

# 'GIVE THE KING YOUR JUSTICE, O GOD' PUBLIC RESPONSIBILITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY

EPIPHANY SUNDAY, YEAR A

**Lectionary Texts:** Isaiah 60:1-6 Psalm 72:1-7, 10-14 Ephesians 3:1-12 Matthew 2:1-12

**Focus Text:** Psalm 72:1-7, 10-14

<sup>1</sup> Give the king your justice, O God, and your righteousness to a king's son. <sup>2</sup> May he judge your people with righteousness, and your poor with justice. <sup>3</sup> May the mountains yield prosperity for the people, and the hills, in righteousness. <sup>4</sup> May he defend the cause of the poor of the people, give deliverance to the needy, and crush the oppressor. <sup>5</sup> May he live while the sun endures, and as long as the moon, throughout all generations. <sup>6</sup> May he be like rain that falls on the mown grass, like showers that water the earth. <sup>7</sup> In his days may righteousness flourish and peace abound, until the moon is no more... <sup>10</sup> May the kings of Tarshish and of the isles render him tribute, may the kings of Sheba and Seba bring gifts. <sup>11</sup> May all kings fall down before him, all nations give him service. <sup>12</sup> For he delivers the needy when they call, the poor and those who have no helper. <sup>13</sup> He has pity on the weak and the needy, and saves the lives of the needy. <sup>14</sup> From oppression and violence he redeems their life; and precious is their blood in his sight.

NRSV

## ADDITIONAL TEXTS

*Woe is me! For I have become like one who, after the summer fruit has been gathered, after the vintage has been gleaned, finds no cluster to eat; there is no first-ripe fig for which I hunger. The faithful have disappeared from the land, and there is no one left who is upright; they all lie in wait for blood, and they hunt each other with nets. Their hands are skilled to do evil; the official and the judge ask for a bribe, and the powerful dictate what they desire; thus they pervert justice. The best of them is like a brier, the most upright of them a thorn hedge. The day of their sentinels, of their punishment, has come; now their confusion is at hand.... But as for me, I will look to the LORD, I will wait for the God of my salvation; my God will hear me.*

Micah 7:1-4, 7

*Woe to him who builds his house by unrighteousness, and his upper rooms by injustice; who makes his neighbors work for nothing, and does not give them their wages; who says, "I will build myself a spacious house with large upper rooms," and who cuts out windows for it, paneling it with cedar, and painting it with vermilion. Are you a king because you compete in cedar? Did not your father eat and drink and do justice and righteousness? Then it was well with him. He judged the cause of the poor and needy; then it was well. Is not this to know me? says the LORD. But your eyes and heart are only on your dishonest gain, for shedding innocent blood, and for practicing oppression and violence.*

Jeremiah 22:13-17

*Thus says the Lord GOD: Ah, you shepherds of Israel who have been feeding yourselves! Should not shepherds feed the sheep? You eat the fat, you clothe yourselves with the wool, you slaughter the fatlings; but you do not feed the sheep. You have not strengthened the weak, you have not healed the sick, you have not bound up the injured, you have not brought back the strayed, you have not sought the lost, but with force and harshness you have ruled them... I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep, and I will make them lie down, says the Lord GOD. I will seek the lost, and I will bring back the strayed, and I will bind up the injured, and I will strengthen the weak, but the fat and the strong I will destroy. I will feed them with justice. As for you, my flock, thus says the Lord GOD: I shall judge between sheep and sheep, between rams and goats: Is it not enough for you to feed on the good pasture, but you must tread down with your feet the rest of your pasture? When you drink of clear water, must you foul the rest with your feet? And must my sheep eat what you have trodden with your feet, and drink what you have fouled with your feet? Therefore, thus says the Lord GOD to them: I myself will judge between the fat sheep and the lean sheep.*

Ezekiel 34:2-4, 15-20

## SCRIPTURE COMMENTARY

BY CHRIS LIU BEERS, PROGRAM ASSOCIATE  
NC COUNCIL OF CHURCHES

Leadership is a theme that stretches across the entire width of the witness of the Hebrew Bible, from the patriarchs to the prophets, from judges to kings. To be clear, when poets, psalmists and prophets talk about leadership in the Hebrew Bible, they are not referring to snappy CEO-style management strategies of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Rather, the notion of good leadership in general has to do with ancient Hebraic virtues such as wisdom, integrity, faithfulness, and justice.

The book of Psalms, of course, is no exception, since this collection of ancient prayers, songs and liturgical poetry reflects in a real sense the voice of the people of Israel. There are a number of Psalms, including Psalm 2, 18, 21, 45, and 61, that speak directly of Israel's king and his responsibilities both to God and to the people. Psalm 72 fits into this category; this psalm is essentially an intercessory prayer for Israel's king, that he would live up to the ideals of faithful leadership as defined in the Torah (see Deut. 17:14-20) and the books of I-II Samuel and I-II Kings.

The opening words of the psalm ring out with prophetic power: "Give the king your justice, O God... May he judge your people with righteousness, and your poor with justice" (72:1-2). The psalmist offers a vision of a king who reigns not with his own best political interests in mind, but rather one who willingly gives himself to others, lending his wisdom and sound judgment to all people, regardless of their net worth. The psalmist goes on to pray that the king would "defend the cause of the poor of the people, give deliverance to the needy, and crush the oppressor" (v. 4). The king is called not only to render impartial judgments that include the possibility of reaching justice for the poor (a radical statement in itself), but to defend them against oppression and to deliver them from under the crushing weight of poverty. The king is called to embody the liberation of all God's people, rich and poor alike.

Only after establishing these parameters of godly kingship does the psalmist go on to pray for his long life and peaceful flourishing. This pattern is reiterated in verses 11-12. Why does the psalmist pray that "all kings" would "fall down before him"? It springs from neither nationalist pride nor self-righteous arrogance, but from the knowledge that a king worthy of long life and great power is one who invariably "delivers the needy when they call, the poor and those who have no helper" (v. 12). A worthy king is characterized by his "pity on the weak and the needy, and saves the lives of the needy. From oppression and violence he redeems their life; and precious is their blood in his sight" (v. 13-14). The psalmist envisions - in rhetoric that should make even our best public servants tremble - a king who does all in his power to save life, to make peace, to defend the rights of the most disadvantaged, to enact justice, and to liberate the oppressed.

## PASTORAL REFLECTION

BY REV. ROBERT SEYMOUR, MINISTER  
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Justice and accountability go hand in hand. Many in the Christian community agree that the war in Iraq does not qualify as a "just war" and want to hold those responsible accountable. Indeed, people of every nation have a right to expect their leaders to practice justice. So it was in Israel when the Psalmist wrote, "God, give the King your justice..."

In a democracy, the people as well as their leaders must also be held accountable, for we are the ones who put presidents in office. There are those who argue that religion and politics don't mix, but if they don't, our religion is irrelevant. We are both religious and political beings, and when we go into the ballot booth, we do not leave our faith and our values outside. Reinhold Niebuhr said, "The duty of politics is to establish justice." And President Carter added, "Politics is God's extension service. In a democracy, our failure to be an informed voter means that we are not accountable."

I grew up in the South where my Church seldom addressed justice issues. Most of the sermons were about personal behavior and the plan of salvation. In fact, there was a common vocabulary used in churches that suggested Christians should not be "worldly." It was as if the task of the Church was to save people from the world rather than transform the world. This was a theological way of escaping the justice issues of our racist, segregated society.

Instead, we white Southerners insisted that we practiced love. But, at best, it was a diseased love. We lived in a culture that was unapologetically unjust, never realizing that love can never take the place of justice. Not until the Civil Rights Movement did we begin to understand that genuine love can never be less than justice. We piously refused to be accountable.

The principle applies to many issues today. There is no justice when we are content when people receive a minimum wage instead of a living wage. There is no justice when we deprive people of health care because we are afraid of socialized medicine. There is no justice when a CEO makes more money in one day than the employees make in a year. There is no justice in a judicial system when identical crimes lead to different sentencing, depending upon the county in which the crime was committed. There is no justice when we assume that our charity is a sufficient response to the homeless.

Martin Luther King's indictment of Christian moderates who are more devoted to order than to justice is valid today about a wide range of issues that we accept in the status quo.

That range of issues is wider today than ever before. When we pledge our allegiance to our country "with liberty and justice for all" we are beginning to understand that ALL includes not just human beings but all of God's creatures with whom we share the planet earth. We now see that justice means protecting endangered species, and we are more cognizant that global warming is a wakeup call mandating justice for environmental viability.

As the 2008 election approaches, the Psalmist's prayer should become our own. "Give the President your justice, O God." And we should add to that petition, "Make all of us accountable."

## WORSHIP AID - 'GIVE THE KING YOUR JUSTICE, O GOD'

### RESPONSIVE READING

Lord God, Author of Justice, Fount of all Life, You have called us to gather in Your name.

**In the spirit of the psalmist who cried, "Give the king Your justice, O God,"**

We ask that you grant our leaders Your justice.

**Give the leaders of our local community the vision and courage to seek the peace of this place,**

To link us across all our differences,

**To shape policies and programs for the common good, and not just for the privileged few.**

Give them compassion for the despairing and oppressed in our midst,

**And grant that they would be guided by Your hope of *shalom*.**

Give the leaders of North Carolina, O God, the strength to resist the temptations of power,

**And to act always with "the least of these" in mind.**

May they be more formed and shaped by your vision of justice than special interest dollars;

**Let them not forget "the orphan, the alien and the widow" among us.**

Give Your church, O God, the forceful lungs of a prophet,

**And the heart of "a mother who longs to gather her children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings."**

Give us perseverance when it seems that we have failed to accomplish what we believe you would have us do.

**Remind us that You call us not to effectiveness, but to faithfulness.**

Give us words of truth and life that — by grace — would have the power to offer hope to the hopeless,

**And challenge the powerful.**

*(continued on next page)*

O God, You judge the hearts of all, and every secret is laid bare before You.  
**What has been whispered in the halls of power will one day be revealed throughout the land,**  
 And what has been plotted against the oppressed will not stand in Your sight.  
**Trusting in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus,**  
**We join together to participate in Your holy work of setting all of us captives free.**  
**Amen.**

*(by Chris Liu Beers and Barbara Zelter)*

**PRAYER OF CONFESSION**

Gracious God, we acknowledge that we have failed to embody Your justice, righteousness and love. We believe You have called us to be in the world but not of it, and yet we so often find ourselves captivated by the latest political ideologies. We believe You have called us to work for justice and liberation, and yet we so often find ourselves trapped in our own destructive ways of life. We confess that we are never free from the limitations of finitude or from the influence of sin. We confess that our perspectives may be tainted and distorted by self-interest even when we seek to know Your will. In our fallenness we bear the capacity to be mistaken in some measure even in our most idealistic convictions and vision. We cannot claim to know with utter certainty what You would have us do or think about any particular matter of public life. Furthermore, we confess that no political program can be wholly identified with Your will, and no political ideology adequately represents divine truth. We work in the hope that political involvement and specific pieces of legislation may move the community a little closer to justice, but we recognize that it would be idolatrous to identify any political program too closely with You. Forgive us, Lord, for our self-righteousness. Teach us to love one another, across the barriers of political affiliations. And raise up leaders among us who faithfully embody Your desire for justice and mercy, for righteousness and peace. In the name of Christ, **Amen.**

*(by Chris Liu Beers, with additional material from "A Statement on Christians, Churches, and Politics," by the North Carolina Council of Churches)*

**SUGGESTED HYMNS**

† <i>All Who Love and Serve Your City</i>	MW 697/CH 670/UMH 433/PH 413/ TH 570
† <i>We Utter Your Cry</i>	BH 631
† <i>God of the Prophets</i>	LW 258/NCH 358/TH 359
† <i>There's a Voice in the Wilderness</i>	TH 75/NCH 358
† <i>You Will Show Me the Path of Life</i>	GC 24

♦ <i>Hymnal Legend</i> ♦
† <b>AM</b> — African Methodist Episcopal
† <b>BH</b> — Baptist Hymnal
† <b>CH</b> — Chalice Hymnal (Disciples of Christ)
† <b>CM</b> — Christian Methodist Episcopal
† <b>GC</b> — Gather Comprehensive (Rom Cath)
† <b>LW</b> — Lutheran Worship
† <b>MW</b> — Moravian Book of Worship
† <b>NCH</b> — New Century Hymnal (UCC)
† <b>PH</b> — Presbyterian Hymnal
† <b>TH</b> — The Hymnal 1982 (Episcopal)
† <b>UMH</b> — United Methodist Hymnal

**ADDITIONAL PRAYERS**

**For Local Government**

Almighty God, our King, send down upon those who hold office in North Carolina the spirit of wisdom, charity, and justice; that with steadfast purpose they may faithfully serve in their offices to promote the well-being of all people, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

*(adapted from the Book of Common Prayer, Prayer 23, "For Local Government," p. 822)*

**For the State Legislature**

O God, the fountain of wisdom, whose will is good and gracious, and whose law is truth: We ask you to so guide and bless our state Senators and Representatives that they may enact such laws as would please you, to the glory of your Name and the welfare of all people; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

*(adapted from the Book of Common Prayer, Prayer 20, "For the State Legislature," p. 821)*

## For Courts of Justice

Almighty God, who reigns over all human persons and institutions, we humbly ask you to bless the courts of justice and the magistrates throughout our state, and give them the spirit of wisdom and understanding, that they may discern the truth and impartially administer the law in the fear of you alone; through the One who shall come to be our Judge, your Son our Savior Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

*(adapted from the Book of Common Prayer, Prayer 21, "For Courts of Justice," p. 821)*

## For Sound Government

O Lord our Governor, bless the leaders of our land, that we may be a people at peace among ourselves and a blessing to everyone around us.

**Lord, keep this state and nation under your care, just as you care for all nations and peoples of the earth.**

To the President and members of the Cabinet, to Governors of States, Mayors of Cities, and to all in administrative authority, grant wisdom and grace in the exercise of their duties.

**Give grace to your servants, O Lord.**

To Senators and Representatives, and those who make our laws in States, Cities and Towns, give courage, wisdom, and foresight to provide for the needs of all our people, and to fulfill our obligations in the community of nations.

**Give grace to your servants, O Lord.**

To the Judges and officers of our Courts give understanding and integrity, that human rights may be safeguarded and justice served.

**Give grace to your servants, O Lord.**

And finally, teach our people to rely on your strength and to accept their responsibilities to their fellow citizens, that they may elect trustworthy leaders and make wise decisions for the well-being of our society; that we may serve you faithfully in our generation and honor your holy Name.

**For Yours is the kingdom, O Lord, and you are exalted as head above all. Amen.**

*(adapted from the Book of Common Prayer, Prayer 22, "For Sound Government," p. 821-822)*

## ADDITIONAL HELPS

### ▣ QUOTES ▣

*The time is always right to do what is right.*

Martin Luther King, Jr.

*Leadership should be born out of the understanding of the needs of those who would be affected by it.*

Marian Anderson

*The care of human life and happiness, and not their destruction, is the first and only object of good government.*

Thomas Jefferson

*The most effective way to restrict democracy is to transfer decision-making from the public arena to unaccountable institutions: kings and princes, priestly castes, military juntas, party dictatorships, or modern corporations.*

Noam Chomsky

*Leaders don't force people to follow – they invite them on a journey.*

Charles S. Lauer

*The first step to leadership is servanthood.*

John Maxwell

## ▪ PERSONAL VIGNETTE ▪

### POLITICS AS VOCATION

BY ELLIE KINNAIRD, NORTH CAROLINA STATE SENATOR, 23 DISTRICT

A Christian who is a politician. That may sound like an oxymoron. On the other hand, living in the Bible Belt, one might think it is a requirement. The Legislature starts each session with a prayer; every organization's banquet, breakfast, and meeting starts with a prayer...

What is the obligation of a Christian in political life?

In Christ's own words, to love God with all our hearts and all our minds and to love our neighbor as ourselves. It is an unmistakable message. The Bible is full of examples in which Christ tells us, directly or through parables, what is our duty. What better place than the Legislature to carry out the commandment to love our neighbors, in the name of all the people of the state?

On a personal level, I read the Bible every day, attend church on Sunday and pray, as best I can in my feeble understanding of what prayer should be. Does it carry over to my work in the Legislature? I like to think it is what informs and motivates me in my work in Raleigh. In fact, I often wonder why everyone in the Legislature doesn't see things the way I do. How can our budget cut crucial funds for the disabled, poor, and elderly? I think to myself, as the Chaplain calls on us to mind the poor and weak in our midst, "Yes, listen to that message, all you who vote to cut their funds." How can anyone vote for tax loopholes for wealthy corporations and ignore the needs of folks on Medicaid? How can my colleagues vote for businesses to escape environmental regulation? How can people take huge campaign contributions and not expect to have to give favors in return? How can anyone vote against the ban on the death penalty for the mentally retarded?...

What are the pitfalls that beset a Christian who is a politician?

First, there is love of power. The Legislature is a place of large egos and a large power struggle, and for good reason. Because if you have no power, the chances of getting bills enacted are minimal. And then there is flattery. Legislators are truly the emperor with no clothes. The staff treats us with the greatest deference and for good reason: legislators pay them. We tell them what to do, and the threat of losing their job if they cross an important legislator is real. It is easy to get puffed up when people think it's a big deal when you join them for their function. Or when people thank you for your efforts in the Legislature, even though it is our Christian duty. We always have to remember, it is not we who are important. We can be easily replaced. The mission cannot. Finally, it is not always easy in a secular context to be open that my choices are based on my Christian beliefs.

How do I reconcile these dilemmas of political life and the Christian life? Back to the Bible -- "Walk humbly before your Lord." Daily confession: "Forgive us our trespasses." Put God before expediency; live by what I learn from the Bible and my church life; and forgive, both myself and others, when choices and actions are not the Christian principled ones we should make. And constantly, to keep our hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God, love your neighbor as yourself, walk humbly before your God, and forgive us our trespasses.

## ▪ CONTACTS AND OTHER RESOURCES ▪

- ✦ [www.nccouncilofchurches.org/areasofwork/committees/legislative\\_program/legislative\\_program.html](http://www.nccouncilofchurches.org/areasofwork/committees/legislative_program/legislative_program.html) – The Legislative Program Committee of the *North Carolina Council of Churches* coordinates the Council's work for just and compassionate public policy in North Carolina. Through *Raleigh Report* and the Legislative Seminar, the Committee equips people of faith across the state to be citizen advocates, grass-roots lobbyists. The Committee also develops the Council's legislative policy statements, by which the Council takes positions on legislative issues.
- ✦ [www.nccouncilofchurches.org/areasofwork/issues/election\\_reform/election\\_reform\\_issue.html](http://www.nccouncilofchurches.org/areasofwork/issues/election_reform/election_reform_issue.html) – In addition to the Legislative Program Committee, the *North Carolina Council of Churches* is actively working in favor of election reforms that would make North Carolina fundamentally more democratic. The Council believes that democracy works best when the voices of everyone are heard, and that democracy is weakened when people think their votes do not count, when some people's votes actually are not counted, when only those with access to money can run for elected office, and when moneyed interests have greater access to elected leaders than "average" citizens.

- ✦ [www.ncjustice.org](http://www.ncjustice.org) – *The North Carolina Justice Center* seeks to hold North Carolina’s leaders accountable across a range of policy issues, primarily through distributing accurate and timely non-partisan information to the public. Their areas of work include the state budget, consumer issues, healthcare, housing, immigration, public benefits, public education, and workforce issues.
- ✦ [www.democracy-nc.org](http://www.democracy-nc.org) – *Democracy North Carolina* is a nonpartisan organization working to fulfill the promise of “one person, one vote,” the bedrock principle of equal rights and self-determination. They hold that “We the people” deserve and demand a government that is responsive to us and committed to the public good. Because voters should control the election process, they are committed to a range of campaign-finance reforms that: (a) improve disclosure of the flow of political money; (b) strengthen enforcement of election laws; (c) address other threats to the integrity of the election process, such as sham issue ads and soft money; and (d) promote a voluntary public-financing program that frees candidates from the money-chase and puts voters at the center of election financing. In addition, they are committed to expanding voter participation in elections, for example, by pulling in those not involved (youth, prisoners and ex-felons, discouraged ex-voters, etc.) and by ensuring that every registered person who goes to the polls has his or her ballot counted.
- ✦ [www.commoncause.org](http://www.commoncause.org) – *Common Cause* is a nonpartisan nonprofit advocacy organization founded in 1970 as a nationwide vehicle for citizens to make their voices heard in the political process and to hold their elected leaders accountable to the public interest. Now with nearly 300,000 members and supporters and 38 state organizations, Common Cause remains committed to honest, open and accountable government, as well as encouraging citizen participation in democracy. Common Cause strives to strengthen our democracy by empowering its members, supporters and the general public to take action on critical policy issues. Currently, they are working on several fronts to: (a) increase the diversity of voices and ownership in media, to make media more responsive to the needs of citizens in a democracy and to protect the editorial independence of public broadcasting, (b) advance campaign reforms that make people and ideas more important than money, (c) make certain that government is open, ethical and accountable, (d) remove barriers to voting and ensure that our voting systems are accurate and accessible, (e) increase participation in the political process, and (f) make certain that our government is held accountable for the costs, in lives and money, for the invasion of Iraq.

## KEY FACTS

### A Statement on Christians, Churches and Politics<sup>1</sup>

Adopted by the House of Delegates, 1996

Politics in our democratic society is the process whereby citizens determine how they will live together. The direction and shape of our community and our communities are influenced by political decisions. Almost all political decisions have a moral dimension. The living conditions of neighbors in need are determined in significant measure by politics. Issues of war and peace, the distribution of resources, of crime and punishment, and many other vital matters are dealt with in the political arena.

As Christians we believe in a God who works in and through the world to bring justice, peace, and reconciliation. God's salvation includes the whole creation of social and economic orders, as well as individual persons. If we are faithful to this God, we will engage political issues and enter political struggles in pursuit of compassion and justice. We will labor to see God's mercy and God's passion for justice reflected in so far as possible in public policies.

Often, when Christians have entered the political realm, they have fallen into the sins of fanatical self-righteousness and dogmatism. These sins must be guarded against. The more common sins among our ecumenical and mainline churches, however, are the sins of indifference, apathy, and hopelessness. We must especially guard against these sins and constantly renew our faith in the God who promises salvation and promises to be with us in the struggles for justice and peace. We need to be reminded of our power and responsibility as Christian citizens in a democratic society, and of the need for witness in the political sector.

## Policy Statement on Good Government<sup>2</sup>

Approved by the Executive Board of the N.C. Council of Churches, 2006

Over 10 years ago, on April 18, 1996, the Executive Board of the N.C. Council of Churches adopted “A Statement on Christians, Churches, and Politics.” It explained: “As Christians we believe in a God who works in and through the world to bring justice, peace, and reconciliation. God’s salvation includes the whole creation of social and economic orders.... If we are faithful to this God, we will engage political issues and enter political struggles in pursuit of compassion and justice.”

Since our founding in 1935, we have taken seriously the biblical ethic of jubilee. The jubilee traditions called for concrete social mechanisms to mitigate the wealth and power disparities that left some too rich, some in debt slavery, and the community thereby unwhole. At his first public teaching in Nazareth, Jesus claimed this ethic to define God’s Spirit at work in the world. Recalling Isaiah, he announced:

*The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.*

Luke 4:18-19

The poor, the oppressed, the captives and the blind – those our tradition deems worthy – are increasingly invisible and unheard in our state and national political systems. Signs abound that our republic is not democratic. “The cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord,” according to the book of James, but those cries often are muffled in the halls of our North Carolina General Assembly.

Special interest dollars fuel elections and prop up privilege. Those who donate the most money have the most influence in shaping political priorities. The high cost of elections keeps incumbents in and discourages qualified persons from running. Parties draw district lines to keep their own in power. Rules for becoming a third party on the North Carolina ballot are far more restrictive than those in most states. Our ethics regulations leave loopholes for corporate lobbyists and political action committees (PACs) that expect favors. These hindrances to legitimate democracy elicit cries of protest from the majority around health care for all, sound education, affordable homes, treatment for the mentally ill, fair wages, and other equity concerns. And the cries seem to fall on deaf ears...

A hallmark of our Christian faith is the open table of hospitality, the wide circle, the inclusiveness that marks each person as God’s creature graced with worth. Working for honest, fair, open, and accessible government is a critical component of this Christian witness. Therefore, we seek ethics and lobbying reform, independent bodies for electoral redistricting, increased public financing of elections, paper accountability of electronic voting, same-day voter registration, easier ballot access, and all similar initiatives for public accountability and more inclusive representation. We urge the appropriate bodies within our denominations and congregations to take part in shaping these government processes that so powerfully shape our communities.

1. North Carolina Council of Churches, “A Statement on Christians, Churches, and Politics,” [www.nccouncilofchurches.org/resources/policystatements/christians-churches-politics.html](http://www.nccouncilofchurches.org/resources/policystatements/christians-churches-politics.html).
2. North Carolina Council of Churches, “Policy Statement on Good Government,” [www.nccouncilofchurches.org/resources/policystatements/good\\_government.htm](http://www.nccouncilofchurches.org/resources/policystatements/good_government.htm)