

Poverty is Everywhere; Advocate for Justice

By Larry Iverson
Synod Minister

“The extent to which an individual does without resources” is a working definition from Ruby Payne in her book, *A Framework for Understanding Poverty*. She states that the ability to leave poverty is more dependent upon other resources than it is upon financial resources. She identifies the following resources: financial, emotional, mental, spiritual, physical, support systems, relationships/role models, and knowledge of hidden rules.

We passed a resolution related to this initiative at our Assembly in May – Resolution 2005-09: Advocate for the Poor and Working Poor Neighbors. I encourage you to read it on our synod web site.

The poverty that is addressed is in the midst of us, not just in the large cities. In small towns and rural areas it is more hidden. It is present in the elderly who live on extremely small incomes below the poverty level (\$9,570 for a single person). It is present in families making minimum wages (\$19,350 for a family of 4). It is present in single-parent households with low paying jobs. It is present in families where one or both income earners are unemployed.

How can we help?

You and your congregation can learn more about poverty in your area and beyond and become an advocate for the poor. You can address the statements that paint the poor with a big brush as “them” without bothering to find out the true reasons and circumstances. You can be aware of changes in federal and state policy that impact those in poverty, and you can be their voice for fairness and justice.

God has called us to this work through the Old Testament calls for justice, and Jesus echoed concern for the poor and all people in his teachings in the New Testament.

More will be shared as we together live into this resolution.

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Reflecting On Stones and Soil



Shirley Gangstad
Synod Vice President

Greetings!

My house is built on a limestone knoll, stone that was so hard that I only have half a basement. There is only a thin layer of topsoil on my lot and the flower beds and my “garden” (a strip along the house where I had a hedge pulled out and soil dumped in) have only a slightly greater depth of soil. Any farmer will tell you that no matter how cleanly you pick rock one spring,

the next spring rocks will again appear. Rocks have a sneaky way of working themselves to the surface! I struggle to get shepherd’s crooks into the ground to hold my birdfeeders for one leg will go into soil and the other will inevitably hit a stone. The fact that I can grow some flowers and tomatoes and things is almost amazing and a testimony to the tenacity of some plants.

I’ve been doing some weeding and thinking about the parable of the sower (Matthew 13). In my imagination I can almost hear sighs of relief from the flowers as I save them from the clutches of a ruthless ivy that climbs up their stems and chokes their leaves or the relentless crabgrass that fills every empty space and chokes their roots.

What a gift we have in the Holy Spirit that gives us spiritual strength to fight off the choking ivies and crabgrasses of sin, that enables us to start over again refreshed and forgiven when we trip on a stone of sin, that gives us fertile spiritual soil in which the Word can grow and bear fruit. Considering how the lilies of the field grow, we have indeed been richly blessed by Christ’s love!

Blessings in Christ,

Shirley

