

The Call
August 25, 2004

Movement Update



Jim Wallis

When I addressed their "[People of Faith](#)" luncheon during the Democratic convention in Boston last month, it was a way to affirm Democrats opening the door to better dialogue with the religious community. Faith leaders in Washington should welcome any party's interest along these lines, but be very careful not to have their prophetic voice muted as they educate them about the faith community's concerns. Many in the Republican Party have taken a misstep in co-opting religious leaders, and many in the Democratic Party have not paid enough attention to our voice. Both approaches are wrong, and people of faith must say so.

People of faith across the country can do so this year and gain attention for the needs of people in poverty. Call to Renewal's "[Isaiah Platform](#)" is designed to help with that. The Isaiah Platform presents a vision for a just society, with specific goals and challenges for political candidates. It is one way for people "on the ground" to inject poverty into this year's electoral debates as a religious issue. Individuals, churches, and organizations across the country have covenanted with Call to Renewal to use the Isaiah Platform to do this, and you can read about one of these -- Heartside Ministry of Grand Rapids, Michigan -- in this issue.

If you live near Grand Rapids, or any of 11 other cities in the nation's heartland, you can also help make poverty an electoral issue by supporting Call to Renewal's "[Rolling to Overcome Poverty](#)" Bus Tour. Kicking-off in Minneapolis on October 6 and ending in Philadelphia on October 17, the bus tour will highlight local anti-poverty work and concerns in six states, with the help of several local and national [partnering organizations](#). Come out and take part in marches, rallies, worship services, clergy breakfasts, candidate forums and more. If you can't make it but want to support the bus tour, please consider a financial contribution and [>>>click here<<](#).

I hope you will covenant to use the Isaiah Platform to educate political leaders about biblically-based economic justice, and take part in the Bus Tour. In this crucial election year, the faith community must speak prophetically to all parties and candidates. We must use our identity and voice to make sure electoral debates take into account those with the severest needs.

Blessings,

[Jim Wallis](#)

Convener and President
Call to Renewal

Legislative Update

"Rolling to Overcome Poverty" Bus Tour to Address Low-Income Housing Issues

Faith leaders and activists in cities throughout the nation's heartland will lift up a range of concerns about policies that impact, as Jesus said, "the least of these" during the Rolling to Overcome Poverty Bus Tour, October 6-17. Events in 12 different cities will focus on a range of low-income social issues. In Wisconsin, organizers will draw attention to the low-income housing crisis. Faith communities in Madison and Milwaukee will provide venues for education and action regarding solutions to this crisis, which also affects numerous communities across the country.

In Madison, on October 8, interfaith leaders and members of the community will gather for a "Parade of Affordable Homes" and a luncheon focusing on the theme: "Federal Housing Policy: Problems and Possibilities." Jim Wallis will speak about the country's national housing crisis and local leaders will lift up local concerns and identify options for action. The next day, in Milwaukee, Call to Renewal will join local organizers to address low-income housing needs in the context of an interfaith worship service. Special focus will be given to efforts to secure a local affordable housing trust fund.

Low-income housing policy changes are currently under consideration by Congress and may be addressed when representatives and senators return to Washington in September. Whether Congressional action this year ultimately benefits or hurts low-income people, the struggle for equitable housing options will continue. This should include people of faith making low-income housing policy an electoral issue that is on the minds of candidates as November approaches. And people of faith should cast votes with candidates' positions in mind.

The Rolling to Overcome Poverty Bus Tour stops in Wisconsin -- and five other states -- provide great opportunities to learn, speak out, and educate political candidates and the media about the faith community's commitment to economic justice. Look for more highlights of Bus Tour stops in future issues of The Call, as well as on our [website](#).

For a recent update on federal housing policy currently being debated, click [here](#).

[Yonce Shelton](#)

National Coordinator and Policy Director
Call to Renewal

Tales from a Christian Activist

The Priority of the Poor

Many years ago, I was part of a group of seminary students in Chicago. We decided to do a study to find every biblical reference to one particular subject--the poor and oppressed. We searched the Scriptures for each mention of the subject and found, to our astonishment, that there are thousands of verses about the poor in the Bible. Those who are marginalized and forgotten by everyone else, those who are mistreated and abandoned on the bottom of society keep appearing in the Bible as a central concern. The Bible, we discovered was full of poor people. And even more startling to discover, God is portrayed through the Bible as the deliverer of the oppressed.

In the Old Testament, the subject of the poor is the second most prominent theme. Idolatry is the first, and the two are often connected. In the New Testament, one out of every sixteen verses is about the poor! In the Gospels, the number is one out of every ten verses; in Luke's Gospel one of every seven, and in the book of James one of every five. One zealous seminarian in our group decided to try and experiment. He found an old Bible, took a pair of scissors and then proceeded to cut out every single reference to the poor. It took him a very long time.

An excerpt from "The Soul of Politics" a book written by Jim Wallis. Look for Jim's new book due out next Spring.

Campus Corner

Created By and For Students Involved in Overcoming Poverty

Does Your College, Seminary or University Have a Story, Information or News that Call to Renewal Partners Should Know About? If So, Click [Here](#).

There's something about big rigs barreling down the highway that has always fascinated me. The distance of their destination, their giant diesel engines, the mystery of their contents, and the commanding blast of their horns has awed me ever since I was a kid (I still hold the family record for provoking the most honks on a single road trip).

Occasionally I catch sight of a truck traveling along without a trailer, though, and I can't help but laugh at their awkward, disproportional appearance. At first glance these mighty machines hold the same intimidating stature of all the other trucks, but their credibility quickly disappears once they come into full view and the facade is exposed.

As I enter into my final year of college I look around at my peers and wonder if perhaps our senior swagger is also a bit deceptive. Over the last four years we have filled our brains with test-friendly knowledge that qualifies us for a funny dress, a fancy piece of paper, and a firm handshake. Our long lists of honors and awards, however, are not enough. We are told that employers prefer well-rounded applicants, so we diversify our extracurricular activities, we seek out leadership roles, and we accumulate as many volunteer hours as possible.

But what have we really accomplished (besides large amounts of debt) when the recipients of our "noble" efforts are still nothing more than "the homeless"? Must we further dehumanize them by neglecting to call them people? Until we know their names and learn their stories we are merely trucks without trailers, driving toward promising futures full of superficial success. We may get where we want to go, but when we come screeching to a halt at the end of our journey will we have anything worthwhile to unload?

This summer, after 21 years of pat-myself-on-the-back good deeds, I finally decided to stop. I have amassed countless hours of service work - I volunteered at a summer camp for kids with disabilities, I went on mission trips to Mexico, I facilitated bingo games at the local nursing home... but when I pulled into the weigh station I found that I had nothing to measure.

It was time to do more than dish out food at the local soup kitchen or collect school supplies for a mass of nameless children in need. I began working at a daytime homeless shelter in Dayton, Ohio. It wasn't long before the people who had initially been intimidating strangers became friends who accepted me and gradually welcomed me into their makeshift community. As these relationships developed I discovered that leaving the shelter at the end of the day no longer allowed me to leave the reality of homelessness. My new friends would wave at me as I walked down Main Street, they would recommend books to me when I visited the library, and they would keep me up at night worrying as I lay in bed listening to the rain pour down outside.

These people might not be able to serve as references in the future, but they have begun to fill my trailer with a new kind of significance and greater appreciation for the journey that awaits me.

Lauren Park
Texas Lutheran University

Poverty Headline News

Read the Latest National Poverty News

Call to Renewal Urges Retention of Faith-based Office

Beliefnet

By Adelle M. Banks, Religion News Service

July 30--(RNS) Call to Renewal, a religiously rooted anti-poverty group, has urged President Bush and Sen. John Kerry to keep the White House Office of Faith-based and Community Initiatives in the next presidential administration. "We believe an Office of Faith-based and Community Initiatives in the White House can help address poverty in this country," wrote Jim Wallis, convener of the Washington-based organization, in letters sent Thursday to Bush and Kerry. www.beliefnet.com/story/150/story_15055.html

Lauded healthcare plan for kids takes a hit

The Christian Science Monitor, August 02, 2004

By Alexandra Marks

After years of little impact, budget woes are now taking a toll on kids' healthcare. The State Children's Health Insurance Program, known as SCHIP, which provides coverage for children of working parents with lower incomes, has seen the first decrease in enrollment since it was enacted in 1997. www.csmonitor.com/2004/0802/p03s01-usec.html

YOUNG VOICES: Teenagers have adult reasons to vote

Detroit Free Press, August 23, 2004

By Ashley A. Smith

Sixteen is the legal age of sexual consent, the age it is legal to drop out of school and the average age of teenage workers. Now some organizations are fighting for teenagers, ages 16 and 17, to get the right to vote. They're petitioning states and the federal government to lower the voting age.

www.freep.com/voices/columnists/esmith23_20040823.htm

Indicators Show a Cooling Economy

Washington Post, August 7, 2004

By Nell Henderson

U.S. job growth nearly stalled last month, the government reported yesterday, reinforcing other signs that the economic recovery lost steam this summer, just months before the presidential election. Employers added 32,000 workers to their payrolls in July, seasonally adjusted, the smallest monthly gain since December and the fourth consecutive month in which the pace of job growth has slowed, the Labor Department reported. www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A46729-2004Aug6.html

Conference Corner

For the next few months we will highlight some of the local events being planned by our partners across the country in conjunction with the "Rolling to Overcome Poverty Bus Tour. Been to a Great Conference, Seminar or Workshop? [Tell Us About It!](#)

Conference Name: "Rolling to Overcome Poverty" Bus Tour (Minneapolis/St. Paul Stop)

Organization/Church: Greater Minneapolis Council of Churches St. Paul Area Council of Churches, Call to Renewal and others

Web site: www.calltorenewal.org

This past May, about 40 church leaders from around the Twin Cities gathered at the Basilica of St. Mary in Minneapolis to visit with Jim Wallis. Rev. Wallis and CTR organizer, Christa Mazzone, came to share their plans and to gather energy for the Rolling to Overcome Poverty Bus Tour.

Emerging from this discussion was the vision of Rev. Al Gallmon, a friend of Jim, and the senior pastor at Fellowship Missionary Baptist Church in Minneapolis. Rev. Gallmon revealed a long-standing vision he held inspired by the passionate marches of the Civil Rights Movement. He imagined a movement of faith communities marching from the four corners of the state, converging on the state capitol in St. Paul. Together, they would come to declare that Minnesota faith communities are united in the goal of overcoming poverty.

A collaboration was formed to bring to life Rev. Gallmon's vision. A collaboration was formed into a statewide, interfaith effort that includes local efforts for voter registration and a statewide Interfaith worship services on October 3rd to raise local media attention to the particular issues of poverty in each community.

In Minneapolis, these worship services will be held in partnership with the 300-500 participants of Minnesota's Immigrant Workers' Freedom Ride. Groups of clergy will march from October 3 through October 6th to the state capitol from the White Earth Reservation (from the north) and Rochester, MN (from the south).

On Wednesday, October 6 all of this work will culminate with 300 people participating in a march to the state capitol where more than 3,000 people are expected to rally to put poverty on the political agenda. The Rolling to Overcome Poverty will kick off at this event.

Later that evening, two college campuses in St Paul will host Jim Wallis and Carrie Newcomer to energize young Christian adults to make concern for poverty a top priority, just as it is in the Bible. Our efforts related to the bus tour end the following morning with a clergy breakfast.

We have also already begun plans for a post-election clergy meeting to evaluate our effectiveness in raising poverty as an issue in this year's election and to strategize how we might continue this energy in the year ahead.

Mike Manhard
Associate Director

Urban Immersion Service Retreats/CIC
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Mark Your Calendar

What's Going On In and Around The Movement?

Does Your Church, Organization, College, Seminary or University Have an Event/Activity that Call to Renewal Partners Should Know About? If So, Click [Here](#).

2004 "No Room for Poverty" National Rally, September 4, 2004

The national Community Action Partnership, along with its 1,000-member network of Community Action Agencies, is holding the "No Room for Poverty" National Rally September 4, 2004, on the Ellipse in Washington, DC. This nonpartisan effort will seek to unify the nation around the need to end poverty and will focus on five key areas: health care, jobs, housing, education, and the Digital Divide. The "No Room for Poverty" National Rally is being held as a part of the Community Action Partnership's 2004 Annual Convention and will mark the 40th anniversary of Community Action. For more information, please visit www.povertyrally.org.

CCDA Annual Rural Conference Targeting Hope, September 24-25, 2004

Christian Community Development Association's third annual rural community and small cities development conference will be held September 24 and 25 in Chestnut Ridge, West Virginia. This event will provide a learning event for churches, organizations and individuals involved with or interested in Christian community development. It will examine the role of the church and personal faith in the community development process and it will celebrate successes and share best practices related to Christian community development. For more information e-mail CCDAHOPE@aol.com or call 304-457-4575 Ext. 49.

National Homeless and Low Income Voter Registration Week, Sept. 26-Oct. 3 2004

The National Low Income Housing Coalition and the National Coalition for the Homeless have joined forces to organize this week as an effort to educate and mobilize low-income and homeless voters who have already been registered through the staff/volunteers/tenants of affordable housing providers, and offer a chance to register homeless individuals who will still be living in the shelters on November 2. To help register, educate and mobilize voters, please contact Katie Fischer at 202-662-1530 x222 or katie@nlihc.org.

2004 CCDA Annual Conference, October 27-31, 2004

Thousands of people from all over the U.S. and abroad will converge on Atlanta, GA for the 16th Annual Christian Community Development Association Conference. The theme of the conference is "Living the Kingdom Now- Restoring Communities in the Name of Christ." Confirmed speakers include: Dr. Andrea

Barthwell - Office of National Drug Control Policy, Dr. Sam Chand - Beulah Heights Bible College, Dr. Raymond Rivera - Latino Pastoral Action Center, Dr. Brenda Salter McNeil - Overflow Ministries, Dr. Wayne Gordon - Lawndale Community Church, and CCDA Chairman and Dr. Bob Lupton - FCS Urban Ministries. For more information visit www.cdda.org.

54th Convention and Training Conference of the National Association of Christian Social Workers (NACSW), October 28-31, 2004, "Social Work on a Global Scale: He's Got the Whole World in His Hands"

Recognizing God's love for the whole world and each person in it, the 2004 conference in Reston, VA, embraces the global context of Christians in social work and acknowledges the impact of globalization on practice. To find out more about this year's exciting plenary speakers (including David Beckmann, Tony Campolo, and Jim Wallis), pre-convention institutes, and program schedule, or if you or your colleagues would like to share valuable insights related to the integration of faith and practice, present model integration practices, or report on valuable research on the following topics: Social Work Direct Practice, Faith of Social Workers, Community Organizing and Development, Social Work Administration and Policy, Social Work Education, and International Social Work in Faith-based Settings, please visit:

www.nacsw.org/conv_head_text.html.

Money & Faith Retreat, October 29-31, 2004

Ministry of Money is a loving, prophetic Christian ministry, which encourages all persons to become free from their attachment to cultural values regarding money and to live out joyfully God's call for their lives and resources. Join them in Germantown, MD at their Money & Faith Retreat, with guest speaker Arthur Simon (author and founder of Bread for the World). For more information, contact Rosemary Diehl at 301-428-9560 or email rosemary@ministryofmoney.org.

From the Ground

Heartside Ministry is a congregation of homeless and near homeless person living in the Heartside neighborhood of Grand Rapids, MI. We are not a top down church (a church coming into a homeless neighborhood and "doing church" each Sunday). Instead we are a bottom up congregation with leadership, liturgy, readers coming from the congregation. Our congregation also participates in a dialogue preaching much like the Latin America Liberation model. We are non-denominational but the two pastors are Reformed Church in America clergy.

We are 21 years old and also have programs during the week such as counseling, art, a computer center, adult literacy, English as a second language, pastoral care, neighborhood advocacy and assistance with housing, jobs, rent, state I.D.s, utilities, etc. Our preaching is very oriented toward co-creating with God a world that is just and good for all God's people. To sign the Isaiah platform was a natural for our people who

have often been treated unjustly and have a wonderful grasp of what the world would be like if we tried to live as God designed us to. Our people look forward to the day when we will not need charity because justice prevails. We have placed signs for the rolling bus tour that brings Call to renewal here on October 11.

Rev. Barbara Pekich
Executive Director and Pastor
Heartside Ministry
www.heartside.org

In My Opinion

Words from the Heart

As a well-known urban missionary, I have a confession to make: I just moved my family to one of Philadelphia's toniest Main Line suburbs.

How we got here is a long and complicated story, but it probably shouldn't be. The simple fact of the matter is that while I have long been a 'city person', my wife and kids most definitely are not. I wish it hadn't taken my wife developing a nasty case of Rheumatoid Arthritis for me to finally see the cost of ignoring that fact for the past fifteen years, but it did, and I have, and so here we are.

As confident as I am in our decision to move out, however, and as thrilled as I am to see my family so happy, the transition from West Philadelphia to Radnor has been hard on me. I miss the city and, no matter what anyone says, I often feel like a traitor to my cause. Like so many Christian activists, I always wore my inner-city address as a badge of honor which validated my commitment. Out on the speaking circuit or among our Mission Year Team Members, invariably the first question I'm asked is, "Where do you live?" Regardless of what I did or did not do there, West Philadelphia was always a good answer. Radnor, on the other hand, doesn't much help my credibility as a crusader for social justice.

My real problem, however, is not what other people think. My real problem is that, aside from adding a miserable commute and a little yard work, moving to the suburbs hasn't really changed my life at all. Stripped of my urban trappings, I am finally facing the fact that I long ago ceased to be a street-level minister to the poor. Instead, I have become the desk-bound leader of a terrific non-profit organization that enables hundreds of young adults to do what used to be my job. The truth is that while I still talk and write a lot about building loving relationships with poor people, I don't do it myself anymore. Simply stated, poor people are no longer my neighbors.

And that's a real problem, not just for me, but for anyone who, like me, has to balance their own self-interest

against the needs of the rest of the world. People like you, who make up family budgets. Church people, who make up church budgets. Our President and Congress, who make up our national budget. Because, while self-interest has no trouble staying fresh in anyone's mind, the needs of the rest of the world only become urgent when they are wrapped up in real relationships with poor people we genuinely know and care about, like my old neighbors in West Philadelphia.

We haven't been in Radnor long, but I am already losing my edge. From now on, I am going to have to go out of my way to stay in touch with those values I mistakenly thought had become a permanent part of me. I will need to listen more to those who still live and work among the poor, and trust less my own increasingly dull instincts. I must read again the teachings of Jesus, remembering that he and his friends were all poor, and oppressed, and occupied as well for that matter. That extra effort, I reckon, is another price to be paid for my privilege.

As I consider the candidates in this election, who would balance self-interest and world needs on behalf of us all, I know better than to think any of them have real relationships with poor people they genuinely know and care about. And now, living in Radnor, I know better than to judge them for that either. Instead, I find myself asking a new question: Which of these candidates is and has been doing the best job of going out of his way to stay in touch with the lives on the other side of their privilege? Which seems most willing to pay the price to love those neighbors they no longer know?

Bart Campolo
Founder and Chaplain
Mission Year
www.missionyear.org

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