

Ecumenews

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“Habits of the Heart” for Healthy Congregations

With Parker Palmer & Online Circles to Engage Faith

We live in a time of deep divisions and polarization, both within the church and in the wider culture. Now more than ever, church leaders are called to embrace the healing and reconciling work of Christ as we seek to build healthy congregations that can engage their differences in more faithful, life-giving ways. What most of us lack are the tools to actually do it.

Pastors and lay leaders throughout Wisconsin are invited to join together this fall to explore Parker Palmer’s “Habits of the Heart,” which are tools and methods for building bridges across our differences and building up the body of Christ:

- An understanding that we are all in this together;
- An appreciation for the value of “otherness;”
- An ability to hold tension in life giving ways;
- A sense of personal voice and agency; and
- A capacity to create community.

Through a blended format of face to face interaction and virtual small

group conversation, workshop participants can expect to gain:

- A conceptual and experiential understanding of Parker Palmer’s 5 Habits of the Heart;
- New connections with clergy and lay leaders who share an interest in public life and the constructive role churches can play; and
- New skills to apply the Habits of the Heart to the current challenges and opportunities facing congregations today.

The ‘Habits of the Heart’ workshop will unfold in three segments.

“Habits of the Heart” are a roadmap for dealing with today’s conflicts- they articulate the essence of what it means to be a Christian in the 21st Century. -- Parker Palmer

Face to Face Kick Off:

Wednesday, September 24: 10:00 am-2:30 pm for all participants at the UCC Conference Offices in DeForest, WI, focusing on building community, reviewing course content and receiving training to

participate in the second segment of the workshop. Attendance is mandatory.

Facilitated Small Group

Conversations: five weeks beginning the week of September 29th. Participants will receive via email print and video content weekly to review at their convenience, covering one “Habit of the Heart” each week. Facilitated small groups will then meet virtually (online) each week to discuss each Habit and its application to their congregation’s life and ministry. A variety of days and times will be offered for virtual small groups. Weekly time commitment: approximately 3 hours.

Closing Retreat with Parker

Palmer: Saturday, November 8: 10:00 am – 2:30 pm, Edgewood College in Madison: A closing conversation featuring Parker Palmer for all workshop participants to reflect on the workshop experience and to consider next steps.

Pastors and lay leaders are welcome to participate, and congregations are encouraged to send teams of 2 or more people. Cost: \$100 per person; \$150 for two persons from the same congregation.

For more information about the workshop, and to register, go to www.wichurches/events.

Combating Poverty:

Elevating the Debate In the Fall Elections



This year marks the 50 year anniversary of President Lyndon B. Johnson declaring an “unconditional war on poverty” in the United States. Over the past five decades there have indeed been advances on the frontlines – from Medicare, and eventually Medicaid, to the development of social safety net programs like Food Stamps, and the implementation of social programs such as Head Start, Job Corps and VISTA.

However, despite its successes, the war has not yet been won. In fact, the very real epidemic of widespread poverty in the United States demonstrates the critical need for a real conversation that begets concrete solutions to ebb the rising tide of poverty in Wisconsin and across the nation.

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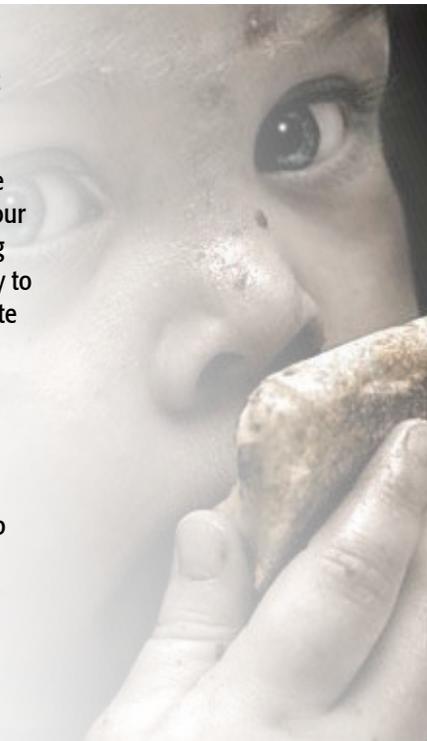
Combating Poverty ...Continued from Page 1

The faith community can and should play a critical role in alleviating poverty. But in serving low income people we know that our charity is not enough. Justice is also required. And that means we need to address the underlying issues that create poverty in the first place and call the public sector to its rightful role in eliminating poverty.

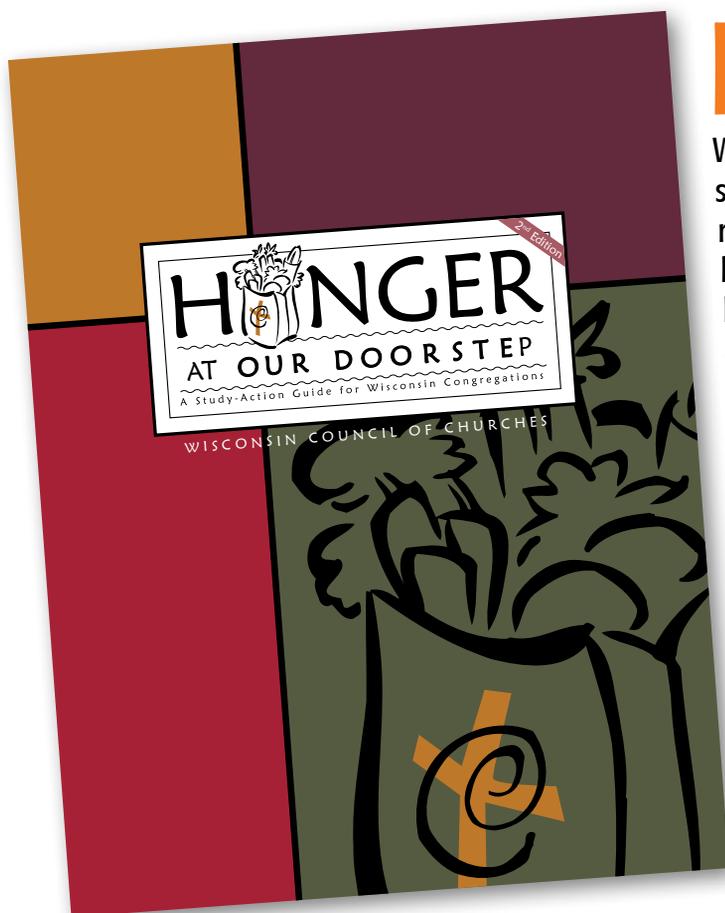
WISDOM, Wisconsin Council of Churches, Wisconsin Council on Children and Families, and Citizen Action are collaborating this year to equip the religious community to raise poverty in the fall elections. Our initiative includes:

- **Regional Symposiums.** Our first was held June 4 in Milwaukee with over 150 local religious leaders, with others planned for Madison, Appleton, Stevens Point, Eau Claire and La Crosse focused on:
 - » What does poverty look like in Wisconsin?
 - » What is our distinctive voice as faith communities in the public square?
 - » How can we make a difference in alleviating poverty?
- **Sign on Letter.** We've set a goal of 5,000 signatures from Wisconsin's religious community for a statewide sign on letter articulating our values and communicating our perspective on poverty to candidates running for state and federal offices.
- **Congregational Toolkit.** A downloadable "how to" resource to equip congregations to host candidate forums and help register voters in a non-partisan way.

Go to www.wichurches.org for more details. ●



Hunger at Our Doorstep: Revised Study Guide available Sept.15



Hunger remains a problem in Wisconsin.

When the first edition of the WCC's study-action guide on hunger was released in 2006, 9% of Wisconsin's households were food-insecure—lacking assured access to affordable, nutritious food. Now 11.3% are. Then, 31% of children were eligible for free or reduced price school lunch; now, 40% are.

Churches are responding to the needs in their communities with food pantries, meal programs, and other direct service programs. But there is more to be done—raising awareness and understanding of the extent, causes and consequences of hunger; identifying particular needs in our community, and

learning about and advocating for anti-hunger policies at the state and national level.

The revised study guide will be mailed to every WCC-related congregation in the state the week of September 15. Watch for it! It will also be available via a downloadable pdf file at www.wichurches.org at no charge. ●

Reflections on the
fall 2014

Lectionary Texts

from the WCC's
Peace and Justice
Commission.

Great sermon starters
and departure points
for lectionary Bible
study groups.

Download at

www.wichurches.org



Upcoming WCC Events

Another Way of Doing Life

2015 Winter Forum with Shane Claiborne
February 27-28, 2015 in the Wisconsin Dells



Christians are meant to be radical non-conformists, interrupting the patterns of our world with prophetic imagination—a holy counterculture. Join the Wisconsin Council of Churches and Winter Forum presenter Shane Claiborne

for a weekend of exploration around what it means to be both disciples and church in a culture that seems increasingly at odds with the heart of the gospel:

- **THE IRRESISTIBLE REVOLUTION** – Using biographical stories to animate biblical truth, Shane will invite us to join God’s revolution where we are.
- **CHRISTIAN TROUBLEMAKERS** – The Kingdom of God is not just something we hope for when we die, but something we are to bring on earth as it is in heaven, creating “holy mischief.” Shane will share stories of contemporary communities who are living with beautiful creativity and sometimes getting into a little trouble for it.
- **THE ECONOMICS OF REBIRTH** – Does God’s economy look like Wall Street? Can the world afford the American dream? Or does God have another dream in mind? Shane will help us re-imagine the biblical vision of Jubilee and to internalize the responsibility that comes with being “born again” in such a dysfunctional human family.

- **RESURRECTING CHURCH** – With ancient stories of the early Christians and contemporary stories of ordinary radicals, Shane will invite us to re-imagine what it means to be the body of Christ. Let’s stop complaining about the church we see and become the church we dream of.

Shane Claiborne graduated from Eastern University and did graduate work at Princeton Seminary. In 2010, he received an Honorary Doctorate from Eastern. His adventures have taken him from the streets of Calcutta where he worked with Mother Teresa to the wealthy suburbs of Chicago where he served at the influential mega-church Willow Creek. As a peacemaker, his journeys have taken him to some of the most troubled regions of the world – from Rwanda to the West Bank – and he’s been on peace delegations in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Shane is a founder and board member of The Simple Way, a faith community which gathers at St. Edwards Church in inner city Philadelphia, the formerly abandoned cathedral into which homeless families relocated in 1995. The Simple Way has helped birth and connect radical faith communities around the world.

Shane writes and travels extensively speaking about peacemaking, social justice, and Jesus. Shane’s books include **JESUS FOR PRESIDENT**, **RED LETTER REVOLUTION**, **COMMON PRAYER**, **FOLLOW ME TO FREEDOM**, **JESUS, BOMBS AND ICE CREAM**, **BECOMING THE ANSWER TO OUR PRAYERS** – and his classic **THE IRRESISTIBLE REVOLUTION**. He has been featured in a number of films including “Another World Is Possible” and “Ordinary Radicals.”

For more information about the Forum and to register, go to www.wichurches/events.



Our mission is to pray and work together for the unity and renewal of the church and the healing and reconciliation of the world.

*Forming Leaders
Empowering Public Witness
Equipping the Missional Church*

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Rev. Scott D. Anderson

Executive Director's Corner

Waking Up to My Whiteness

Moving to Madison from Sacramento, California—named TIME magazine's "Most Integrated City in America" in 2003—was a rude awakening. Within a week I was conscious that my work and neighborhood environments were virtually all white.

Within a year I had reached the conclusion that race was the elephant in the middle of Wisconsin's living room, overshadowing every political, social, and cultural issue in this state.

The dismal and morally outrageous statistics are all too familiar. This past spring, the nonpartisan Annie E. Casey Foundation issued a report showing Wisconsin ranked 50th out of 50 states in the well-being of Black children.

In March I attended the White Privilege Conference in Madison (the WCC was an institutional co-sponsor), a national gathering of academics and community leaders committed to racial equity in our society.

The four day event for me, personally, was a transformative moment. I realized—perhaps for the first time—how ignorant I was about my own racial identity and its place within the larger system and structures of privilege. On the journey towards racial justice, this is a critical way station where I need to spend more time.

Three books—all recommended at the White Privilege Conference—have invited me into a deeper self-examination of my Whiteness:

- *"Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?" And Other Conversations About Race*, written by Clinical Psychologist Dr. Beverly Daniel Tatum (currently the President of Spellman College) is an invaluable look at racial development in Blacks, Whites, Hispanics and others in our White context. The helpful discussion guide at the back of the book makes this a fine introductory resource for adult study groups.

- *Waking Up White and Finding Myself in the Story of Race*, by Debby Irving, is the moving and empowering autobiography of a New England suburban mom who uncovers in her own story the painful realities of racial inequities and her role in addressing them.

- *Racing to Justice: Transforming our Conceptions of Self and Other to Build an Inclusive Society*, by U.C. Berkeley Law Professor John Powell, provides a useful critique of public policy prescriptions from both the Right and the Left and offers a new roadmap for an inclusive society which integrates race, spirituality, self and social justice.

The epiphany I experienced at the White Privilege Conference has pushed me to a clearer view of my own identity and place in the struggle for racial justice. It's an epiphany more Wisconsinites need to experience. •

WCC values your support and what we can do together

The materials and programs we offer are possible only through your support. You can do that by sharing this newsletter and our program announcements with your friends and colleagues and asking them to join our communication network by asking them to forward their name, address and e-mail to wcc@wichurches.org.

Please contribute now: send a check to Wisconsin Council of Churches, 750 Windsor St., Ste. 301, Sun Prairie, WI 53590 or use the "Donate Now" button on our website – www.wichurches.org. A monthly automatic contribution is easy; ask for the authorization form from Rich Fluechtling at rfluechtling@wichurches.org.

Consider a planned gift such as bequest from your estate, beneficiary of an insurance policy or beneficiary of a retirement account. These are simple ways to assure WCC's work continues many years into the future. •

Save These Dates

2015 Week of Prayer for Christian Unity

January 18-25.

For Worship resources, go to www.geii.org

2015 Washington Island Forum

June 22-26

Presenter John Bell

Registration at:

www.wichurches.org/events

