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Press Release

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**EMBARGOED FOR RELEASE
NOON EDT, March 8, 2005**

FIVE MAINLINE PROTESTANT LEADERS CALL PRESIDENT'S FY'06 BUDGET "UNJUST"

WASHINGTON, DC: Leaders of five mainline Protestant denominations representing over 20 million followers in the United States today called President Bush's 2006 federal budget "unjust."

Speaking together at a press conference in Washington, DC, leaders of the Episcopal Church USA, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Presbyterian Church (USA), United Church of Christ, and United Methodist Church invoked Luke's Gospel story of a poor man named Lazarus laying at the gate of a rich man who ignores the poor man's needs. When the two men die, Lazarus goes to heaven, and the rich man to hell.

"In telling this story, Jesus makes clear that perpetrating economic injustice is among the gravest of sins," the leaders said in a joint statement.

"Like many Americans, we read our daily newspaper through the lens of faith, and when we see injustice, it is our duty to say so," they added. "The 2006 Federal Budget that President Bush has sent to Capitol Hill is unjust. It has much for the rich man and little for Lazarus."

The statement was signed by: the Most Reverend Frank Griswold, Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church USA, the Right Reverend Mark Hanson, Presiding Bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America, the Reverend Dr. Clifton Kirkpatrick, Stated Clerk of the General Assembly, Presbyterian Church (USA), United Church of Christ General Minister and President John H. Thomas, and James Winkler, General Secretary of the General Board of Church and Society of the United Methodist Church

In separate statements, the church leaders pointed out areas of particular concern. Bishop Frank Griswold said that three questions should be asked about the budget: "Is the budget compassionate? Does the budget strive to serve the human family, both at home and around the world? Does the budget serve the common good?"

Dr. Clifton Kirkpatrick quoted the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) by saying it, "Calls on Congressional Representatives to insist on a government that follows ethical values of

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justice for the poor, welfare for children, hospitality to the stranger, and assistance to the disadvantaged."

Bishop Mark Hanson of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America pointed out that faith-based ministry "is not new" for Christian charities. He added: "The President's proposed cuts are to the very programs, especially the net \$45 billion cut to Medicaid, that support many Lutheran social ministry organizations and the services they provide. If these cuts are implemented a significant number of these providers may become vulnerable since they operate on very small margins. The real damage, however, is done to the people who desperately need the services provided by LSA."

Rev. John Thomas of the United Church of Christ said: "There is no more important moral value in this country than supporting families, especially those who are poor. The President's budget is anything but good news for the poor."

United Methodist Church General Board of Church and Society General Secretary James Winkler added: "How are we as a nation – the richest nation in the world – caring for our children? The United Methodist Council of Bishops reminds us, "The technical resources are available to protect children from the most common diseases, to provide them with the necessities of food, shelter, clothing, and health care. What is lacking are the vision and the moral will."

The leaders concluded their joint statement saying: "We urge the members of our churches, of other churches and other faiths, and all whose conscience compels them to do justice to join us in opposing this budget. And we invite them to work with us on economic policies infused with the spirit of the man who began his public ministry almost 2,000 years ago by proclaiming that God had anointed him "to bring good news to the poor."

Advance copies of the joint statement are available by contacting John B. Johnson at 202-548-3384. To view a copy of the media advisory for this event go to
<http://releases.usnewswire.com/GetRelease.asp?id=43829>