



TOWARDS THE GLOBALISATION OF JUSTICE

*The Reformed Churches of Bern–Jura–Solothurn / Switzerland
as part of the world-wide ecumenical movement*

Policy Statement of the Synodal Council, 2003

Policy statement

adopted by the Synodal Council
on 10 September 2003

Translation by Isabel Best
(cooperation: Jane Stranz)

Based on the study paper on principles
prepared for the Synodal Council
www.refbejuso.ch

Project Group members:

Uli Geisler, Committee for Ecumenical Affairs
Matthias Hui, OeME* office
Helmut Kaiser, Committee for HEKS/EPER**
Irene Meier, Synod member
Walter Rohrer, Office of Social Issues
Susanne Schneeberger, OeME* office
Werner Zingg, former Synod member
Albert Rieger, director of
OeME/Migration Dept.

Copies may be ordered from:

Reformed Churches of Bern-Jura-Solothurn
Central Services
Post Office Box
CH-3000 Bern 23, Switzerland
Telephone +41 31 370 28 28
Fax +41 31 370 28 90
E-mail zd@refbejuso.ch

Photos

P. 11 Cordula Kropke, HEKS
P. 15 Marie-Anna Gneist
P. 25 Ruedi Lüscher, HEKS

*OeME = Ecumenical Relations, Mission and Cooperation for Development

**HEKS/EPER = Aid and Development Agency of the Swiss Protestant Churches

INTRODUCTION

This policy statement represents the current position taken by the Reformed Churches of the Swiss cantons of Bern, Jura and Solothurn on the world-wide process of globalisation. The statement is the result of two years of intensive and at times controversial dialogue, both in our church and with a wider public.

Our church sees itself as part of the world-wide ecumenical movement. In 1997 the World Alliance of Reformed Churches appealed for "a committed process of progressive recognition, education and confession (processus confessionis) within all WARC member churches at all levels regarding economic injustice and ecological destruction". This position statement is our response to that appeal. The statement will be presented to the World Alliance of Reformed Churches at its

General Assembly in Accra Ghana, August 2004, by the delegates from the Swiss Federation of Protestant Churches (SEK/FEPS).

Within our own region, this policy statement is intended to take our church's discussion further and to stimulate it anew. We also plan to use the statement to initiate and pursue dialogue with leaders in society, politics and economics, and with the movement critical of globalisation.

Behind this policy statement stands a thoroughgoing **study paper on principles**, "Towards the Globalisation of Justice", which was written by a project group appointed by the Synodal Council of our church. The study paper is available in German from: Reformed Churches of Bern-Jura-Solothurn, Central

Services, Post Office Box, 3000 Bern 23, Switzerland, or by e-mail: zd@refbejus.ch.

This policy statement has three parts. **Part I** presents globalisation in a theological and ethical framework. **Part II** describes the main features of economic globalisation, and gives some examples for clarification. **Part III** outlines some suggestions for taking action both in the church and in society.



I. GLOBALISATION AND THE NEED FOR JUSTICE

To work for a just society is at the very core of the Reformed Church's mission. This includes recognising the causes of injustice, making them public and working steadily, consistently, professionally and radically to develop, propose and support ways of overcoming them. This is especially true in the context of globalisation:

"Globalisation [is a] term for the emergence of world-wide markets, the increasing internationalisation of trade and of the financial, goods and services markets as well as the international interlinking of national economies. The globalisation process is driven particularly by new communications, information and transport technologies, new ways of organising the production processes within companies, and financial liberalisation and deregulation measures being taken in many countries. The protagonists are chiefly multinational corpo-

rations (also known as 'multis' or 'global players')." (From: Die Volkswirtschaft [The National Economy] Magazine, Bern, 1/2002).

Because discussing and assessing globalisation is controversial, it is essential to look at it from an ethical viewpoint:

- Some see globalisation as an opportunity to improve everyone's well-being, to raise standards of living and quality of life, and as the only possibility for efficient solutions to world-wide ecological problems.
- For others, globalisation has become an economic nightmare which recognises neither social nor ecological values, degrades the living conditions of people in the poor countries, speeds up the destruction of natural resources necessary for life, and aims only at creating market values (profits, shareholder values).

As Reformed churches we recognise first of all that we play our part in globalisation, and secondly, that as churches we stand in the midst of this tension over contradictory assessments of it. Thirdly, we would emphasise as strongly as possible that globalisation can be shaped according to ethical principles, and that there is an obligation to do so. Giving globalisation an ethical form requires that we be guided by the following premises, formulations of issues, basic attitudes and perspectives:

1 Serving life

The economy exists because people exist. The priority for the economy is to serve life. A life-serving economy, first of all, puts human beings and their needs at the centre of its concerns, and secondly, makes the preservation of basic natural resources a priority. Serving life means that justice in terms of needs, and sustainability, are basic goals of economic activity.

2 The question of meaning and legitimisation

The economy and economic activity are not ends in themselves, but rather economic activity should always serve life. Serving life raises two questions:

- The question of meaning: what values are being created? This question addresses the purpose and the goal of economic activity.
- The question of legitimisation: for whom are these values being created? This question of legitimisation is about raising the issue of, and pursuing, a justly organisation of society.

3 Being radical rather than extremist

The mission of the Reformed Church inherits from its tradition (the Old Testament prophets, the New Testament, Zwingli and Calvin) a particular kind of radicality. Being radical should not be confused with being extremist; it means rather to get at the roots of a problem. Thus

the constitution of our regional church says that the church, "bears witness that the Word of God is valid for all areas of public life, including state and society, the economy and culture. Therefore the church struggles against every injustice, all deprivations of body and spirit and the causes thereof."

4 The viewpoint of those affected

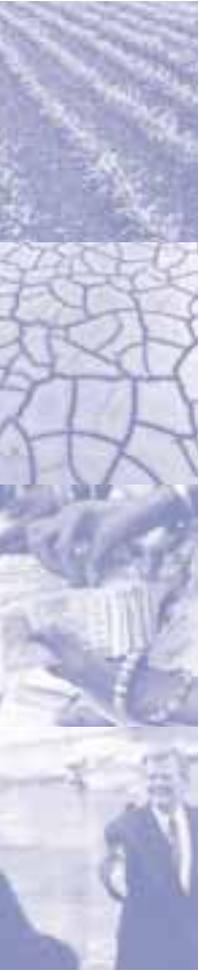
The Reformed Churches of Bern, Jura and Solothurn are part of a world-wide church. We therefore seek to fulfil a global responsibility. We commit ourselves to include in our analysis the viewpoint of those affected by globalisation, the victims and the losers.

To sum up

If globalisation is subjected to the four claims described here, the claims of justice according to the Judeo-Christian tradition, then it is impossible to speak of progress only in terms

of economic growth, freedom only in terms of free markets, and justice only in terms of equal exchange. We are talking, instead, about a globalisation of justice, for which solidarity, participation and the preservation of creation are indispensable.

It is one of the tasks of the Reformed Churches of Bern, Jura and Solothurn to continually restate the need for justice in the globalised economy and demand that justice be implemented.



II. THE GLOBALISATION OF JUSTICE – ALTERNATIVES TO THE PRESENT SITUATION

1. The overwhelming power of the market and competition

Competition and the market influence our lives economically, politically and in the private sphere. The influence of globalisation forces us to uphold individual achievement and the competition of everyone against everyone else as paramount values. We are expected to subject our personal relationships, our relationship to nature and ultimately our right to exist as human beings to the power of the free market and the utilitarian values that go with it. The result is that values such as solidarity, mutual support and cooperation are eroded and endangered.

The actions of those who defend economic globalisation are contradictory. On one hand they say that regulation is the job of the market and demand that markets be opened up world-wide, at every level. On the other hand they pursue protectionist economic policies wherever it is in their own interest, using raw power to put them in place. Barriers to trade flowing from rich to poor countries are removed, but not those in the other direction. Competition is manipulated and globalisation becomes a one-way street.

Globalising justice – alternatives

We publicly advocate that the market be obliged to operate within a social and ecological framework. All over the world, it should be possible for markets to be opened up gradually and subjected to governmental regulation, finely tuned and adapted to local conditions. Switzerland must be prepared to abolish, in stages, export subsidies which have disastrous consequences in the South (for example in sugar production).

Examples

The United States of America's tariffs to protect its steel industry

In March 2002 the United States imposed protective tariffs of up to 30 per cent on certain steel products. China, Japan, South Korea, Russia and the Ukraine, as countries which had previously exported inexpensive steel to the USA for use in its auto industry, are severely affected by these tariffs.

Swiss agriculture – sustainable development needs protection

Besides production, our agriculture fulfils many other functions in the areas of ecology, tourism, cultural tradition and people's relationship to their environment. The way in which food is produced reflects respect for one's environment, so it must not be reduced to a purely technological economic business. In this context, regional structures make sense: they enable the preservation of local know-how of ecologically sound production; they ensure that the regional market is supplied and avoid the disadvantages of long-distance transport (energy consumption, unripe products, etc.). This is only possible for us because our government at present – unlike many in southern countries – can still defend itself

against the immediate and complete integration of our agriculture into the world market. Direct payments ensure that our agriculture continues to fulfil its many functions and that the farmers survive. Economic regulatory mechanisms for the benefit of those affected, do protect them to a degree from the globalising pressure of the World Trade Organisation (WTO).

2. The growing gap between rich and poor

Opening up markets without rules to protect the disadvantaged, widens the divide between rich and poor. This is aggravated by the policies of the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, the World Trade Organisation and the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development. Globalisation, which is based on a philosophy of market deregulation, does not recognise any rules which might protect the marginalized groups. Thus a concept of globalisation which is not integrated with national and international strategies for combating poverty widens the gap between rich and poor.

This is confirmed by particularly severe developments in many African countries which have not found it possible to establish any rules, due to political instability, wars and turmoil. On the other hand, what can be achieved through rules to protect the disadvantaged can be seen in the example of Asian countries. Their economic policies combine liberal elements with their own intervention directed towards clear developmental goals, which have brought about improvements in their situation.

Globalising justice – alternatives

We stand for a liberal and democratic political order, which takes local conditions into account and which has as its goal to reduce by half the number of people living in extreme poverty (less than 1 US-dollar per day) by the year 2015.

Examples

Poverty is on the increase

We note that 1.2 billion people still have to get by with incomes of less than a dollar a day – after years of economic globalisation, which had promised advances in combating poverty. The gap between rich and poor has widened massively. In 1980, the richest 20 % of the world's people earned 45 times more than the poorest 20 %, in 1990, 60 times more, and in 2000, 80 times more.

Africa

Sub-Saharan Africa is home to 11 % of the world's population, but their share of world trade is only 1 %. Only 1 % of direct foreign investment comes to this region. These figures make it plain that for almost the whole continent of Africa, during the phase of rapidly developing globalisation, hardly any efforts were made to improve the flow of trade or to build communications networks, infrastructure, educational institutions or health care systems.

Sub-Saharan Africa (not including South Africa) depends for 75 % of its exports on raw materials, and thus is particularly affected by the low prices of these materials in the world market. Political conflicts, wars, corruption, lack of democracy and reliable justice systems, along with AIDS, make its development problems worse.

3. Domination by the financial markets

Capital flows to where there is already money and where quick profits can be made. It is often lacking in those places where it is really needed. The number and the scope of financial transactions have risen to incredible heights in recent years, so that at present only about 2 % of movements of money have to do with trade transactions. Every day some 1500 billion dollars of financial capital is moved in search of higher yields. This speculation in capital is largely responsible for the insecurity and instability of the world markets.

The Evangelical Churches of Argentina have written to appeal to us: "We beg you (...) to help us lighten the load of foreign debt which, in our situation, is leading to poverty and death for millions of people. In view of the injustice and inappropriateness of these debts, not only solidarity is at stake, but ethics itself."

Globalising justice – alternatives

We support the development of a fair procedure for debt cancellation for poor countries (insolvency procedure). Together with our aid agencies, we advocate that a duty be charged on all foreign exchange transactions (Tobin Tax).

Examples

Argentina

This South American country offers an example of the debt spiral from which many countries can no longer free themselves. Before its economic breakdown it had excessive offers of foreign capital and was forced to take out loans worth billions. But increased interest rates and changes in the global economy led to a debt crisis, which was abused by the international financial institutions to impose neo-liberal structural adjustment programmes. These developments were also caused by the corruption and arrogant attitudes of the powerful ruling class, which itself was supported through its extensive dependence on the globalised world of finance.

Pension funds

Through our contributions to pension funds, we too are implicated in this phenomenon. Our money is also playing the game of the financial markets and going where the yield is highest. On one hand, our pension contributions are participating in making the financial markets unstable; on the other they are exposed to the risk of speculation losses and endangered by the great fluctuations of the market, which in turn creates more insecurity in our social fabric.

4. The concentration of power and structural violence

One consequence of economic globalisation is the increasing concentration of power in relatively few centres, accompanied by reduced democratic rights. The structure of the world's economic establishment is dominated by international organisations, in which financially powerful states and transnational corporations can set the agenda and carry disproportionately more weight than poor countries. The world-wide general criticism of economic globalisation begins with this concentration of power and with the structural violence which it exercises.

Churches, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and trade unions are grouping themselves together in networks, in order to constitute a counterweight representing civil society. They are demanding that the important

issues which favour a more humane economy, democratisation and solidarity be opened up for broad-based discussion. Many people are also getting involved creatively and non-violently in protest actions. The churches are refusing to accept the media focus on the violent interactions between demonstrators and the police which take place on the margins of protests.

Globalising justice – alternatives

We are trying to tackle the dynamic of hate, powerlessness, repression and sporadic destructiveness and, by taking clear positions, to contribute to the non-violent resolution of conflicts. At the same time we point out the connections between structural violence, hunger, oppression and forms of political action which do not lead to peace. We advocate civil society having the right to take part democratically in decision-making processes.

Examples

The International Monetary Fund (IMF)

The governments of today are delegating more and more authority for the regulation and deregulation of the world's economy to supranational institutions like the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Trade Organisation (WTO) and the World Bank. These bodies are not democratically constituted, but are defined, to varying degrees, by the economic heavyweights. In the IMF, for example, (voting) rights depend to a large extent on the capital possessed by the member states.

The IMF is the creditor of many indebted nations, but it also sets the conditions for loan procedures and the rescheduling of debts. It thus demands of many debtor nations that they increase their exports. Taxes and protective tariffs which hinder exports are to be abolished, privatisations are to be promoted and government expenses reduced. This requires cuts in areas such as education, health care and public services. The result is suffering for the bulk of the population.

Transnational corporations

The 100 largest economic powers (states and corporations) in the world comprise 49 states and 51 transnational corporations. Each of these has an economic turnover greater than the national income of entire nations. The business activities of transnational corporations are directed toward the maximising of profit, and thus have no democratic legitimisation. However, the effects of corporations' policies on the lives of people, on human rights and on the state of the environment are enormous.



5. The demand for human flexibility

The liberalisation of world trade and the deregulation of labour laws are leading to radical changes in the employment situation of many people. On the one hand, it seems that a high number of unemployed women and men is accepted as a necessary evil of a globalised economy. On the other, working conditions are being made more flexible, increasing the pressure on employees for more mobility and productivity, along with the continual need for further training to keep up with changing job requirements in the rapidly mutating market.

This pressure for flexibility can be an opportunity, but often leads instead to overtaxing of people's strength, and to illness. Those who cannot keep up with these many-sided demands are less and less likely to find jobs and solidarity in the economic community.

This unrelenting pressure is clear among people of working-age in our congregations. Societies in developing countries are even more seriously affected.

Globalising justice – alternatives

The church as employer commits itself to create fair working conditions within its own structures, and also to work for fair employment through political means in the economic world.

Examples

Guatemala

In this country the importance of the so called "maquilas", factories which are built in deregulated free trade zones, is growing. The location of these factories here has nothing to do with the needs of the regional or national economy. Investors are attracted by the state's willingness to grant them exemption from legal obligations and tariffs and taxes on their production. These factories produce exclusively for export, and most of the profits also leave the country. The jobs created are especially for women with low qualifications. Employees have almost no rights: no minimum wage, no overtime pay, no right to organise, and dismissal in case of pregnancy. The economic and social needs which prevail in Guatemala are so pressing that more and more women

resign themselves to working under such conditions. However, these working conditions undermine the social security of the workers on a permanent basis, and rob them of their human dignity.

Switzerland

The unemployment insurance law allows for a two-hour commute to work to be considered reasonable. So an unemployed person who cannot find a job nearer by, who does not want to change his or her occupation and is not prepared to accept four hours of commuting per day – there are no exceptions for family needs – can encounter serious difficulties in getting into the job market.

6. World-wide deregulation and the march to privatisation

Democratic and societal control of many areas of life and the economy is being sidelined by policies which reduce the role of government to a minimum and turn over as much control as possible to the "free market". An economy globalised to this extent, which has been increasingly establishing itself since the changes in Europe in 1989, is oriented neither to social nor to ecological values.

Common sense gives way to efficiency, progress is defined as economic growth, and the freedom of citizens is reduced to the freedom of the market. Democratic participation in decisions which have consequences for the lives of many people becomes secondary to the free flow of goods and capital, of jobs and raw materials. Commodities such as education, medical care, and even food and water, which are essential for life, become subject to the dictates of this liberalised economy. It also influences the debates on the patenting of life forms and genetic engineering.

Examples

Water

Water offers a good example of how the principle of global deregulation works. The proper use of water is to be obtained by its distribution strictly according to criteria of profit. Neither the sustainable use of water, nor access to water for everyone, is a primary goal, but rather profitability for the corporations concerned. For business purposes a high rate of water consumption is preferable to the sustainable and conservation-oriented use of this scarce resource. This may be good for economic growth, but it takes no account of long-term social and ecological consequences and costs.

More than a billion people have no access to clean drinking water. If the current trend continues, in 2025 this will be true for one person in three on the planet. The promoters of globalisation are determined to pursue the privatisation of water services. Thus the IMF and the World Bank, as part of their structural adjustment programmes, call on poor countries to sell their water utilities.

Bolivia

In Cochabamba, Bolivia, for example, the water service was privatised – because of pressure from the World Bank, as a condition for making loans available. When the water utility was taken over by private companies, the price rose by 35 %. Tens of thousands of the city's inhabitants protested in the streets, because they could not afford this higher price. In the end, the water service had to be "de-privatised".

7. Gender inequality

Traditional financial accounting entirely excludes women's work, both in reproduction and in caring for people. Care of the family, household and other people does not count officially; it apparently does not have "market value", although every society and our future depend on it. Thus women's work becomes invisible and has no publicly recognised value.

Globalisation affects women unevenly. In many places it has brought about increases in the numbers of employed women. New jobs have been created in industrialised countries which offer well-educated women opportunities to advance their careers. But since child care facilities are very often lacking, the need for child and family care workers is being increasingly met by migrant women. Thus women's unpaid work is not being shared between the genders, but is rather being pushed onto women who have immigrated from the South by women in the North.

Globalising justice – alternatives

We are systematically analysing the financial effects on both sexes of budgeted positions within the church (gender budget analysis), and are adapting our budget policies to improve equality of opportunity between genders.

We are doing what we can to promote a gender analysis by the IMF and World Bank of their structural adjustment programmes. This means analysing the gender-specific effects of their decisions on the lives of women and men. All decision-making is to be subject to the principle of equal access to power and to resources for women and men (gender mainstreaming).

Examples

Poverty among women

Rates of poverty among women increased during the 1990s under structural adjustment programmes and economic crises. Over 70 % of the poor are women. The number of women in poverty is increasing in absolute terms, and definitely more rapidly than the number of men in poverty. There are clear gender-specific differences such as unequal distribution of jobs, income and property (land), and unequal access to education and health care.

Structural adjustment programmes such as those prescribed by the IMF have especially heavy consequences for women. These programmes are one-sidedly oriented toward increasing exports, and often prescribe massive cuts in government spending for social programmes. Since women are responsible for the well-being of their families and communities, it is they who work harder to try to compensate for these losses in the quality of life. Thus the traditional asymmetry between the sexes is reinforced and inequality is projected into the future.

Inequality in earnings

On a world-wide basis, gender equality in salaries and wages has not been achieved. The average disparity in the pay earned by men and by women for equal work is around 20 %, but varies greatly among different countries and sectors of the labour market.

Volunteer work

The church benefits greatly from the work of volunteers, the majority of whom are women.

8. The destruction of life's natural resources

Control over arable land, the seas and rivers, drinking water, oil and gas is being gradually taken away from democratically elected powers, through economic liberalisation and privatisation. International agreements and WTO, IMF and World Bank contracts are determining how we deal with natural resources. Transnational corporations and the economic major powers, especially the USA, are opposing international rules which have been made to protect the environment. There is no court of appeal where we can take our complaints about the exploitation, deterioration and destruction of natural resources and genetic diversity.

Globalising justice – alternatives

We are advocating that clear steps be taken quickly in the industrialised nations – including Switzerland – to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 40% by the year 2020, and as much as 80% by 2050. This can help alleviate the dangerous course of climate change. Such a rigorous and pro-active policy on climate change belongs in the political domain, and cannot be left to voluntary initiatives by economic players.

Examples

Prevention of climate change

The "Earth Summit", the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, was held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. At that time, the industrialised nations of the North took the main responsibility for the global ecological crisis, and promised new financing to promote ecologically- and socially-oriented development in the South. In 1997 the Kyoto Protocol was written, a UN overall agreement on prevention of climate change, which provided among other things that carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions be stabilised at the level of 1990. There was agreement that the industrialised nations, with their decidedly higher level of emissions per person, must make the first move. Switzerland ratified this protocol in 2002; the USA, China and Russia have not yet ratified

it. They are determined to stick to economic growth and exploitation, rather than conversion of their industries, energy conservation, or promotion of renewable energies, because setting limits on CO₂ emissions would curb economic development too much. International agreements on reducing the ecological consequences of global economic activity are thus failing because of resistance by major industrial nations.

In this context, two facts are particularly disturbing:

- Ecological issues are playing only a secondary role in the current discussions criticising globalisation.*
- The environment is becoming the object of negotiations; it is supposed to be available for use at the lowest possible price, if not "for free". The costs of measures to protect the environment are not entering into the calculations of corporations.*



III. ACTION

The following proposals for action are built upon the foregoing analysis and the Christian ethical views which have been put forward. As churches we insist that we can have a part to play in shaping globalisation, and that it can be changed to make it more just. The globalising of justice can take place when the church:

- strengthens the sense of community in society
- promotes cooperation and participation at various levels
- helps to promote social welfare and human security
- calls for equality and justice, and practises them itself
- demands transparent democratic procedures in important economic decision-making processes
- appeals for everyone to participate in protecting the environment

- helps people to experience that life is meaningful.

However, we in the church realise that there are limits to our understanding and to our power to take action. So we seek to cooperate with as many different partners as possible: on the one hand, in ongoing dialogue with politicians, business representatives and NGOs in our region; on the other, with groups critical of globalisation, which have their roots in the new civil society which is taking shape today.

We submit this policy statement for debate, in the Synod, in the work of central church offices with the local churches and regions, and on the Internet.

As a matter of principle, our church takes action in two interdependent ways:

- On the one hand, we work within our own structures, because only a church which is constantly reforming itself can demand of those outside it that they change their actions.
- On the other, we formulate positions on economic and social policies, and strategies to implement them, in line with our Biblical, Reformation and ethical foundations. Here, our church pursues a strategy with two parts. It works for immediate, realistic steps towards policy changes, in and with the economy, politics and the civil society; but it also keeps in view the promises of our tradition and the prophetic vision of justice in the workplace, in economics and in the lives of all people.

I: In the church

The church commits itself to priorities in the following areas:

1. Educational opportunities offered by the church for learning basic economic literacy

In relation to the Bible and to Christian ethical positions, the church takes current global and regional issues and reflects on them, together with its members and other interested persons, to help the church community to develop its capacity for action.

2. Social welfare work

The church is extending its activities in advice and support to people who fall through the social and economic safety net. It is also intensifying its study and educational work in the areas of "Deregulation – Privatisation" and "Poverty – Migration", on the basis of which the ongoing lobbying of leaders in politics and society is being developed.

3. Deepening of spirituality in the context of globalisation issues

The spiritual side of the church's reflection is being developed by proposing outlines for worship and suggestions for particular occasions.

4. Strengthening our participation in the ecumenical movement

Our church is planning to participate in ecumenical processes having to do with globalisation issues in the coming years, by sending delegates and making available funds (contributions, special offerings), ideas and suggestions. We will do this especially through our involvement in

- the Swiss Federation of Protestant Churches (SEK/FEPS)
- the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, in connection with its General Assembly in 2004
- the World Council of Churches, in connection with its Assembly in 2006.

5. The importance of sustaining church partnerships

Our church promotes partnerships across national and cultural boundaries, and also locally with migrant churches and in inter-religious dialogue. These pick up from current experiences we have, for example with partners in Guatemala, Sri Lanka and Israel/Palestine, as well as from the work of aid and mission agencies. The church should create structures to support and help our local congregations in their efforts to set up lasting partnerships with others.

6. Lifestyle change

Our church is developing models for a simplified lifestyle, aimed at sufficiency rather than wealth and built on respect for humanity and the creation. Practical sharing – from the perspective of the world-wide church – has profound implications for both theology and financial policies.

7. The church's funds

The Synodal Council is reconsidering its financial policies and its budget from the point of view of a just and humane economy. It is also looking at the budget in particular through the lens of gender analysis, to see what effects its spending policies have on gender relationships and to make corrections where necessary. The Synodal Council is intensifying its efforts to encourage local congregations to commit 5 % of their budgets to aid agencies and missions.

II: In society

Our church is committed to priorities in the following areas:

1. Continuing dialogue with economic and political forces in our region

Our church seeks a continuing dialogue with economic leaders in our region, such as employers' associations, trade unions and other organisations, and with political leaders such as those in government offices and political parties, to encourage discussion of this policy statement on globalisation. The church is also working on its own positions in important areas such as tax systems, public services, social security etc., to be able to participate as a well-informed partner in discussion of these issues.

2. Continuing dialogue with the movement critical of globalisation

A parallel dialogue to that with economic and political entities is the continuing dialogue between the churches of our region and the movement critical of globalisation. We plan to use this policy statement in these discussions as well, and look for specific points for collaboration, for example:

- taking part in social forums at national and international levels;
- helping to conduct regional debates which take place on the sidelines at World Economic Forum meetings.

3. Dealing with violence

Our church is involved in the World Council of Churches (WCC) Decade to Overcome Violence. In the process of dealing with globalisation, we seek ways of overcoming all kinds of violence, whether these are manifested in structural forms of economic violence or in acts of violence in the streets. The way we make political criticism must not contradict this non-violent approach; thus our church stands for peaceful demonstrations as a means of protest.



4. Promotion of new kinds of economic instruments; the beginnings of fundamental alternatives

It is the church's task to identify new forms of economic activity in our church and our region, to help set up networks, to promote or even to invent such activities. These might be alternative production or credit associations, organic farms offering particular agricultural products, local solidarity and barter systems, or forms of living and working which are oriented towards a fair sharing of paid work and reproductive work between women and men.

In the systematic development of such a process, we get to know the others who are on this path with us, and perhaps especially in learning from them, we see that together we are already well on the way towards a globalising of justice which is rooted in our local communities.



Reformed Churches of
Bern-Jura-Solothurn
Switzerland

*Reformed Churches of
Bern-Jura-Solothurn
Post Office Box
CH-3000 Bern 23
Switzerland*

*Telephone +41 31 370 28 28
Fax +41 31 370 28 90
zd@refbejuso.ch
www.refbejuso.ch*