



CIRCLE *of* PROTECTION

January 13, 2025

To President-Elect Trump and Members of Congress,

The Circle of Protection is a coalition of church bodies and related ministries representing the diversity of Christianity in this country—Historic Black Churches, Hispanic Churches, Mainline Protestants and Evangelicals, Anglicans, Roman Catholics, Orthodox Churches, Pentecostals, and Peace Churches. Together, the church bodies in the Circle of Protection have close to 100 million members. We are united across theological, sociological, and political differences by our shared faith in Christ and the motivation it inspires to make our nation and world more consistent with the fact that God loves all people, with a special concern for the poor and vulnerable, as our Scriptures remind us. Our churches across the country, in both rural and urban America, are on the front lines of assistance to people in need.

We focus together on major fiscal decisions that are important to people who are struggling with poverty. Jesus identified with people in need - people who are hungry or thirsty, immigrants, people who can't afford proper clothes, people who need medical care, and prisoners (Matthew 25). As the 119th Congress begins, we offer Scripture-informed counsel on funding for poverty-focused programs and the related issue of tax policy.

Poverty-focused programs: We urge you not to cut programs that provide help and opportunity to poor and vulnerable people. According to research published in the Journal of the American Medical Association, poverty is the fourth leading cause of death in the United States. Poverty permanently cripples the development of many of our children. When Congress expanded assistance programs during the pandemic, child poverty was cut in half. But as pandemic assistance programs expired, hunger and poverty increased again. We should be doing more, not less, for people in need. Thus, we oppose cuts and harmful policy changes in Medicaid and SNAP. We also urge adequate appropriations for international aid, housing and other poverty-related discretionary programs.

Tax policy: We urge you to expand the Child Tax Credit, with priority to families with low wages or in poverty. The tax system should raise adequate revenues to pay for the public needs of society, especially to help meet the basic needs of the poor. The tax system should be structured so that those with greater financial resources pay a higher rate of taxation.

We pray for each of you that God will bless and guide your steps. The policy priorities we recommend are not guided by loyalty to any party or ideology. They are grounded in our Scriptures, centuries of church tradition, and our experience of God's love for all people. They are shared by many other faith traditions. We prayerfully ask you to make them your own.

Dr. Paul Baxley, Executive Coordinator, Cooperative Baptist Fellowship

Rev. Dr. David Beckmann, Dean's Advisor, Virginia Theological Seminary; Coordinator, Circle of Protection

John A. Berry, President, The U.S. Society of St. Vincent De Paul

John Carr, Founder, Initiative on Catholic Social Thought and Public Life, Georgetown University

Rev. Eugene Cho, President and CEO, Bread for the World

Rev. Chris Kellerman, S.J., Secretary of Justice and Ecology, Jesuit Conference of Canada and the United States

Bishop Vashti Murphy McKensie, President, National Council of Churches

Rev. Carlos Malavé, President, Latino Christian National Network

Bridget Moix, General Secretary, Friends Committee on National Legislation

Rev. Amy Reumann, Senior Director for Witness in Society, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Kerry Alys Robinson, President and CEO, Catholic Charities USA

Rev. Dr. Gabriel Salguero, President and Founder, National Latino Evangelical Coalition

Rev. Adam Russell Taylor, President, Sojourners

Rev. Jim Wallis, Inaugural Chair and Founding Director, Center on Faith and Justice at Georgetown University

Dr. Barbara Williams-Skinner, Co-Convener, National African American Clergy Network; President, Skinner Leadership Institute