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TO: Members of the Minnesota House of Representatives
Members of the Minnesota Senate
Governor Tim Pawlenty

RE: Decisions affecting our life together in the State of Minnesota

We write having learned that the latest economic forecast revealed that the state's projected budget deficit is predicted to hover around \$4.57 billion. While this deficit is far less than what was first feared, it will still require careful choices about our life together in this state at a time when the fragile economy challenges all Minnesotans, particularly those living on the margins. In the midst of such hard times, the needs of the poor loom even larger, and human lives hang on the brink of your decisions.

We hope that as you consider the options before us, you enlist all of us in this effort. The task before you isn't only about creating and balancing a budget, but also about shaping the kind of state we want to be and the kind of human community we hope to create. The budget is a moral document that reflects the choices we make for our life together.

The measure of our moral fiber as a people is how we treat those who need help the most. We ask that you enlist all of us in this effort. Churches and community agencies have increased efforts to serve those in need, but only government has the reach and power to affect us all. Invite us to invest in this state, tighten our belts, and contribute our time and resources. We're not afraid of tax increases if it means poor people who are sick can get health care, families who lose their homes find shelter, and children are cared for.

Allow us all to be a part of determining a future for Minnesota in which the dignity and value of each one of us is upheld. The challenge is not just yours—it's *ours*.

Sincerely,

Bishop Thomas Aitken
Northeastern Minnesota Synod

Bishop Jon Anderson
Southwestern Minnesota Synod

Bishop Craig Johnson
Minneapolis Area Synod

Bishop Peter Rogness
Saint Paul Area Synod

Bishop Harold Usgaard
Southeastern Minnesota Synod

Bishop Lawrence R. Wohlrahe
Northwestern Minnesota Synod

