

Bulletin Inserts for the Poverty Progress Report

Ensure Safe and Affordable Housing for All Minnesotans

Suggested week for use: August 13-19

Bulletin/Newsletter Insert: Our Abrahamic faith traditions teach us the importance of security, strong foundations, and standing firm. Too many Minnesotans are faced with economic instability due to high cost of housing. Our voice is needed to advocate for safe and affordable housing for all Minnesotans, particularly during the 2018 elections. *Ask candidates: “How will you promote innovative and sustainable solutions for affordable housing? Do you support tax incentives for builders and investors? Which types of regulations do you believe are making the development of affordable housing most difficult?”*

Scripture:

- My people will live in peaceful dwelling places, in secure homes, in undisturbed places of rest. Isaiah 32:18
- For this reason I kneel before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name. I pray that out of his glorious riches He may strengthen you with power through His Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord’s holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God. Ephesians 3:14-19
- O you who have believed, be persistently standing firm in justice, witnesses for Allah, even if it be against yourselves or parents and relatives. Whether one is rich or poor, Allah is more worthy of both. So follow not [personal] inclination, lest you not be just. And if you distort [your testimony] or refuse [to give it], then indeed Allah is ever, with what you do, acquainted. Quran 4:135

Prayer: Remember the privileged few will not rally round you in moments of difficulty: they will try to side-track justice, they will ask for more than what they deserve and will show no gratitude for favors done to them. They will feel restive in the face of trials and will offer no regret for their shortcomings.

It is the common man who is the strength of the State and Religion. It is he who fights the enemy. So live in close contact with the masses and be mindful of their welfare.

-- Imam Ali

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Create Pathways Out of Homelessness

Suggested week for use: August 20-26

Bulletin/Newsletter Insert: In the texts of our faith traditions, we see images of transitioning from pain, oppression, and poverty to a place of comfort and opportunity. People experiencing homelessness need shelters and require support services for comfort and opportunity. *Ask candidates: "How will you expand supportive services for homeless Minnesotans? Will you prioritize increased funding for emergency shelters, transitional housing, and affordable housing options?"*

Scripture:

- Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. Matthew 11:28-29
- And He found you poor and made [you] self-sufficient. Surat Ad-Duhaa 93:8
- Again I saw all the oppressions that are done under the sun. And behold, the tears of the oppressed, and they had no one to comfort them! On the side of their oppressors there was power, and there was no one to comfort them. And I thought the dead who are already dead more fortunate than the living who are still alive. But better than both is he who has not yet been and has not seen the evil deeds that are done under the sun. Ecclesiastes 4:1-3

Prayer: Lord, have mercy on us for the deafness of our ears to the cries of the needy, and for the vain glory to which our power tempts us. --
Reinhold Niebuhr

Bulletin Inserts for the Poverty Progress Report

Provide Safe, Efficient, Affordable Transportation Across Minnesota

Suggested week for use: August 27-September 2

Bulletin/Newsletter Insert: The promise of freedom is referenced over and over again in our religious texts. Modern day freedom comes, in part, from an ability to obtain employment and access needed services such as medical assistance. Access to these things requires funding for local transit systems and improvements and maintenance of roads and bridges. *Ask candidates: "Do you support the expansion of transit system hours and service areas so that Minnesotans in retail and service jobs with variable hours can safely get from home to work? How will you support a transit system that is accessible for all, particularly Minnesotans with disabilities?"*

Scripture:

- The alms are meant only for the poor and the needy and those who are in charge thereof, those whose hearts are to be reconciled; and to free those in bondage, and to help those burdened with debt, and for expenditure in the way of Allah and for the wayfarer. This is an obligation from Allah. Allah is All-Knowing, All-Wise. Quran 9:60
- Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the straps of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke? Isaiah 58:6
- The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor. Luke 4:18-19

Prayer: All-knowing God, Help us to remain present as we walk with our brothers and sisters in times of joy and celebration and in times of pain and sorrow. Grant us the voice to speak out against injustices but also the voice to praise and to comfort. Give us the strength to build communities that ensure the well-being of all people, particularly the most vulnerable. May we always know that you are accompanying us. Amen.

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Educate Minnesotans for Success

Suggested week for use: September 3-9

Bulletin/Newsletter Insert: God's plans, laid out in scripture, describe a just and equitable future for God's people. In Minnesota that just and equitable future begins with addressing income, race, and geographical differences in our education system. We can create a positive future for all children by offering early education programming to vulnerable populations and ensuring that schools are prepared to meet students' needs. *Ask candidates: "Do you support targeted early education and home-visiting initiatives? How will you ensure that schools are able to provide sufficient supports to students? In what ways will you address the achievement gap in Minnesota's education system?"*

Scripture:

- For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope. Jeremiah 29:11
- And Moses was instructed in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and he was mighty in his words and deeds. Acts 7:22
- The believers, men and women, are protectors one of another: they enjoin what is just, and forbid what is evil: they observe regular prayers, practice regular charity, and obey Allah and His Messenger. On them will Allah pour His mercy: for Allah is exalted in power, wise. Quran 9:71

Prayer: Thanks for reminding us, God, that love and justice, rights and equal opportunity, are meant to be spread around.

-- Malcolm Boyd

Bulletin Inserts for the Poverty Progress Report

Guarantee Affordable Child Care for Low Income Families

Suggested week for use: September 10-16

Bulletin/Newsletter Insert: Not only do our sacred texts tell us to care for our children, but they prompt us to think towards the future as well. By guaranteeing affordable care for all children we are also investing in a future where children have the tools to succeed from an early age (80% of brain development happens in the first five years of a child's life!). Asking legislators to provide financial assistance to eligible families for childcare and increase provider rates for the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) cares for Minnesotan children and orients Minnesota towards a prosperous future. *Ask candidates: "Will you support legislation that increases child care provider rates for CCAP? What measures do you endorse that increase accessibility to childcare for all families, particularly low-income families?"*

Scripture:

- Have you seen him who belies the rewards and punishments of the Hereafter? He it is who drives away the orphan and does not urge giving away the food of the poor. Quran 107:1 - 3
- Start children off on the way they should go, and even when they are old they will not turn from it. Proverbs 22:6
- If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him! Luke 11:13

Prayer: We pray that our neighborhood, cities and nation become places where justice and peace are honored and celebrated and humanity revered and dignified. And show us how and where to make a start.

-- Bishop Lyman Ogilby, Episcopal Church

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Promote Work as a Means Out of Poverty

Suggested week for use: September 17-23

Bulletin/Newsletter Insert: While our faith calls us to address the immediate needs of our neighbors, we are also called to free our neighbors from the oppressions that create need in the first place. Work is an important tool to end poverty. In Minnesota, work opportunities can be expanded through job skills training, increases to the temporary cash assistance program (MFIP), and smooth transitions between receiving public benefits and work. *Ask candidates: "Will you commit to increasing the cash grant of The Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP)? Do you support tax credits from employers who offer employee training or career information services to their employees? How will you promote and reward job creation that offers individuals reasonable wages and benefits?"*

Scripture:

- Woe to those that make unjust laws, to those who issue oppressive decrees, to deprive the poor of their rights and withhold justice from the oppressed of my people. Isaiah 10:1-2
- If a brother or a sister is without clothing and in need of daily food, and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and filled," and yet you do not give them what is necessary for their body, what use is that? Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, being by itself. James 2:15-17
- The believers, both men and women, are allies of one another. They enjoin good, forbid evil, establish Prayer, pay Zakah, and obey Allah and His Messenger. Surely Allah will show mercy to them. Allah is All-Mighty, All-Wise. Quran 9:71

Prayer: There are eight degrees in giving of tzedakah in Jewish teaching, one higher than the other: those who give grudgingly, reluctantly, or with regret; those who give less than is fitting, but give graciously; those who give what is fitting, but only after being asked; those who give before being asked; those who give without knowing to whom, although the recipients know the identity of the donors; those who give without making their identity known to the recipients; those who give without knowing to whom, and neither do the recipients know from whom they give; those who help others by giving a gift or loan, or by making them business partners or finding them employment, thereby helping them dispense aid to others. As scripture says, "You shall strengthen him, be he a stranger or settler, he shall live with you."

-- based on Maimonides' Eight Degrees of Tzedakah, Mishnah Torah

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Support Working Families Through Tax Policy Changes

Suggested week for use: September 24-30

Bulletin/Newsletter Insert: The messages of our scriptures tell us that we must give special care to those struggling to meet their basic needs. Compassion and fairness (though not necessarily sameness) are the tools that should drive us. In Minnesota, tax credits and refunds can be important measures to promote economic stability. *Ask candidates: “Will you ensure that our tax code includes the Working Family Credit and Child, Dependent Care Credit, and Child Tax Credit? Can you commit to protecting the Property Tax Refund, which protects low-income homeowners and renters, in Minnesota’s tax code?”*

Scripture:

- Listen! The wages of laborers who moved your fields, which you kept back by fraud, cry out, and the cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord of hosts. James 5:4
- And do not become like the woman who, after having painstakingly spun her yarn, caused it to disintegrate into pieces. You resort to oaths as instruments of mutual deceit so that one people might take greater advantage than another although Allah puts you to the test through this. Surely on the Day of Resurrection He will make clear the truth concerning the matters over which you differed. Quran 16:92
- He will again have compassion on us; He will tread our iniquities underfoot. You will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea. Micah 7:19

Prayer: Almighty God, You teach us by reason that all the riches of the world are made by you for our common use, And that by nature not one of them belongs to one human being more than to another; Direct us, we pray, in obedience to your will, That all things may serve all people, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

-- St. Anselm of Canterbury

Bulletin Inserts for the Poverty Progress Report

Help Minnesotans Plan for the Future

Suggested week to use: October 1-7

Bulletin/Newsletter Insert: The bones for an economically just society are laid out for us in our scripture. Modern day barriers to economic justice in Minnesota come in the form of payday lenders, debt from medical or student loans, and low financial literacy. Opportunities to build wealth and to plan for the future must be available for all Minnesotans. *Ask Candidates: "Which programs will you support that allow Minnesotans to build assets? How will you protect economically vulnerable Minnesotans from falling into crippling debt? In what ways will you help Minnesotans plan for the future?"*

Scripture:

- Seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you...and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will have your welfare. Jeremiah 29:7
- And spend something (in charity) out of the substance which We have bestowed on you, before Death should come to any of you and he should say, "O my Lord! why didst Thou not give me respite for a little while? I should then have given (largely) in charity, and I should have been one of the doers of good". Quran 63:10
- How does God's love abide in anyone who has the world's goods and sees a brother or sister in need and yet refuses to help? 1 John 3:17

Prayer: Lord, help me not to be a taker but a tender, Lord, help me not to be a getter but a giver, Lord, help me not to be a hindrance but a help, Lord, help me not to be a critic but a catalyst for good.

-- Marion Wright Edelman

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Make Healthcare Accessible to All Minnesotans

Suggested week for use: October 8-14

Bulletin/Newsletter Insert: Our religious texts teach us how the mind, body, and soul are connected. As with the mind and soul, the health of the body and the health of our neighbors' bodies is something to be cared for with compassion. In Minnesota we recognize all too well how access to health care is essential for us to thrive in all areas of life. Health care coverage is key to preventing financial catastrophe caused by uncovered medical bills and remains a critical tool to obtain and keep a job. *Ask Candidates: "What measures do you support that will increase Minnesotans' access to primary and behavioral healthcare? How will you invest in the long-term health of Minnesotans?"*

Scripture:

- Ah, you shepherds of Israel who have been feeding yourselves! Should not shepherds feed the sheep? You eat the fat, you clothe yourselves with the wool, you slaughter the fatlings; but you do not feed the sheep. You have not strengthened the weak, you have not healed the sick, you have not bound up the injured, you have not brought back the strayed, you have not sought the lost, but with force and harshness you have ruled them. Ezekiel 34:4
- Beloved, I pray that all may go well with you and that you may be in good health, as it goes well with your soul. 3 John 1:2
- Worship Allah and associate nothing with Him, and to parents do good, and to relatives, orphans, the needy, the near neighbor, the neighbor farther away, the companion at your side, the traveler, and those whom your right hands possess. Indeed, Allah does not like those who are self-deluding and boastful. Quran 4:36

Prayer: Most men worry about their own bellies, and other people's souls, when we all ought to be worried about our own souls, and other people's bellies. – Rabbi Israel Salanter