A Campaign to Cut Wisconsin’s Child Poverty Rate in Half in Ten Years
In 2014

Starting at Marquette University
2 faith-based networks

* WISDOM
* Wisconsin Council of Churches
and 2 policy groups

* Kids Forward
  (Formerly the Wisconsin Council on Children and Families)

* Citizen Action of Wisconsin Education Fund
hosted a path breaking 2 year conversation on poverty

* 24 major forums at churches & other religious settings
* In every region of Wisconsin
* Over 1,200 participants

Frame Presbyterian Church, Stevens Point
we dug into the facts

* who is poor
* how prevalent is poverty
* racial inequality
* causes of poverty
* history of efforts to reduce poverty
we discovered that children are now the poorest Americans

* in the 1950s seniors were the poorest group
* children were the second poorest group
* poverty for both was cut dramatically by public investments
* investments in seniors continued….
* investments in children tapered off….
* seniors now have the lowest rate of poverty
* but children are the poorest group in America today
% Poverty Over Time: 1959-2010
Children and Seniors

Sachs JD. The Price of Civilization. 2011, Random House, NY. Chapter 10, pp. 185-208
in discussions across the spectrum of faiths

we found that child poverty is expanding in every region of Wisconsin
Free or Reduced-Price School Meal Eligibility

2003-2004

Legend
- Not participating
- 20 percent or less
- 21 to 40 percent
- 41 to 50 percent
- 51 to 70 percent
- More than 70 percent

Image source: DPI
Free or Reduced-Price School Meal Eligibility

2013-2014

Legend
- Not participating
- 20 percent or less
- 21 to 40 percent
- 41 to 50 percent
- 51 to 70 percent
- More than 70 percent

Image source: DPI
In WISCONSIN...

compared to white kids

* African American kids are almost 5x more likely to be poor
* Latino kids are 3x more likely to be poor
* Native American kids are 4x more likely to be poor
* ...and the poverty rate for our African American kids is 8% above the national average for black child poverty

U.S. Census Bureau, 2016
In addition, we learned that:

1) children are the poorest segment of Wisconsin
2) Wisconsin has among the worst racial disparities
3) pulling children out of poverty makes the biggest difference in life prospects
4) to help children you must help their families
high rates of poverty are **not** a result of individual moral failings

* kids are clearly not responsible for their own plight

* poverty is a result of **human-made** economic and social structures
“Poverty is not an accident. Like slavery and apartheid, it is man-made and can be removed by the actions of human beings.”

-- Nelson Mandela
Great Britain adopted the national goal of eliminating child poverty by the year 2020.

Evidence-based strategies were adopted up to the scale of the problem.

A robust evaluation and tracking system was adopted to:

- Evaluate progress in real time
- Identify what is working
- . . . and what is not
- . . . and recommend policy shifts

We were inspired by the promise of a goal oriented approach.
What the British Experience Shows


The chart shows the percentage of individuals living below the poverty line in the United States and the United Kingdom from 1989 to 2010. The United Kingdom's poverty rate started higher but decreased more sharply over the years compared to the United States, which had a relatively stable rate with a slight decrease. In 2010, the United Kingdom's poverty rate was lower than the United States.

Key points:
- United Kingdom: 26.1% in 1998, 12.3% in 2010
- United States: 18.9% in 1998, 10.6% in 2010

Note: The United States data includes children under 18 years of age, while the United Kingdom data includes children below the absolute poverty threshold.
at concluding forums across the state

- First English Lutheran Church in Wausau
- St. Matthew CME Church in Milwaukee
- Lutheran Church of the Good Shepherd in Eau Claire
- St. Paul AME Church in Madison
- West Side Moravian Church in Green Bay
The faith community believes that Wisconsin needs to set a goal of cutting childhood poverty in half in the next ten years. It needs to also ensure that racial disparities in childhood poverty are cut in half. These goals should be accompanied by a commitment to annual, evidence-based evaluation of progress.
the path forward

1. make our goal of cutting child poverty and racial disparities in half prevalent . . . .
2. Build a large and larger group of supporters beyond the faith community...
3. seek commitment from elected leaders and other community leaders...
4. use goal to force a choice, for or against....
5. Create a context where leaders cannot posture as advocates for children while taking no meaningful action to the scale of the problem. . .
6. our campaign must create a context for moral clarity and moral choice...
Establish Wisconsin government policy which officially adopts the goal of cutting child poverty and racial disparities in half in 10 years

I. put the goal in state statute
II. adopt initial evidenced based policies at the necessary scale
III. establish robust tracking and evaluation capacity to adjust policies and keep us on track
The obstacle is the **will** not the **way**

This is where YOU come in

- reducing child poverty in half is a moral objective
- we must extend the consensus to larger and larger circles
- ... to the point where it becomes a shared goal for Wisconsin
Wisconsin can be a place where ALL children can thrive . . . .
End Child Poverty Wisconsin

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Endorse Our Vision of Ending Child Poverty in Wisconsin

We believe in a vision of ending child poverty in Wisconsin. We believe that the people of Wisconsin, working together, can cut child poverty in half in the next ten years. Seeking greater equity, our vision includes cutting racial disparities in child poverty in half. We are committed to evidence-based evaluation of progress.

Join the Wisconsin Council of Churches, WISDOM, Kids First, & Citizen Action of Wisconsin Education Fund in this effort. And if you are part of an organization that wants to join our coalition then just click the box “My organization is signing on”!

447 of a goal of 10,000 endorsement goal

Will you add your support?

First Name

Last Name

Email

Phone

Organizational Name

Your Title

End Child Poverty Wisconsin

Endorse the Child Poverty Goal!

do it now!

Text POVERTY to 1-414-376-6728

or go to: endchildpovertywi.org on your phone, tablet, or laptop!
END CHILD POVERTY