Next week, Pittsburgh will be the host city for the G-20 Summit. You’ve probably heard a lot in the news about the event — but what is it, and how does it connect with how we pray, listen, learn, and serve?

What is the G-20, and why do they meet? G-20 is short for the “Group of 20”, a group of twenty countries around the world who are economically powerful or have rapidly growing economies. These countries represent about 90% of the world’s gross national product. The leaders of these countries have been meeting since 1999 as a way of discussing trends and making decisions that affect the global economy — the ways countries cooperate, regulate trade and lending, and provide aid to poorer countries.

What impact does the G-20 have? We live in a global economy — what happens in one part of the world has an effect on other countries. Think of how quickly the failures of giant banks in this country last year restricted people’s access to mortgages and companies’ access to the credit they needed — and how that still is affecting people’s jobs and families.

The G-20’s decisions can have a similar impact on an international scale. The conditions that richer countries put on the aid they send to poorer countries shapes whether recipients can build basic services in their countries or use those resources to pay debts. The regulations that countries impose on how banks and corporations operate shape the ways that people have access to loans, the ways workers are treated, and the ways local markets and communities are strengthened or weakened here and around the world.

This is also why some groups are organizing public events to try to make the needs of poorer countries visible, and why others are in Pittsburgh to protest, concerned over how much power the G-20 nations and international agencies have and how they use it.

How does this connect with the life and mission of the church? Access to work and money aren’t just about “things,” but about the ways that people can use their God-given gifts in the world. Decisions about aid affect those who are most vulnerable — in a global economy, they are those who stand as the Biblical “widows, orphans, and sojourners” in particular need of justice. The ecumenical church around the world is scattered across both the countries at the G-20 table and those affected by its decisions.
What issues are on the table at the G-20?

- **economic development and poverty**

Nearly one-half of the people in the world live on less than $2.50 a day — many millions live on far less. While the cost of living varies widely across countries and regions, 50,000 people a day die of poverty-related causes — limited funds can mean limited or no access to clean water and medical care. Millions of others survive by taking on debt that will burden their families for generations.

In an increasingly globally-interconnected economy, even the ability to subsist on a small income within a local economy does not translate into the ability to participate in the larger economic world. The G-20 faces the task of reforming the existing system of international development aid and the practices of lenders like the World Bank and International Monetary Fund, to find ways to protect and sustain local economies, and to find ways of freeing countries from debt so high that it drains the resources needed to build basic services.

- **hunger and food insecurity around the world**

One of the effects of economic instability is hunger. When markets collapse and access to credit is tight, food prices rise, supplies dwindle, and jobs disappear. In our local communities, food pantries and feeding programs have seen a surge in demand over the past year. For many people around the world, however, there is no local remedy — economic insecurity added to the existing scarcity of local resources leaves people malnourished, sometimes facing famine. According to the World Health Organization, over 10 million children die each year of malnutrition and related illnesses. To put it more starkly: in the world’s poorest countries, 13 out of 100 children born today won’t make it to age 5 — compared to 6 out of 1,000 in the G-20 member countries.

Part of the G-20’s work at the Pittsburgh summit is to re-examine access to the credit and capital that local economies need to participate in trade, buy basic goods, and keep jobs available. These are issues of “big finance,” but Christian advocacy groups like Bread for the World are meeting with G-20 delegates as well to make sure the human impact of these issues stays on the table.

- **rebuilding economic trust**

Think about what you do when you deposit your paycheck and then visit an ATM. You depend on other people you don’t know to put your money in a place you can’t see, to be counted correctly and given to you when you ask for it. You depend on your employer having the money in the bank, and their bank sending it to yours. Economic systems only survive where there is trust — whether they extend across the street or across the globe.

Over the past few years, this trust has been damaged as financial systems have become increasingly complex. Some institutions, seeking profit wherever and however it could be made, have ended in collapse. The G-20 delegates face the task of agreeing on regulations and safeguards that will affect institutions within their own nations, and finding ways to enforce limits on financial practices that are excessively risky or unfair. Without this, smaller institutions and investors won’t be able to trust the systems that support the ways people invest in each other’s work, and cooperate and collaborate across businesses and communities around the world.
What can we do?

**pray**

- Pray for all those in need and in danger, that God would protect them and move our hearts and hands in their service and protection.

- Pray for the leaders gathered for the G-20, that they would bring wisdom, accountability, transparency, and a will for justice to their deliberations.

- Pray for those in churches around the world seeking to be faithful witnesses in the midst of need, that they will be sustained as they build up their communities and support their people.

- Pray for those in churches around the world seeking to be faithful witnesses in the midst of plenty, that they would speak for justice and help their members to be good stewards of time, money, and power.

**listen**

- Get to know fellow students and church members from other parts of the world. What is daily life like in their countries? How are their communities and economies affected by decisions in other parts of the world?

- Keep track of the news in the next few weeks: why do some groups say they are protesting? What decisions are made at this summit?

- Talk to other students who have made mission and justice work part of their time here — what have they learned from working with other communities? How has that experience changed how they study, listen to Scripture, and minister to others?

- Be curious about the community where you pastor or do field education — how do they decide about how to spend their money and energy in mission? How have people there been affected by the economic changes this past year?

**learn**

- Visit the Bread for the World website and other organizations on the next page to learn more about the human impact of hunger, poverty and war.

- Visit the G-20 and UN agency websites for more on the various international bodies that affect international development and the distribution of aid.

- Find out what your denomination and church are doing to advocate for justice and to minister in partnership and mission with other parts of the world. How could that connect to your work in ministry? How do you see justice and mission as part of the work of the church?
Resources to learn more

Events:

• Gather with others at PTS for a community dinner and time of prayer for those affected by the G-20 on Wednesday, September 23, 4:45 - 6 pm, in dining room 1.

• Interfaith prayer services, St. Paul’s Cathedral, Oakland, and St. Mary’s Church, Mount Washington, Monday evening, September 21, 6:30 pm

Many local organizations are holding learning, witness or protest events around the G-20. A detailed list of local events can be found at http://pittsburghpost-gazette.com/pg/09245/994817-482.stm

Online resources:

• More information about the G-20 and its history can be found at www.g20.org. Details on the Pittsburgh G-20 summit—including events and travel restrictions, can be found at www.pittsburghg20.org

• Bread for the World (www.bread.org) has a very helpful resource guide to the G20 for people of faith; check their website for stories and data about the scope of hunger in the world.


• Jubilee USA (www.jubileeusa.org) is a faith-based organization that witnesses to the effects of large-scale debt on poorer countries; their website offers a good introduction to this complex economic issue.

• Denominational websites are a great connection to both what the broader church is doing in justice and mission. Search the PC (USA) site (www.pcusa.org) to find information about advocacy through the church’s Washington office, as well as to read the stories of people working in mission partnerships all over the globe. Click on the world map on the United Methodist Church’s website (www.umc.org) to see its global witness.

On-campus resources:

• Dr. Deirdre Hainsworth, director of the Center for Business, Religion and Public Life, can help you find resources on economic, work, and peace and social justice issues, and help connect you with students and organizations working on these issues in the community — dhainsworth@pts.edu or cbrpl@pts.edu.

• Dr. Scott Sunquist and Dr. Don Dawson can help you learn more about our PTS missions partnerships with churches in Vietnam, Chiapas (Mexico), Haiti, Sierra Leone, Turkey, and Malawi, among other places, through the World Mission Initiative — sunquist@pts.edu or wmi@pts.edu.

• Dr. Ronald Peters, director of the Metro-Urban Institute, can help you learn more about issues of justice and ministry in the urban context, both here and in other countries — mui@pts.edu.