

Important message from the Coalition on Human Needs!

Register and pledge to vote!

Candidates for Congress, Governor, and state legislatures may, if they're elected this November, decide on (or stand in the way of) some pretty critical issues: minimum wage, immigration reform, labor and voting rights, and whether to invest in or cut services like education, child care, nutrition or housing.

That's not all: in Congress, and most likely in many states, they will be deciding whether to get fair revenues from corporations and wealthy individuals or to hand them hundreds of billions in tax breaks. They will try to gut the Affordable Care Act, or protect against that. In states, there will be opportunities to expand Medicaid, or provide paid leave - or not.

Some of these candidates are banking on folks like you not showing up. It's time we spread the word that we will not be silent on these issues.

Voter Registration Deadlines are Approaching in Many States

See your state's deadline [here](#):

<http://www.nass.org/elections-voting/voter-registration-deadlines-and-polling-place-hours-for-the-2014-general-election/>

Very convenient links to register, get your polling place, and learn who's running where you live: <http://www.nonprofitvote.org/register-to-vote/>

The League of Women Voters [Vote411.org](http://www.vote411.org) (*How to register and info on topics like early voting, polling places, candidates' information, voter ID required, etc.*) Links for [online registration](#) for these states: AZ, CA, CO, CT, DE, GA, IN, KS, LA, MD, MN, NV, OR, SC, UT, VA, and WA. (*Note: registration has already closed in some of these states.*)

<http://www.rockthevote.com/voter-registration/online-application-system/online.html>

Something extremely important you can do: forward the links above to everybody you know.

Report from Captain Obvious: all these big decisions will hinge on turnout. So making sure your colleagues, friends, neighbors, clients, etc. are registered and encouraging them to vote can change outcomes.

POWER's Voter Roundtable:

Our November POWER Outage, which falls on Voting Day eve, will be a Voters Roundtable. Bring your ballot and share what you know about the initiatives and candidates. Learn what others know.

Monday, November 3rd at Darby's Café, 311 5th Ave, in downtown Olympia.

We start with a potluck at 5:30. Bring something to share if you can. Discussion from 6 – 8.

Childcare will be provided by the fabulous Olympia Childcare Collective down the street at the POWER office, 309 5th Avenue.

POWER Annual Member Meeting and Board Elections:

Another upcoming opportunity to vote is for 2015 POWER Board members.

Any POWER members who have completed at least 20 hours of POWER activities throughout the year may run for POWER's board. Email info@mamapower.org if you would like to be sent information and an application.

We invite you to our annual member meeting:

Saturday, November 1st, 11:30 am to 3:30 pm

MIXX 96 Meeting Room, corner of State and Washington in downtown Oly

You can meet and hear from the Board Candidates, get to better know other POWER members, and help us vision our work in the upcoming year.

We encourage all POWER members to attend this meeting if at all possible. Bring a friend you'd like to introduce to POWER. We will provide transportation support to those who take public transportation, or carpool from their area. We will help you organize carpools if you call, 360-352-9716 or email, info@mamapower.org. Also, please let us know if you will need childcare.

Bring a potluck dish to share if you can and an apple pie if you wish to enter the apple pie bake-off. The winner gets a prize!

POWER

Parents Organizing For Welfare and Economic Rights

309 5th Avenue SE, Olympia, WA 98501

360-352-9716 toll free 866-343-9716

monica@mamapower.org

www.mamapower.org

Find us on **Facebook**.

POWER is an organization of low-income parents and allies advocating for a strong social safety net while working toward a world where children and care giving are truly valued, and the devastation of poverty has been eradicated.

Join us for **POWER Member meetings every Wednesday** from 2 – 4 pm at the POWER office, 309 5th Avenue, next to Rainy Day Records in downtown Olympia. We start with an hour of shared education, then an hour of planning.

Below:

1. Legislature is looking at the little support left to the poor for savings!
2. Little Hollywood article about the City of Olympia and Crazy Faith
3. Chris Dixon to speak in Oly about his book on Transformative Politics
4. King County Council approves a living wage requirement.
5. Interesting view on religious almsgiving and poverty.

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1. Sorry to be the bearers of bad news again, but the Governor and state legislators are again asking state agencies to make cuts to the tiny benefits left to poor people!!!

On the chopping block is the entire Aged, Blind and Disabled program. These benefits have been cut from the already low amount of \$339 to the current amount of \$197.

To be eligible for this program you have to prove you are too disabled to work. The majority of recipients are homeless.

We've already heard from one POWER member who relies on these benefits who has managed to keep her housing despite the cuts, but won't be able to after!

Also on the chopping block are the restoration of TANF benefits (from previous 15% cuts), the telephone assistance program, first steps home visits, emergency assistance to families, naturalization services, tribal TANF, and more.

Please let us know if you want to share your story with legislators about how these cuts will harm you, your family, your community. Contact Monica at monica@mamapower.org or call us at 360-352-9176.

Saturday, October 11, 2014

[Winner of Nine Pulitzer Prizes](#)

Disabled people could lose in budget cuts

If budget-reduction scenarios ordered by the state become a reality, thousands of disabled people would be affected, according to new reports.

By [Joseph O'Sullivan](#)

Seattle Times Olympia bureau

If budget-reduction scenarios undertaken by two state agencies become real, thousands of disabled people currently receiving state aid would be affected, according to new reports.

The scenarios, ordered by the state Office of Financial Management this spring, call for agencies to hypothesize how they could cut 15 percent of revenues received from the state's general fund for programs not protected by the state constitution or federal law. Gov. Jay Inslee could use the scenarios as input when drafting his 2015-2017 budget proposal.

Lawmakers will approve a budget next year with tax revenue that has lagged behind the economic recovery. Meanwhile, the Legislature will have to find billions of dollars more for education funding that is mandated by the state Supreme Court's McCleary decision.

Under its budget-reduction scenario, the state Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) would eliminate its Aged, Blind or Disabled program.

Cutting the program would stop cash assistance to the approximately 23,000 people using it, according to the proposal.

The DSHS plan would take some of the money and give it to a program under the state Department of Commerce known as Housing and Essential Needs (HEN).

The program provides rental assistance and items like bus passes and toiletries to people who are disabled, homeless or at risk of homelessness.

But that program faces cuts under its own 15 percent budget-reduction scenario.

The Department of Commerce's scenario would reduce money for HEN by 13 percent, according to that department's proposal.

That would mean 580 of 4,010 people would lose rental assistance, and nearly all of those without the aid could become homeless, according to the report.

Michele Thomas of the Washington Low Income Housing Alliance acknowledged that the next budget will be under severe pressure.

But, “after years and years of cuts, it’s time to start reinvesting in these programs,” said Thomas, director of policy and advocacy at the advocacy group.

Rep. Ruth Kagi, D-Seattle, said those cuts would be unimaginable on top of cuts that social-services programs already took during the recession.

“I know that we won’t be able to pass the budget if we cut into what’s left of the safety net,” said Kagi, who chairs the House Early Learning and Human Services Committee. “I certainly won’t vote for it.”

Sen. Mark Schoesler, R-Ritzville, criticized the budget scenarios as ploys to justify funding for state services.

“You come out and you pick out the high-profile plan of the least fortunate and say you’re going to push them overboard,” said Schoesler, the Senate Republican leader.

The Governor’s Office, which will present its budget proposal in December, said Monday that it would not comment on departments’ individual scenarios.

Joseph O’Sullivan: 360-236-8268 or josullivan@seattletimes.com.

2. Little Hollywood

A blog about the local news and events of and around Olympia, Washington.

Thursday, October 2, 2014

[Crazy Faith Pastor Ben Charles Fined For Using Downtown Parking Lot; Hearing Today](#)

By Janine Unsoeld

www.janineslittlehollywood.blogspot.com

The City of Olympia came prepared for battle this morning at a civil infraction hearing against Crazy Faith Outreach pastor Ben Charles.

Charles was cited on June 19 by the City of Olympia and the Olympia Police Department for using a downtown parking lot without a permit. Crazy Faith was using the lot to feed street people, an activity they have done for about four years. The city owned lot in question is on the corner of Washington and State streets, located across from the Intercity Transit station.

Charles was fined \$103. The citation was not given to Charles directly, but mailed to a reservation address. Charles is a member of the Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe.

The city was represented by attorney Jeffrey Myers with assistance by deputy city attorney Darren Nienaber. Presenting multiple exhibits over the objections of Charles' attorney, Myers worked to illustrate that the city has informed Charles and Crazy Faith Outreach that they are in violation of city code OMC 10.16.140, as passed by the Olympia city council in December 2013. The city stated that it has offered alternative locations for Crazy Faith to conduct its mission of feeding street people.

The city ordinance states, in part, that lots may only be used for parking, unless an activity is authorized by a city issued permit, lease or unless the activity is conducted by the city. Crazy Faith uses the parking lot for its service to feed those who come on Thursday and Saturday evenings.

Charles is being represented by former Olympia based Freedom Foundation constitutional rights attorney David Roland, who is now with the Freedom of Missouri. Roland requested that the case be dismissed, challenged the amount fined, and found inconsistencies in Officer Paul Lower's report.

Given 20 minutes notice, Municipal Judge Christopher Coker presided over the case, replacing Judge Scott Ahlf, after Ahlf revealed a possible conflict of interest.

The non-traffic civil infraction hearing often felt like a criminal trial, and lasted one and a half hours.

While Myers produced maps, email exchanges, and letters, Roland raised multiple objections that the city was trying to call into question matters that were beyond the scope of the citation. At one point, after Myers asked Charles if he had a permit through the state department of health, and whether or not he believed in the Bible, even Judge Coker asked where Meyers was going in his line of questioning.

Roland also pointed out inconsistencies in Olympia Police Department Lieutenant Paul Lower's report. Lower, who has been with the department for about 18 years, is assigned to walking patrols and specialty operations with a focus on downtown.

Although Lower checked the box on the citation indicating that he had checked Charles' identification, Lt. Lower testified on the stand that in fact he did not check Charles' identification on that evening, but had on a prior occasion.

In his report, Lower wrote that, "he (Charles) arrived with a large white van...from this van he and other members of his group unloaded large tents and multiple tables and merchandise...." Roland questioned the use of the word "merchandise," and Lower admitted that he didn't know what word to use, but the "merchandise" was in fact food, and there was no buying or selling observed.

Lower also said that he had spoken with City Manager Steve Hall and city attorneys prior to issuing the citation, and that Hall and city attorneys knew that he was going to issue a citation that evening.

Crazy Faith Continues Its Mission

Crazy Faith has continued to serve food and beverages to street people since the citation was issued.

"It gets busy toward the end of each month," said Charles outside the courtroom before the hearing.

"A lot of folks are now telling me that their hours, if they work, are being cut to 25 hours a week. We're feeding 4,400 servings of food per month. There's still a great need. Not only is the physical food a benefit, but I believe we are providing emotional and spiritual support as well."

Crazy Faith supporters Amy and Shea Renecker joined Charles and his wife Denise before the hearing. They said they have been helping serve food with Crazy Faith for almost a year. They said that Papa John's Pizza on the Westside has been especially generous in providing food.

"It's a service that's desperately needed in our community – we bring our daughter down and she serves the drinks," said Shea Renecker.

"The Crazy Faith feed is a safe place, a neutral area. We're feeding people. It's a peaceful gathering where people get fellowship. If you need to pray for something, come...." The Reneckers dispute reports that the feeds have posed any problem to downtown businesses.

"We have contact with the Olympia Police Department all the time. They walk on through just to see if everything is o.k. There's never been an arrest at one of our feeds. We're being part of the solution to

downtown crime. The Harlequin Theater manager even says there's less crime on the nights we're here...." said Renecker.

After the hearing, attorney David Roland said that he suspects the city is using Charles as a test case, and that the city hasn't taken further action against Charles because it wants to see what their next step should be.

"I find it appalling that (the city) wants to reserve this space for a 'better class' citizen. Not everyone can afford cars. The city can't condition a constitutional right to gather as long as they are peaceful and that's the definition of what Crazy Faith has been doing – they are doing this for a laudable purpose."

Judge Coker said he would issue a decision in the case in about a week.

For more information about Ben Charles and the mission of Crazy Faith Outreach, go to www.janineslittlehollywood.blogspot.com and use the search button for past stories.

Fri Oct 17 at Orca Books

Tuesday, November
4
at 7:00pm

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Orca Books presents a book launch for

Another Politics: Talking Across Today's Transformative Movements (University of California Press)

by Chris Dixon

with a foreword by Angela Y. Davis

About the book:

Another Politics: Talking Across Today's Transformative Movements engages the anti-authoritarian current, a political tendency including abolitionists, anarchists, anti-racist

feminists, autonomists, and many other radicals. Cutting across a wide range of left social movements in North America, this current is distinguished by its commitment to directly democratic structures, anti-oppression politics, explicit organization-building, prefigurative political practices, working for reforms while also pursuing revolution, and grassroots organizing. In a time of daunting crises, the anti-authoritarian current offers crucial lessons and strategies for social transformation.

As *Another Politics* documents, the anti-authoritarian current has emerged out of the fascinating convergence of a variety of radical politics and broader-based movements in recent decades. From this convergence, a growing set of dynamic and dedicated activists – from anti-poverty organizers in Toronto to prison abolitionists in Oakland, from occupy activists in New York to migrant justice organizers in Vancouver – are developing shared politics, practices, and sensibilities based in overlapping areas of work. They are building “another politics,” to use an expression from the Zapatista rebels in Mexico that has become increasingly popular north of the border.

Another Politics draws on dozens of interviews with experienced organizers across the U.S. and Canada. It traces the strands of movement and struggle that have led into the anti-authoritarian current, explores the defining principles and practices of another politics, and examines the visionary political approaches and questions that are emerging from the activities of this current. Building on collective reflections, this book also distills hard-earned lessons concerning anti-oppression politics, prefigurative praxis, strategy, organizing, leadership, and organization.

About Chris Dixon:

Chris Dixon, originally from Alaska, is a longtime anarchist organizer, writer, and educator with a PhD from the University of California at Santa Cruz. His writing has appeared in numerous book collections as well as periodicals such as *Anarchist Studies*, *Clamor*, *Left Turn*, and *Social Movement Studies*. He serves on the board of the Institute for Anarchist Studies and the advisory board for the activist journal *Upping the Anti*. Dixon lives in Ottawa, Canada, on unceded Algonquin Territory, where he is involved in anti-poverty organizing. His new book is *Another Politics: Talking Across Today's Transformative Movements*, published by University of California Press. Find him at writingwithmovements.com.

Wednesday, October 8, 2014

[Winner of Nine Pulitzer Prizes](#)

King County Council approves 'living wage' requirement

A split Metropolitan King County Council passed legislation Monday that county employees and those working for certain contractors earn a so-called living wage.

By [Daniel Beekman](#)

Seattle Times staff reporter

The Metropolitan King County Council approved legislation Monday requiring that a so-called living wage be paid to most county employees and to the employees of certain county contractors.

The legislation doesn't establish a new minimum-wage scale for everyone who works in King County, like [Seattle's new law](#) does for everyone who works in the city.

[The county's legislation](#) applies only to people working directly or indirectly for taxpayers, partly because the county has limited authority over how business is conducted in cities and towns within its borders.

But proponents say the legislation is significant because it recognizes that many people are struggling to get by despite having a job.

The vote to enact the legislation was 5-4, with the council's five Democrats in favor and its four Republicans opposed.

"We applaud the council for taking this on. There is a lot of symbolism in the county making this statement," said Ben Henry, senior policy associate at Alliance for a Just Society, a Seattle-based advocacy organization. "This is a step toward paying people what they need to make ends meet."

Councilmember Rod Dembowski, a sponsor of the legislation, says more than 100 other jurisdictions around the country have adopted living-wage ordinances.

"It didn't seem right that we could have someone doing the county's work while being paid so little that we would be subsidizing their bus pass or providing them with rental assistance," said Dembowski, a Democrat.

“My view is that if you’re working full time you should be paid a living wage so we don’t have to subsidize you.”

Councilmembers Jane Hague and Kathy Lambert, Republicans who sit on the council’s economy committee, didn’t immediately return requests for comment Monday.

On Tuesday, Lambert said she opposed the ordinance because its sponsors couldn’t tell her how much it might cost the county.

Lambert believes minimum wage increases for the county’s lowest-paid employees will lead better-paid county employees to demand raises, as well.

In addition, she says, some contractors will stop doing business with the county or will try to charge the county more.

The legislation will apply to all county employees except short-term ones and people in work-study and training programs. It will apply to contractor employees working on service contracts of at least \$100,000.

The county and contractors with at least 500 employees will be required to pay a minimum \$11 an hour starting April 1, 2015; \$13 in 2016; and \$15 in 2017; followed by annual increases pegged to the rate of inflation.

Most county employees already make at least \$15 an hour.

Contractors with fewer than 500 employees will be required to pay \$10.50 an hour starting in 2016, followed by annual increases to reach \$17.25 in 2024.

Starting in 2025, the smaller contractors will be required to pay the same minimum wage as the county and the larger contractors.

Seattle’s new ordinance, approved in June, calls for all employers in the city to pay a minimum \$18.13 an hour by 2025.

The state minimum wage is \$9.32 an hour.

The county’s living-wage legislation will apply to new contracts only. There are 4,512 existing contracts, 1,058 of which are service contracts of at least \$100,000.

County officials say they don’t know how many employees are working on those contracts and don’t know how many workers the legislation will affect.

Dembowski says minimum-wage hikes make sense because they improve lives without the government overhead that comes with social services.

“Raising a minimum wage is probably the most efficient social program there is — no government waste, no fraud, no abuse,” he said.

“This is a fiscally responsible piece of legislation,” Dembowski added, saying the state has enjoyed strong job growth after raising its minimum wage.

Last month, County Executive Dow Constantine proposed eliminating more than 500 county jobs as part of his budget plan for 2015 and 2016.

The council, which is reviewing Constantine’s budget, took up the living-wage legislation while considering a report published this summer by the Alliance for a Just Society.

The [“Families Out of Balance”](#) report found that a single adult in King County with no children and a full-time job needs to earn more than \$17 an hour — about \$36,000 a year — to make ends meet while saving 10 percent of his or her income.

Daniel Beekman: 206-464-2164 or dbeekman@seattletimes.com

“The least of these” and our shared future

Story by Colleen Wessel-McCoy

Thank you for welcoming me to join you in worship this morning. I attended seminary with Rev. Fayette and know that she is a remarkable and gifted priest. I’m excited to be able to witness her in action again. I grew up in Marietta, Georgia and was formed at Wesley Chapel United Methodist Church. My mother was raised Episcopal and my father grew up Pentecostal, so they met in the middle and raised me Methodist. My husband always adds that since I’m Methodist and he’s Catholic our children ought to be Episcopal.

An important part of that formation at Wesley Chapel was our mission work. Our youth group would serve in soup kitchens in Atlanta, sort donated school supplies in the suburbs, and travel on mission trips to rural areas in North Georgia and Tennessee. I am here today because I learned two things from this work. First, that poverty is

pervasive, crossing racial and ethnic lines, geographies, family types, and political parties. I also learned that poverty is not what God desires for us. God finds poverty unacceptable and calls us to wipe this scourge from the Earth.

Determined to make a difference, after college I worked for a non-profit providing affordable housing and support services to those in or near homelessness. My job was to organize the tenants to fight for more affordable housing, better access to livable jobs, and fairer treatment from neighbors and police. But it seemed that no matter how hard we worked, conditions continued to worsen. When we would open doors to take housing applications, hundreds of families would line up around the building and down the block hoping to get one of the few new vacancies. My husband John, who worked for the same organization, and I found ourselves in a crisis of faith, struggling to reconcile what we thought was necessary and what we were finding possible. So together we brought our questions to Union Theological Seminary.

What does it mean to really end poverty, rather than merely patching up pieces of it? What is the role of religious leaders and people of conscience in this work? What does it mean for the poor themselves to lead the way in building a social movement to transform society? It turned out there were others there asking the same questions. Just a few months before we arrived, a group of students and community leaders had formed the Poverty Initiative, seeing from decades of experience organizing among the poor that a social movement to end poverty necessitated finding these answers.

Reading today's passage from Matthew 10 reminded me of one particular day, one moment really, that shifted my life's course. I was about sixteen and with my church youth group on one of the mission trips to Rabun County, rural North Georgia. We'd mow lawns for people who couldn't get around like they used to, repair porch steps, underpin trailers to keep the critters out, tar roofs and build wheel chair ramps. We'd attempt to do whatever people couldn't afford to have done properly. We'd start out from camp with our set of directions that often included instructions like, "when the paved road turns to dirt go two more miles and turn left at the well" or "when you pass the house with the blue barn—you'll know it when you see it—turn right and head up the mountain." These families lived in trailers and small old houses tucked into the Appalachians—all over the region—and they were all struggling to survive. Each day we'd go to a new assignment, down different roads, past more and more families living—trying to live—all far from our nation's sight and consciousness.

While clearing a patch of briars with a shuttle blade on one of those days, a nest of yellow jackets convinced me to take a break. That's when I met Sarah. She was about

five, the age of my son now, and lived there with her parents and grandfather. We walked around and talked for a little while, checked out the hog, and then she asked me, “wanna play princess?” I agreed and she led me inside her house to her ‘space.’ It wasn’t a room, just a mattress in the corner of the kitchen where I imagine a kitchen table used to be. And when I say mattress, I really mean just a mattress. There was no box-spring or frame. Just a mattress, blanket and pillow on the floor next to the stove. She hopped into the room past the kitchen and came back in lugging an old box fan which she plugged in and perched facing the mattress. Sarah told me to sit on the edge of the mattress, and I obliged. She turned the fan on and adjusted it so it was blowing air right at me, she sat down next to me, and she scratched my back. “This is what momma does,” she said, “this is how we play princess.” Her mother didn’t have much to offer her by way of material things, but she took time and she took care to show Sarah she was worthy and loved. I never met Sarah’s mother, who was at work that day. But I will never forget her.

I remember that day for lots of reasons. I often think of Sarah when I hear statistics about the pervasiveness of poverty in the US. I think of Sarah when there is silence about poverty in the United States. I think about Sarah and her mother playing princess whenever I hear the assumption that poor people are bad parents. I remember Sarah and the way she carefully adjusted that fan to face me when I’m trying to understand God’s grace. Jesus tells us in today’s gospel reading, “whoever gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones in the name of a disciple— truly I tell you, none of these will lose their reward.”

We often receive more than we give when we engage in missional work. But was that day with Sarah, my work on the mission trip, really about my eternal reward? *This has been a struggle throughout the history of the church, with almsgiving to the poor being a spiritual benefit to the rich. The poor became the salvation of the rich through the profit making on poverty wages in fields and factories, and this relationship was made holy by giving poverty a spiritual currency in the pews and pulpits, with almsgiving to the poor being a spiritual benefit to the rich.* Today we talk about service and mission in the same way.

But when this is the purpose of the relationship I think we miss the point of the Gospel. We could read Matthew this way, and many do. If I serve, the rewards of heaven will be mine. But the gospel calls us not just to service but to relationships. When we come together in service of one another we have the opportunity to break down divisions between ourselves. That is the call of Christ to love one another, yes as an ideal, yes

with those most like ourselves, but also in the midst of life where it is not easy or what we expect or with whom we expect.

Of course it is possible to get to know those we are serving and walk away with our suspicions and stereotypes confirmed. That day when I came away forever changed by Sarah and her mother, on the ride back to camp one of the youth ministers told us what he took away from the time with that family. He saw the grandfather wait on the porch for the mail to come and eagerly jump in his truck when a check from the government arrived as expected. There was a condescension in his voice. And that I remember as clearly as I remember Sarah. Looking back now I wonder how he was so certain that that was what arrived in the mail. And if it was, wasn't it likely social security? And whatever it was, they needed it. They were clearly working hard and it still wasn't enough.

It isn't enough then to just come in contact with people who we think are different from us. Sometimes we are transformed and sometimes we see only what we already know. The difference is whether we are seeking community, what we have in common, and shared responsibility for each other, or whether we seek to feel good about serving someone who is out there, other than me, whose life and destiny is not tied up with my own.

These days we hear so many stories where hard work and perseverance leads to great success, but also where hard work and perseverance is rewarded with heartbreak and insecurity. Our children and grandchildren can no longer assume that they will live better than their parents. My generation finds itself back at our parents' houses too often. My friends and family members end up taking jobs for which they are overqualified. Even for those who are not poor, economic security cannot be taken for granted. And so perhaps it's not surprising that two surveys were recently released, one by Pew and one by Wall St. Journal/NBC showing that while twenty years ago most people, including the youth pastor, believed that poverty was primarily due to a lack of effort on the part of the poor, now half of us believe that poverty is due to factors beyond individual initiative.

In 2012 the official poverty rate was 15 percent, but an additional 33 percent of the US population lives below twice the poverty line, one lost job or health crisis away from poverty. Taken together this means that half of us are poor or low-income. Yet this is not how we talk about "the poor". The call of Christ here is not to serve someone different from us, but to build community through service to one another, with our futures tied up together.

In the two decades since I met Sarah I have spent time learning about the many fronts of poverty across the United States and world, including learning about the leadership and genius among the poor. Those who like Sarah's mother make ways out of no way. Those like the farmworkers in Immokalee, Florida who organized against slavery rings and won a penny more a pound by analyzing the supply chains to find decision makers and by revolutionizing the use of the internet in community organizing. Those like the high school students of the Philadelphia Student Union who have claimed their right to a future, using analysis and study to envision the education they need and organizing to achieve it for all of Philadelphia and beyond.

These are some of the many groups who have heard the call to take a leading role in building a movement to end poverty. We are told in so many ways that the poor are pitiful or criminal, yet hidden from view are the ways in which they find decency in indecent conditions and seek justice in hardship.

I have learned not that I am more blessed by my service, but that we have so much in common. We are blessed by the discovery of that commonality. God desires for us to be together as God's children, not as those who serve and those who are served, but as those who thrive together. This foundational Christian principal is one that we know and don't know at the same time. We agree with it, but we don't organize our lives around it. In Matthew 10 we are called with the disciples to organize our lives around it. Christ sends the disciples out to take part in the good news to the poor, to heal the sick and give water to the least of these. This is the call to us as well, to build the community of God through service to each other, not as others apart from our own destinies, but as sharing a future together.