



NEWS RELEASE – VICTORIA FAITH IN ACTION APRIL 21, 2010

BEGGING FOR JUSTICE: Has it really come to this?

Faith in Action, a coalition of Victoria faith communities providing support for the vulnerable, is taking its concern for the rising number of poor in our midst to the provincial Legislature.

Led by five spiritual leaders of the community, Faith in Action will gather on the front steps of the Legislature at noon, April 28, to beg—literally *beg*—the government to address the rising pain and injustice being created by widening gaps in the social safety net.

“Using a begging bowl, faith leaders will beg on behalf of the programs and supports that only government can adequately provide for those living below the poverty line,” says Faith in Action.

The event has been sparked by increasing evidence on the front lines—where all of Faith in Action’s support effort is provided—that the problem of poverty in our community is getting worse. The number of people using its food banks, shelters and other services has grown rapidly in recent months as continued government cutbacks have taken hold.

The situation has alarmed and frustrated Faith in Action members and community volunteers alike. This has prompted calls for more public action to address the poverty issue at a higher level. Hence “Begging for Justice” will be taken to the seat of provincial government.

Begging in silence is a spiritual exercise with a long and honourable history and roots in several major religions, including Buddhism, Hinduism and Christianity. It is still widely practiced in Asia. Donations or ‘alms’ collected in this fashion are mainly used to support social programs provided by faith organizations in these countries.

As well, every major religion enjoins its followers to work towards alleviating the problem of poverty and inequity in society as an expression of their faith. References to this duty can be found in the Bible, the Torah and Koran, among others.

For this reason, Faith in Action has issued an invitation to people of faith in communities throughout the Capital Regional District to come and stand in solidarity with Faith in Action on April 28 as its spiritual leaders beg justice for the poor and vulnerable in our community. Everyone who participates will have the

opportunity to add a personal request for justice to a large begging bowl. All contents of the bowl will be collected by a Member of the Legislature and presented to the House.

When asked, 87% of British Columbians say they believe now is the time for strong political leadership to reduce the number of poor people here and elsewhere in Canada. Such leadership would recognize that it costs less to support the most vulnerable directly than to pay the social and medical costs that come from neglect.

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