

Reflections from A MN Without Poverty Statewide Event “If Not Us Who, If Not Now When?”

Words of challenge, encouragement and support to believe in the vision of ending poverty in Minnesota by 2020 were given by state and local representatives of the business, nonprofit, faith, and government sectors. Some see this as an impossible goal, but “With God, nothing is impossible...” As one participant stated, “It is better to aim for this goal and possibly fall short than to aim for nothing and succeed!”

So, what is poverty in Minnesota? Hunger, lack of shelter, sick with no health care, illiteracy, unemployed...the federal poverty guideline for a family of 4 is \$22,000, the median household income for Olmsted County 2008: \$67,363 (www.citydata.com/county/Olmsted_County-MN)...poverty rate among white Minnesotans is 6th lowest in nation; among African Americans is 3rd highest in nation...1 in 4 women over 16 years of age, in Minnesota, is experiencing poverty, and over 140,000 children.

Two documents outline the will and pathway to eliminating poverty in our state by 2020, but it will take our commitment to the common good! The first document is “The Common Foundation” which challenges us all to work toward a vision of the common good in our state. View and sign on to this document (www.mnwithoutpoverty.org) as have many of your fellow citizens and leaders including our previous Bishop Bernard Harrington (who was one of the original signers of the document when it was created in 2004, prior to the 2006 establishment of the legislative commission).

The second document is the Minnesota (Bipartisan) State Legislative Commission to End Poverty in Minnesota by 2020 Executive Report (www.commissions.leg.state.mn.us/lcep/index.htm). This report outlines current ways of defining poverty, and recommendations resulting from four full hearings, 10 listening tours of the state, extensive research of facts, statistics and best practices, and analysis and deliberation on possible solutions. The recommendations which can be found in the “Legislative Report by the Commission to End Poverty in Minnesota by 2020” full report or executive summary, are a legislative road map to our vision and goal of a Minnesota without poverty!

There is one piece missing...**you**. To advocate for the actions needed to help people lift themselves out of poverty and enact such legislation will require the work of us all. Many faiths, one God who loves us all, and especially the poor, for whom we set this vision to End Poverty in Minnesota by 2020. The work is just beginning. To be a part of this mission, commit to the following actions:

- Read SE MN Synod of ELCA Bishop Usgaard’s statement to the Rochester gathering on Feb. 27, 2010. (link to Bishops statement doc.)
- Read the Common Foundation document and sign on to this interfaith statement of seeking the common good (www.mnwithoutpoverty.org) ;
- Review the “Legislative Report by the Commission to End Poverty in Minnesota by 2020” or at least the Executive Summary (www.commissions.leg.state.mn.us/lcep/index.htm);
- consider being an advocate for legislation toward this goal through an email network of legislative alerts(go to www.mnwithoutpoverty.org and click on “Sign Foundation” on left sidebar) and by your own contacts and relationship with your legislators ;
- talk to friends, neighbors, family and coworkers about ending poverty in Minnesota by 2020, and brainstorm practical ways to make this vision a reality;
- be people of prayer and hope in this work!