

**MINISTRY WITH THE POOR:
BUILDING BLOCKS –
SIX STEP OUTREACH PLAN.**

- I Sanctuary clothing/food baskets**
- II Prepare and Serving Meals at established feeding sites**
- III Eat and converse with others**
- IV Participate in local immersion experience**
- V Become a life guide to a family**
- VI Practice “Aggressive Pursuit” of persons who live in poverty**

Step One - If just getting started; *This is an introduction to outreach. It is an easy entry. Often, persons find themselves in discount stores shopping for food and clothing for their family. This step can help us think about God’s call to help others by purchasing a new package of underwear or socks, or notebook, or paper, or peanut butter and jelly, and then have the church transport these things to a location pantry for distribution to persons who live in poverty*

Actions:

- Research a food pantry in the community to support.
- Place a large basket in or around the primary worship area where congregants may bring food, underwear, socks, toys, etc. on a habitual schedule.

Step Two - If the above is already a part of your church life; *This step involves moving persons past the contribution box into more human contact. It becomes a bigger step to bring food, prepare food, travel to a site where persons who are poor congregate for meals, and serve the meal. This may be the first time, face to face, opportunity for many church people.*

Action:

- On a regularly scheduled basis, bring and serve food to hungry persons to an already established feeding site.

Step Three - If the above 2 things are already a part of your church life; *This is the beginning of real relationship building. Here we get deeper into human contact and start finding common interests and hearing life stories. People will share their story under trustful settings.*

Action:

- Eat with others. Don't stop with the preparation, transportation, and serving of food, eat with the persons who are poor. Grab a plate, sit down next to someone who is in a different socio-economic class and strike up a conversation. Extend beyond your comfort zone.

Step Four - If the above 3 things are already a part of your church life; *Now one moves from an occasional conversation with persons who know poverty up close to deeper conversations with many persons. You will hear their stories describing how they found themselves in this place and experience "up front and personal." This may include social service bureaucracy frustrations the poor have endured. You will learn the principles of "first, do no harm" and "treat everyone with dignity and respect." You may begin to understand poverty's spiritual dimension and the church's calling to be an active partner in transformation and stabilization.*

Action:

- Participate in an immersion experience. Block out 1-3 days. Find a guide who is intimately familiar with the world of the poor in your geographic area. Take a team of persons from your church to a site(s) in your city which provide relief from oppressive poverty. Under a directed, structured program, immerse yourselves in the world of poverty through the people you meet.

Step Five: If the above 4 things are already a part of your church life; *Now we increase the level of intimacy with those who live with poverty. We are persons who are able to break through barriers for others struggling to live independently and achieve stability. Be careful to practice "equality of power" in these relationships. You will learn as*

much from the new friend who lives in poverty as they will learn from you.

Action:

Offer your time as a problem solver and life guide. Lawyers do pro-bono work fighting bureaucracy in the name of the poor. Likewise, physicians, nurses, educators, social workers, anyone with any developed skill, can join in partnering with someone to develop necessary life skills.

Step Six: If the above 5 things are already a part of your church life;

Take inventory and discern how "diversity friendly" your church is along socio-economic lines. Work on making the music, the liturgy, what clothes people wear, and how persons are greeted friendlier than those have less. When the necessary, poverty friendly changes have been put in place, aggressively pursue persons who live in poverty to worship with you. Become the church of Acts, chapter 2. Invitations are not enough. Encourage others as follows "I really need you to come and worship with me. I don't know if you need to come to church or not but I cannot be all God has called me to be unless you worship with me....." This will be a plea to one with whom there might be a developing relationship. Trust has been offered, tested, and received.

Action:

Practice "Aggressive Pursuit" of persons who live in poverty, your new friends for the purpose of coming to your congregations Bible Study and Worship.

Conclusion:

These steps follow each other well. They are not necessarily rigid in their order but these steps have been time tested. We suggest the early steps be in place before any church takes on the later steps. They are building blocks.