

## The Jubilee Movement

In the late 1990s, a broad network of people of faith and conscience came together under the banner of Jubilee 2000, engaging their communities and challenging policy makers to address the international debt crisis. This mobilization brought the issue of debt to the global stage, but it did not end the debt crisis.

In 2005, pressure from the Jubilee movement, together with the Global Call to Action Against Poverty, again pushed the issues of debt and global poverty onto the agenda of world leaders. But once again, while significant steps were taken, the debt crisis was not ended. The imperative to finish what was started remains: to lift the excruciating burden of debt that continues to siphon resources from impoverished countries that should be used for health care, education and clean water.

Inspired by the Jubilee vision of liberation and fullness of life for all, people of faith and conscience around the world are calling their political leaders to observe a Sabbath Year in 2007, seven years after Jubilee 2000.

“...Proclaim liberty throughout the land to all its inhabitants; it shall be a jubilee for you...”

Leviticus 25:10

## What is Jubilee USA Network?

Jubilee USA Network is part of the worldwide movement of people of faith and conscience seeking to cancel the debts of impoverished countries. The Network includes a broad range of religious, social justice, environmental, and development organizations, as well as thousands of individuals who share a moral commitment to finding a definitive solution to the international debt crisis.



# 2007: The Sabbath Year



“We envision a world in which external debt no longer impoverishes nations and peoples by diverting resources from health, education, and the environment to pay rich countries and financial institutions, a world in which families and communities have a voice in economic policies and decisions that affect their lives, a world where right relationships are restored between nations. We respond to the call for Jubilee found in Judeo-Christian scripture; where those enslaved because of debts are freed, lands lost because of debt are returned, and communities torn by inequality are restored.”

Jubilee USA Network Vision Statement



“Must we starve our children  
to pay our debts?”

– Julius Nyerere, former President of Tanzania



## The Sabbath Year: Rooted in Scripture

Seven years after the beginning of the new millennium, we live in a world that is seriously out of balance. Every day, 13 percent of the world's population goes hungry. Every day, 30,000 children die of easily preventable diseases due to malnutrition and lack of adequate medical care. The Jubilee vision that we find in scripture calls us to challenge this horrible reality.

In the Hebrew Scriptures we find a vision of life in community that is liberating and just, governed by Sabbath cycles – the Sabbath Day, the Sabbath Year, and the Jubilee Year. These cycles are a powerful reminder of God's intent that all creatures enjoy fullness of life and partake in the abundance of God's world. The Sabbath Year is at the heart of Moses' final instructions to the Hebrew people before they enter the Promised Land (Deuteronomy 15: 1-18). Sabbath Year observance requires that every seven years debts are canceled and those enslaved because of debts are freed, restoring equal relations among community members and preventing a situation of ongoing exploitation in which the rich accumulate ever more wealth at the expense of the poor.

In the Gospel of Luke, Jesus declares a Jubilee or “year of the Lord's favor” (Luke 4:18-19), proclaiming God's liberation for all oppressed and impoverished people. This jubilee vision was the cornerstone of Jesus' ministry and gives us hope that life can be made new and can be redeemed in our own time.

## The Debt the G-8 Left Behind

Debt cancellation commitments made in 2000 and 2005 mean that as of late 2006, 20 nations in Africa and Latin America have seen full cancellation of their debts to the IMF, World Bank and African Development Bank, and an additional 20 nations may qualify.

But this is only a fraction of the debt cancellation that is needed:

- Countries such as Kenya, Indonesia, Ecuador, and the Philippines have been completely excluded from debt relief initiatives to date.
- An additional 20 countries eligible for debt relief are not able to receive cancellation because they are being forced by the IMF and World Bank to first implement harmful economic policies such as water privatization and trade liberalization.
- Only 1 in 10 people in the developing world will benefit from debt cancellation provided to date.
- Between 60-70 countries require full debt cancellation just to meet the Millennium Development Goals; dozens more require cancellation of odious and illegitimate debts.

## Why a 2007 Sabbath Year?

The global gap between rich and poor continues to grow. During the 2007 Sabbath Year the world will reach the half-way point to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), global commitments that would cut extreme poverty in half by 2015. Despite these commitments, we are nowhere near meeting the goals. In Sub Saharan Africa for example the percentage of people living in extreme poverty has increased steadily from 1990 until today.

Some of the money needed to meet the MDGs can be generated from aid, but new infusions of aid cannot be effective until the drain of debt payments is stopped. Pouring more aid into impoverished countries without debt cancellation is like trying to fill a bathtub with the drain open.

In addition to its current impacts, the origins of the debt are unjust. A large portion of debt is odious or illegitimate, accrued under oppressive regimes or on unfair terms. During the Cold War era, loans were often made more for ideological and political reasons than for reasons of assisting development or addressing human needs. In places such as apartheid South Africa, much of the money that was loaned was used to oppress the majority of the population. As people of faith and conscience we must ask, “Why should the people of the South endlessly pay for bad loans that never benefited the people?”

In light of the jubilee message of salvation, redemption, deliverance and liberation, debt burdens that prevent countries from meeting the most basic needs of their people cease to be merely a financial concern for a few and become a spiritual concern for all of us. To advocate and educate for debt cancellation in solidarity with the people of the world's impoverished countries is one way we can participate in God's Jubilee.

## The Opportunity and the Call

2007 presents people of faith with many unique opportunities to raise a prophetic call for debt cancellation and economic justice:

- The World Social Forum will be held in Africa for the first time, serving as a platform for Jubilee campaigners from across the continent.
- We will reach the halfway point to the 2015 Millennium Development Goals.
- The G-8 summit will be held in Germany, the site of the initial Jubilee 2000 commitments.
- We will mark the 200th Anniversary of the end of the Atlantic Slave Trade by honoring the brave abolitionists who fought slavery as we build our own movements to abolish global poverty.

In 2007 we will use these opportunities to educate, organize and mobilize as we work for the jubilee vision of right relations between people and nations and an end to unjust debt and global poverty.

**Our goal by the end of the 2007 Sabbath Year:** A hearing in Congress on the JUBILEE Act, which would provide debt cancellation for many more nations that need it.

## Debt Relief Works

Debt cancellation is an excellent tool for supporting development because it provides direct and predictable budgetary support to impoverished countries, avoiding the costly processes that accompany the application for and granting of overseas aid.

The debt cancellation resulting from the Jubilee 2000 campaign and the 2005 mobilization has been felt by literally millions of impoverished people worldwide. Thanks to the limited debt relief to date:

- Social spending in countries that have received debt relief has increased by 75 percent.
- Mozambique has introduced a free immunization program for children and taken strides to combat HIV/AIDS.
- Millions of children have returned to school in Uganda, Malawi, Zambia, Tanzania, and Benin after school user fees were abolished.
- In Burkina Faso, access to clean water has increased by 26 percent, meaning that more than one million additional people now access safe drinking water.

## Debt, Trade, and Aid in the Sabbath Year

Addressing the crushing debt burden facing impoverished countries is an important component of efforts to abolish global poverty. But addressing debt alone is not enough. The Sabbath Year is not only about cancellation of debt, but also right relationships. Unjust trade policies and practices formalize and structuralize the economic exploitation of impoverished nations and facilitate a global “race to the bottom” which harms working people worldwide. Current aid commitments are far below the level needed, and the political and economic agendas of donor nations prevent much of this aid from reaching those who need it most. In the Jubilee spirit of restoring right relationships among peoples and nations, we must take a holistic, multi-issue approach to challenging poverty and injustice.

Our goal: The eradication of global poverty through just trade, genuinely people-centered aid, and total cancellation of unjust debts for the countries of the global south without harmful conditions. In the Sabbath Year and beyond, Jubilee USA will continue to partner with allies working for global economic policies and trade rules that eradicate poverty, promote sustainable human development and prevent destructive cycles of indebtedness.

## Take Action Today!

### Celebrate Jubilee Sunday in your Congregation

On January 21st congregations around the country will be launching the Sabbath Year with a Jubilee Sunday celebration – special worship materials are available from Jubilee USA.

### Become a Jubilee Congregation

Jubilee Congregations commit to work for a more economically just world by praying and acting for Jubilee justice. Contact Jubilee USA for worship and study resources and to find out how to enroll your congregation.

### Introduce a Resolution

Raise awareness and commitment within your synod or regional denominational assembly by introducing a resolution in support of debt cancellation for the world's impoverished countries. Draft resolutions are available for you to adapt.

### Support the Jubilee Act

Join people of faith and conscience around the United States by asking your Senators and Representative to support the Jubilee Act – a bill that calls for the cancellation of the debt of impoverished countries without harmful economic policy conditions attached. More information is available from Jubilee USA.

### Come to Washington, DC

Consider coming to Washington for Ecumenical Advocacy Days March 9-12th, or for a fall Jubilee event and lobby day (stay tuned for more details).

### Knowledge is power

Stay informed about the debt issue and upcoming opportunities for action through Jubilee USA's monthly update email listserv. Go to [www.jubileeusa.org](http://www.jubileeusa.org) and click the “join our lists” link.

There will be many more opportunities for you or your congregation to take action for debt cancellation during the 2007 Sabbath Year. For more information and helpful resources, please contact Jubilee USA's Outreach and Congregations Coordinator Kristin Sundell at [kristin@jubileeusa.org](mailto:kristin@jubileeusa.org) or 202-546-4470.

## Events and Opportunities

### January 2007

Congregations celebrate Jubilee Sunday on January 21st. The gospel reading will be Luke 4:14-21.

### March 2007

Ecumenical Advocacy Days in Washington, DC will be held March 9-12th – come meet with your Members of Congress about the JUBILEE Act!

### April 2007

Jubilee USA's second annual grassroots conference – location to be announced.

### Spring/Summer 2007

Official half-way point to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

Sabbath Year resolutions introduced in denominational gatherings around the country (contact Jubilee USA for a draft resolution to adapt and introduce).

G8 summit held in Germany (the site of the Jubilee 2000 debt relief commitments) where people of faith and conscience are working to put global poverty and the need for cancellation of illegitimate debts on the summit agenda

### Fall 2007

National rolling fast to call for a hearing on the JUBILEE Act.

Annual meetings of the IMF and World Bank in Washington, DC.

Fall event and lobby day organized by Jubilee USA.

Jubilee launches its annual “Drop the Debt!” national speaking tour with partners from the Global South – consider inviting the speakers to your community!

Hearing on the JUBILEE Act in the Financial Services Committee or a “people's hearing” on Capitol Hill.

“Every seventh year we will forgo working the land  
and will cancel all debts.”

Nehemiah 10:31