



Introducing the Jubilee Initiative

In the stories we hear at the end of Genesis and the beginning of Exodus, Pharaoh's economy – the economy of Empire – is an economy of the fear of scarcity. Pharaoh has bad dreams that he will run out of food, so he builds storehouses to store up food. It seems like a reasonable idea on the face of it. No one wants to run out. The economy of the Egyptian Empire is built on this fear. Great storehouses are built around the Empire, and so many storehouses are needed that Pharaoh presses slaves into the service of building them.

But when God liberates the Israelites from their service to Pharaoh in building these storehouses, and leads them toward the promised land, God gives them a new economy, a Jubilee economy, radically different from the economy they learned while slaves in Egypt. It is an economy of (among other things)

- abundance, and trust that God will give them what they need each day,
- lending without interest,
- debt that disappears every seven years,
- the redistribution of real wealth on a regular basis, and
- care for widows, orphans, and aliens in the land.

For the last few years Christ Church Cathedral has been involved in a citywide movement to explore and support a way of thinking about and doing economics that is more in line with the economics of God's Kingdom as described throughout Holy Scripture. We've worked with groups like the Economics of Compassion Initiative, MORTAR, Interfaith Business Builders, Cincinnati Interfaith Committee for Worker Justice and the Cincinnati Interfaith Workers Center, and also for sponsoring ventures like Community Blend (a worker owned co-op), and events like the Neighborhood Economics Conference, the Jubilee Forums, and Conspire.

Coming directly out of the relationships established at the Neighborhood Economics Conference and the Jubilee Work Circle of the Economics of Compassion Initiative, Christ Church Cathedral is about to establish the Jubilee Initiative, a fund for lending to/ investing in entrepreneurs who have not historically had access to the resources they need to establish or scale up their businesses. The Jubilee Initiative Task Force (Ed Burdell, Nicole Redus, Steve Lemen, Olden Warren, John Gillespie, Roxanne Qualls, and Tom Kent) is working with MORTAR (an entrepreneurship hub with a mission “to enable under-served entrepreneurs and businesses to succeed; creating opportunities to build communities through entrepreneurship”) to develop a range of resources to support wealth creation in neighborhoods and among communities that have been historically excluded from the traditional economy, but on terms intended to line up more closely with God’s Jubilee Economy. These will include, but not be limited to, no or low interest loans, friendship, skills support, and mentorship.

In the next few weeks, the Jubilee Initiative Task Force will use this space to introduce you to the concepts of Jubilee and God’s economy, to our partners and friends (Economics of Compassion Initiative, MORTAR, etc.), to our Task Force, and to the work we are doing. We will also describe opportunities for you to share in this work.

I am excited about the work of joining with God in the work of creating the new economy of God’s Kingdom, and am I also excited to invite you to share in that work.

Canon Rob Rhodes