

THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH IN NORTHERN ILLINOIS

## THE DIOCESE OF CHICAGO

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Office of the Bishop

June 24, 2009



CELEBRATING  
AND SHARING  
OUR FAITH

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ:

I am sure you have been following, as I have, accounts in the media of the budget negotiations going on in Springfield. Many things being considered, such as an increase in the state income tax, will be felt by each of us. Other things, like proposed cuts of millions of dollars in state funding for vital social services, will devastate the people who depend on those services as well as the agencies who need that funding to employ the frontline staff serving the homeless, the mentally ill, the uninsured, and thousands of other women, men, children, and families who live unnoticed in the shadows of our society.

Myriad stories and admonitions in the Bible instruct us in why this matters to you and me. From the instructions in Deuteronomy to always be open handed to the poor to the many acts of Jesus demonstrating special concern for the poor, our faith is rooted in the understanding that our common life requires action on behalf of the suffering, the impoverished, and the needy. One of our modern prophets, Jim Wallis of Sojourners ministries, puts it this way: “Our faith is always personal, but it is never private.”

As Christians, we must take seriously the Gospel imperative to care for – even defend – those who depend on the many social services funded by the State and who will be disproportionately affected by the proposed budget cuts.

As Episcopalians, you and I cannot sit on the sidelines waiting for someone else to help. Today, there are many opportunities for us to answer with bold action the last question in our baptismal covenant: “Will you strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being?”

I am asking you to join me in responding to this crisis in the following ways:

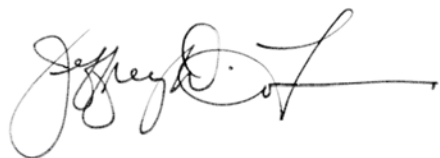
First, find out what these cuts will mean to agencies in your community. Contact your local senior center, food pantry, foster care provider, or other social welfare agency and learn what the impact will be on them, their program participants, and their staffing.

Second, help your congregation consider actions that might help address this crisis. Prayerfully consider volunteering, providing financial resources, or organizing a campaign to influence your legislators in Springfield to help your local service providers.

Finally, take action to demonstrate your faith commitment to the poor, the needy, the marginalized. I am enclosing a fact sheet prepared by the Illinois Council of Churches which I hope will help you get started.

I have already contacted our legislators, urging them to act quickly to end the budget impasse, and to make funding decisions that will not jeopardize the health, safety, welfare, and dignity of people least prepared and privileged to afford adequate food, housing, education and medical services.

Your servant in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jeffrey D. Lee". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Jeffrey D. Lee  
Bishop of Chicago