

An ELCIC Statement on Commercialism

The Christian is grateful for God's love and mercy. As members of the church we find ourselves faced by the needs represented by the mission of the church. It is this call to involvement that leads us to make responsible decisions regarding financial response commensurate with the need. When we as individual Christians give to the church, our giving testifies to the task and mission of the church and is integral with it.

By "commercialism" in the church we mean the ownership and management of income-producing properties and businesses and the selling of goods or services in the name of the church, with the purpose of securing funds to finance the programs and operations of the church, its congregations, auxiliaries and institutions. Such commercialism obscures the clear relationship between the giving of the Christian and the mission of the church: it fails to bear witness to this mission and creates a false image of the church.

Commercialism further weakens and impoverishes the spiritual life of the church and distorts the true sense of stewardship for the following reasons:

- a. It involves the church in other than its true business of giving – giving the Gospel to all people.
- b. It is used instead of giving. The church languishes and suffers from a lack of support due to an improper understanding of and commitment to giving by its members.
- c. Buying from the congregation often suggests supporting the church. This leads to a false sense of security that satisfies the consciences of people not actively involved in the church of Jesus Christ.
- d. It can place the church in competition with private business.
- e. It wrongly exploits church members, who may feel obligated to support the projects thus endorsed by congregations, auxiliaries and institutions.

The relinquishing of commercialism offers new and deeper opportunities for service, participation and community in the life of the church.

Congregations are encouraged to work towards the total financial support of their mission and ministry, both local and church-wide, through the stewardship response of their people.

The free, generous, cheerful giving of money, goods and selfless service are the marks of the Christian stewardship of its members which ought to be amply sufficient to finance the work of the church. This stewardship is motivated by response to God's love, the claims of the Christian fellowship and the needs of neighbour (2 Corinthians 8:3-5, 9:6-15).

Recognizing all the gifts that God has graciously given us, this church shall support its programs and ministries through the free-will offerings of its people. Any money-raising venture within the congregation should have as its intention the nurturing of the community within the congregation and the mission and ministry of the church.

CC 89-143 MS That the Statement on Commercialism be revised and adopted in the following form: "Recognizing all the gifts which God has graciously given us, this church shall support its programs and ministries through the free-will offerings of its people. Any money-raising venture within the congregation should have as its intention the nurturing of the community within the congregation and the mission and ministry of the church."

CARRIED