

Occupy our faith

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The park police dismantled Occupy DC. After weeks of rumors, court orders, assurances, and broken promises, they folded down the tents. Many in the religious community worked hard to make sure the rights of the homeless were protected in the process, and that the protestors who still have the right to assemble have a place to stay. A Lutheran Church downtown is housing many of them.

Though the protestors have been removed, I don't think the movement will go away. It grew, in a very short time, across the country and the world. Now that many of the stakes have been upended, the encampments morph into other things—radio stations, media groups, national networks, and faith movements.

Why will the movements persist even after the tent poles have been folded up? Because the problems that the Occupiers lifted up are real and they ought to grab people of faith.

We should be concerned about income inequities. The fact that [rich get richer](#), and the [number of poor people grows](#) in our country should incite us. The prophets haunt people of faith as we remember their rage against those who ravage the needy. We know that God lifts up the lowly, fills the hungry with good things. Jesus proclaims that the poor are blessed.

In our country, when lawmakers rely heavily on the wealthy and “corporate personhood” for their campaign contributions, those gifts are often repaid through tax cuts and benefits. The rich have their advocates; we need a strong movement of people who will speak loudly for the growing number of poor. While the wealthy pay 15% on the income they make on investments, shelter their funds in the Cayman Islands, and receive numerous tax cuts, those in poverty carry the burden. It's not just about the fact that the janitor of a corporation might pay a higher percentage of taxes than a hedge fund manager, but her children will also pay with anemic

education, dangerous infrastructure, student loans, or military service.

What are we doing to combat poverty in our country and make sure that we join the voices of the prophets who speak out against injustice? Often denominational churches work hard on these issues, but we do it within our particular silos and we may not effectively communicate what we're up to. We neglect to work with one another, with other people of faith, or with national movements to make our voices stronger. Older generations become annoyed with splashy social media efforts that don't have strong organization, while younger generations become frustrated with the slow pace of established institutions and boards.

But what if we took this important moment to harmonize our voices on behalf of the poor? Surely we could do a better job than those who are working against insurance coverage for birth control. What if we came together so that the solos we sing could become a choir that cannot be ignored? What if we began to work between generations, so that the on-the-ground, persistent, wise organization could meet up with the passion, energy and technological savvy of a new generation?

So tell me, right now in the comments, what are you doing, as a church or as a denomination to speak out for the poor? Can we make our voices louder, together?