

Our Commitment as Faithful Citizens to Reducing Child Poverty in Wisconsin

“The persistence of poverty is a
moral crisis that calls us to
action.”

Our commitment to reducing poverty is based on our religious teachings:

- All people are created in God's image
- People are created for life in community – relationships of mutual care, respect, and responsibility

Our commitment to reducing poverty is based on our religious teachings:

- God's gifts are abundant and are to be enjoyed by all
- We are to share God's special concern for the vulnerable and marginalized

Our responsibility to provide assistance to our neighbors is supported by quotations from scriptures of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam:

Judaism: Deuteronomy 15:7-8

If there is among you anyone in need...do not be hard-hearted or tight-fisted toward your needy neighbor.

You should rather open your hand, willingly lending enough to meet the need, whatever it may be.

Christianity: Luke 4:17b-19

[Jesus] unrolled the scroll [of the prophet Isaiah] and found the place where it was written:

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”

Islam: Quran 2:177

*It is not righteousness that ye turn your faces towards east or west;
but it is righteousness . . . to spend of your substance, out of love for Him, for your kin, for orphans, for the needy, for the wayfarer, for those who ask, and for the ransom of slaves; to be steadfast in prayer, and practice regular charity; to fulfil the contracts which ye have made
Such are the people of truth, the God-fearing.*

- When we turn away from the needs of our community, God calls us to repentance – as individuals and as a community.
- At the same time, God draws us forward with visions of a community of dignity, justice and well-being for all, a world in which every child has a bright and promising future.

People of many faiths and philosophies share the goal of reducing poverty, and can work together to find solutions.

As people of faith we commit ourselves to being part of the solution, in partnership with all persons of good will.

Faithful Citizenship Project:

Poverty Reduction Goal

- The people of Wisconsin need to set a goal of cutting childhood poverty in half in the next ten years.
- To guarantee greater equity, we also need to cut racial disparities in childhood poverty in half.
- These goals need to be accompanied by a commitment to evidence-based evaluation of progress.

Conclusions from the conversations:

- Poverty is mainly the result of social and economic factors, not individual moral failings.
- We have a responsibility to change social and economic conditions as well as to help individuals.

Conclusions from the conversations:

- Effective solutions will require finding common ground
- This work must be done in relationship between those experiencing racial disparities and poverty and those living with abundance.

- While there is broad agreement that government has a role, there is much disagreement about particular policies.
- We should “flip the script.”
- Instead of supporting policies based on our political preferences,
- We should hold ourselves and our elected leaders accountable to outcomes.

Four main strategies:

- 1. Set child poverty reduction goals, racial equity goals, and timelines**
- 2. Develop accountability mechanisms:**
Track and evaluate to see what is working and what needs to change

Four main strategies:

- 3. Implement multi-sector, evidence based strategies:** Including employment, income, education, and strengthening families
- 4. Measure progress and adjust strategies as necessary.**

First step:

a faith-led effort to inspire policymakers, opinion leaders and stakeholders to publicly commit to the goal.