COVENANT FOR A COMMON FUTURE: A WORKING DEFINITION OF DEVELOPMENT

THEOLOGICAL AFFIRMATIONS:

God has so ordered creation that everything is interrelated - light and darkness, land and sea, creatures and humankind. By God's Work, creation is an interwoven system, harmonious and good (Genesis 1-2, John 1). God summoned into being people made in the image of the Creator (Genesis 1:26, 27) and given to each other as a blessing for life in community (Acts 17:26). God's intention for the human family is that people serve the Creator through responsible care for each other and devoted stewardship for all creation (Micah 6-8; Psalm 8:6, Matthew 22:36-40)

This original harmony within the human family and the created order is broken by the presence of sin in the world (Genesis 3). The abundant garden with the inherent goodness of creation has been supplanted by a desperate world that continues to experience the separation between Creator and created. This is manifested in divisions between rich and poor, the powerful and the powerless, the victimizer and the victim, the oppressor and the oppressed as well as the included and the excluded within God's world.

In God's incarnate and redemptive action in Jesus Christ, Christians are set free to a baptismal vocation of service (diakonia) in the restoration of creation (world) (Romans 6). Gathered as a community (Koinonia) and enlivened by the Holy Spirit, the marks of this service are the pursuit of justice, an endeavour for peace, and the preservation of the integrity of creation. Challenged by the witness and example of Jesus, Christians can undertake this mission confidently and boldly, empowered by the Gospel and equipped with a vision of God's intention for a "new creation" (Luke 4:16-21; Galatians 3:26-28; 2 Corinthians 5:6ff).

AN ELCIC VIEW OF DEVELOPMENT

The church's vision of and hope for the "new creation" is manifested in its work for development. Development is a collective social responsibility that involves individuals, communities, governments, business and labour, and the church. Development symbolizes a covenant among those within the human family for a common future - a continual process that seeks to transform social structures and institutions both in Canada and internationally:

- to ensure justice for the poor, the hungry, the sick, and the homeless;
- to enable all persons and communities to contribute to the common life of their societies and the global community;
- to reconcile divisions within the human family;
- to offer a foretaste of the vision of God's "new creation."

Three general axioms are essential to informing the church's view of development. Development should be governed by principles of;

JUSTICE: including the equitable distribution of resources.

PARTICIPATION: involving those people and communities affected by decisions.

SUSTAINABILITY: providing for immediate needs without compromising the ability to meet the needs of future generations.

Development support should not be confused with Emergency Aid, relief, and support for refugees must be provided for those in need. However, such measures should only be seen as temporary.

STRATEGIES FOR DEVELOPMENT:

Three strategic approaches need to complement our work on development. These include;

- Service through development projects and programmes
- Education to identify the factors that inhibit development
- Advocacy to propose appropriate policies for development

HOW THE ELCIC EVALUATES DEVELOPMENT:

In evaluating the impact of development programs and policies, the church uses human rights criteria as a benchmark for assessment. Inasmuch as people bear the image of the Creator, that image is violated when human rights are not respected.

Various international and national declarations and conventions are useful as a more precise articulation of these various human rights. Most noteworthy of these is the United Nation's Universal Declaration on Human Rights. Various political forums, such as the United National's Human Rights Commission, offer continuing direction and helpful evaluation in interpreting human rights abuses.

The ELCIC affirms two expressions of human rights measurement (criteria) in evaluating development initiatives;

BASIC HUMAN RIGHTS are those fundamental requirements for living a life that has dignity and self-respect. These requirements include the minimal necessities to sustain life (food, clothing, shelter, etc.), as well as freedom from arbitrary arrest or detention, torture, or extrajudicial execution.

These basic human rights are fundamental. At the minimum, insuring basic human rights is a prerequisite to providing Official Development Aid by the Canadian government.

HUMAN RIGHTS include religious, civil, economic, political, and cultural rights. This designation refers to the full range of rights that lead to a more fulfilled life. They insure religious freedom, participation in the political process, access to social institutions, a functioning judicial process, as well as rights to language and cultural expression.

Preferably, development support should be provided in places and in ways that will encourage and strengthen the realization of this fuller range of religious, civil, economic, political, and cultural rights.

PRINCIPLES/CRITERIA FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES:

1) Development needs to recognize the "partnership" within the global community. All persons/communities contribute to realizing the goal of development.

2) The priority of development must be to restore the most vulnerable to full inclusion within the human family. Development programmes and projects must seek to address the needs of the poorest within our communities in Canada and in other countries.

3) Technology must be appropriate to the needs of the community in which it is employed.

4) Development must involve full and active participation by those most affected in identifying their needs and in making decisions.

5) Development recognizes the stewardship and preservation of creation for future generations.

6) Development recognizes the importance of selfless giving to restore those who have been pushed to the margins of the human community.

7) Development is a <u>social responsibility</u> of all sectors of society. These include governments, churches, non-governmental organizations, the private sector, labour organizations, and individuals in their own vocation.