Raise the Wage Feb. 15, 2017, Rev. Earl Kooperkamp, Vermont interfaith Action

Two years ago the Clergy Caucus of Vermont Interfaith Action began the "Movement Toward a Moral Economy." Based on the sacred scriptures of our religious traditions, we seek to inform our policy debates with a moral foundation. One of the key aspects we discern for a Moral Economy is livable wages for all workers. We are extremely grateful to be present here today as we make a start here in Vermont toward that goal.

Governor Phil Scott has called for the expansion of the Vermont economy by bringing in new and younger workers to our Green Mountain State and the Raise the Wage campaign is designed to do just that: make Vermont jobs sustainable for all Vermont workers and bring the lowest paid workers into greater parity with others. Of course, as Vermonters we were all proud that our Senator, Bernie Sanders, took this message coast to coast in his campaign: raising the minimum wage is the most effective anti-poverty program we can implement.

It will not be easy, but we all have to pitch in and do our part, like Vermonters always do. My parish has been paying a $15 an hour wage for our custodial and clerical staff for the last seven years, and just last month we decided at our Annual Meeting to raise this wage beyond the $15 per hour level. It is time for us all to put our money where our mouth is, or, if you prefer a more church-like saying, to practice what we preach! This is the right thing to do: raising the wage will help us here in Vermont to move against the economic inequality that has become worse and worse in our nation and in our state. I thank you for your time and your kind consideration of my views and I urge you to take a positive action and raise the wage. Vermont Interfaith Action is here today to say, in the words of a great American, "Yes, we can!" Thank you.

Rev. Earl Kooperkamp, Rector

Church of the Good shepherd, Barre, VT (802) 476-3929 revkooperkamp@aol.com

President, Board of Director,

Vermont Interfaith Action, Burlington, VT