

MEETING NEEDS

MOVING FROM RELIEF TO INDIVIDUAL DEVELOPMENT

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COMMUNITIES FIRST

WORKBOOK 3

Meeting Needs

Moving from Relief to Individual Development

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1. Background

Churches have the responsibility to get to the root causes of individual or family needs within the community and help people build skills to become more self-sufficient. We are called to be compassionate, which literally means “to suffer with.” Providing relief for immediate needs is not a substitute for being available and entering into the life of a broken and hurting individual. In doing this, word and deed combine to bear real fruit and church members begin to simultaneously transform and be transformed.

2. Development Terms

Before getting into how to help your congregation participate in meeting individual needs in developmental ways, consider some useful definitions. There are undoubtedly better and worse ways to define these terms, but we offer them to establish common frames of reference so that we can all begin on the same page.

“Community”

The term “community” often refers to a specific affinity group or geographic unit. The *Communities First Team* strongly encourages congregations to consider the geography around their church building as the critical location within which to concentrate their program and ministry outreach efforts. Attempting to take on more than the area in close proximity to the church can dilute the impact of the ministry.

Questions:

1. How would your congregation describe its various communities?
2. Does your congregation identify a specific geographic area as the target of its various ministries and programs?
3. Should it? Should it not?

“Stakeholder”

Stakeholders are those (neighbors, churches, program participants, schools, non-profits, businesses, etc.) who are most directly affected by the positive and negative aspects of an activity, plan, or condition in their shared geographic area.

Questions:

1. Who might be the natural stakeholders of your church’s programs? Imagine who the stakeholders are for:
 - a. a food pantry operated from the church facilities
 - b. an after-school program for middle school students
 - c. a recovery group meeting on Wednesday nights
2. Think about the people within your church’s geography. What are two issues they face as a community? What makes those issues important to the various stakeholder groups? Are those issues important to your church? What does that say about your church’s relationship to community stakeholders?

3. How might the forward movement of the Kingdom of God in your neighborhood be affected if your church took up one of the issues identified as important to your community stakeholders?

Levels of Ministry

“Relief Ministry”

Relief ministries tend to provide temporary assists without much of an effort to determine if the need is temporary or permanent, if it is eliminated or still present, or if the served person's life is substantially impacted. Examples of some relief ministries are: bringing a welcome gift or a meal, cleaning someone's house, painting a fence, giving someone a ride, paying a bill.

Questions:

1. What ministries does your congregation implement that appear to be relief ministries?
2. Think about two relief ministries your congregation implements now. How do those ministries affect the different stakeholder groups in your church's community?
3. What are the pros and cons of having a clear geographic focus to relief ministries?

“Betterment Ministry”

Betterment ministries tend to create positive, caring, beneficial environments and relationships that offer participants respite or positive experiences. Examples of some betterment ministries are: providing temporary housing, giving someone a used car, standing beside someone in a difficult circumstance, or helping someone create a budget to live by.

Questions:

1. Which of your congregation's ministries appear to be betterment ministries?
2. Think about two betterment ministries your congregation implements now. How do those ministries affect the different stakeholder groups in your church's community?
3. What are the pros and cons of having a clear geographic focus to betterment ministries?

“Development Ministry”

Development ministries focus on measured changes (usually increases) in the knowledge, skills, abilities, or condition of the participants. Normally, these changes are measured in some numerical way and are bound by a time frame. Examples: “Increase reading ability to 8th grade level in six months.” “Save at least \$20 per month for at least 12 months.” “Purchase a home within 18 months.” “Be drug- or alcohol-free for at least three months.” Examples of some development ministries are: teaching someone English, increasing educational skills, teaching a marriage enrichment class, helping someone learn to use financial institutions, helping someone find a job or buy their first home.

Questions:

1. What ministries does your congregation implement that appear to be development ministries?

2. Think about two development ministries your congregation implements now. How do those ministries affect the different stakeholder groups in your church's community?
3. What are the pros and cons of having a clear geographic focus to development ministries?

Going Deeper: Understanding the Purposes and Goals of Relief and Development Ministries

It is likely that at least one of your church's ministries is a relief ministry. The "Meeting Needs" workbook focuses on transitioning some of your current relief ministries and programs to development ministries and programs that equip participants to reach higher levels of self-sufficiency. The chart below provides a framework for viewing and discussing the similarities and differences between relief and development ministries.

Relief Ministries	Development Ministries
Addresses crisis situation	Addresses chronic situation
Short term intervention	Long term intervention
The presenting need is identifiable quickly	The actual need might be different from the presenting need, which may be unearthed over time.
Event oriented	Relationship oriented
Presenting need often addressed by giving something	Actual need often addressed when participant gains knowledge, abilities, and/or access to information for the purpose of solving a problem
Focused more on what "we" do for "them."	Focused more on what participant can do for themselves once they have gained skills.
Tend not to be focused on alleviating sin effects.	Tend to focus on alleviating sin effects—personal, corporate, and systemic—in holistic ways
Akin to evangelism without discipleship	Akin to evangelism with discipleship

An often unintended outcome: fostering dependency. Relief ministries tend not to identify <u>why</u> people use these ministries. People whose need is temporary might not need us in order to return to a level of self-sufficiency, but others, for whom crisis living is somewhat normal, may become dependent and will not be helped by our relief ministries in the long run.	An intended outcome is empowerment. Empowerment involves convincing people that they have the ability to take charge of some part of their lives, and setting them on the path to acquiring the needed knowledge, skills, abilities, or relationships they need to do so. Empowering someone envisions that person as being capable of becoming an equivalent partner in ministry.
Aid tends to be directed toward specific needs. We see hunger, we provide food. We see utilities being shut off, we provide emergency assistance funds. We see worn clothes, we provide used clothes in better condition.	Aid tends to be directed at specific opportunities. We see a community full of renters, we provide opportunities to build knowledge, behavior patterns, etc. that support becoming homeowners. We see low educational achievement, we see opportunities to help students master reading and math at grade levels.
Tends not to focus on behavior change in the participant.	Tends to provide incentives to stimulate behavior change in the participant.
Church members do not have to confront their fear or mistrust of program participants.	Because of importance placed on relationship building between the church members and participants, fear and mistrust that each person has towards the other can be confronted and healing can occur.

Now that you are aware of some key differences between relief and development ministries, alone or with a ministry group do the following:

1. Assess a particular ministry (food pantry, financial education, clothing bank, etc.) using this tool to guide you.
2. Envision what things could be like a year from now if you incorporated you're your church's ministry elements from the development ministry side of the chart.
3. Make a list of suitable next steps for transitioning some aspects of your targeted ministry from a relief orientation towards a more developmental orientation.
4. Share your thoughts with others in your congregation and some ministry participants. Find ways to incorporate their ideas into the transition plans of your group. Begin to implement some of those ideas, first in small ways to ensure process and impact are positive, then in larger ways.

3. Church/Community Alignment

How does your congregation interact with its community, if at all? Recall the difference between ministry *in*, *to*, or *with* the community discussed in the introduction to the *Communities First* book. Churches that implement ministry “in” their community are not likely to engage people from the community. Churches that implement ministry “to” their community tend to do relief ministries. Churches that implement ministry “with” their community tend to focus their resources on development ministries. The form of interaction a church has with its community often determines the kind of ministry a church does.

Record below your thoughts about the way your congregation interacts (or does not interact) with your community. State the reasons for your assessment. Also state whether you think your congregation is described by more than one interaction model, and whether members want to move from one model to another.

Your congregation's basic alignment description is: (<i>In</i> , <i>To</i> , or <i>With</i>)	Reasons for this selection are:	Would congregation agree with assessment? (Yes/No)	Would congregation desire change in alignment description? (Yes/No)	Steps to take to A) introduce congregation to alignment descriptions and B) encourage change
	-			-
	-			-
	-			-
	-			-
	-			-

Using some of the definitions presented and the “In-To-With” model, let’s begin a more comprehensive overview of two or three of your church’s outreach ministries. Below are three identical charts, one chart for each ministry. Alone or in a ministry group, do the following:

1. Agree on where that ministry fits along the Relief continuum
2. Agree on where it fits along the Betterment continuum
3. Agree on where it fits along the Development continuum
4. Record in the appropriate boxes on the chart some key words or phrases that reflect your shared assessment

Ministry #1 _____

Development			
Betterment			
Relief			
	In Community	To Community	With Community

Your concluding thoughts about the assessment of Ministry #1:

Ministry #2 _____

Development			
Betterment			
Relief			
	In Community	To Community	With Community

Your concluding thoughts about the assessment of Ministry #2:

Ministry #3 _____

Development			
Betterment			
Relief			
	In Community	To Community	With Community

Your concluding thoughts about the assessment of Ministry #3:

4. Transitioning a Program from Relief to Development

Key materials you will need as you work through transitioning a program from relief to individual development include:

1. A clearly written one-page description of the ministry you want to transition. An example appears below. It should include:
 - a. ministry title
 - b. one to two sentences describing the ministry's purpose
 - c. a brief profile of the kind of participants served by the ministry
 - d. a brief listing of the key recurring steps that implement the ministry
 - e. a discussion on how decisions about the ministry are made, including by whom (specifying any role participants have)
2. A stakeholder analysis of should be involved
3. Some examples of ministry descriptions that do incorporate participant self-sufficiency into their ministry design (spend some time gathering them)

Example: Ministry Description

Ministry Title: Deacons Fund/Benevolence Fund

Ministry Purpose: To assist eligible church members and neighbors in meeting emergency needs or expenses they would not otherwise be able to meet. This assistance is intended to help them through crisis periods.

Profile of People Served:

1. All church members and church neighbors who live within a five-block radius of our church who meet low- to moderate-income guidelines
2. Those who have not received Deacons Fund/Benevolence Fund assistance within the past six months
3. Those who have received a written termination or shut-off notice

Key Recurring Steps:

1. Requestor brings to designated church member copy of written termination or shut-off notice.
2. Requestor completes church's assistance request form
3. Designated church member discusses in person with requestor his or her eligibility for assistance and the nature of the crisis
 - a. the reason for the lack of payments
 - b. encourages the requestor to resolve the problem for the future and prays to that end with him or her
4. Designated church member consults with another person assigned to implement this ministry and, if he or she concurs, calls vendor to arrange payment assistance if possible. If no concurrence, or if no funds are available, informs requestor the church is unable to assist at this time.

5. If vendor will cancel termination or shut-off notice, designated church member arranges for payment up to \$350, and initiates process for church financial official to send check to vendor.
6. Church financial official sends check to vendor.
7. Designated church member reports action to deacons as scheduled.

Persons to be involved in decisions about increasing self-sufficiency in Fund activities:

1. A committee of the deacons/trustees who will develop recommendations and report them to all deacons/trustees
 - a. Two church members who assist with this process on behalf of the church (may be deacons/trustees)
 - b. Two deacons/trustees not generally involved in Fund activities
 - c. Two requestors
 - d. A church member whose work involves helping participants become more self-sufficient
2. Deacons/trustees who will adopt changes and re-write ministry descriptions and procedures.

5. Steps to Change

The chart below suggests some steps for adding development dimensions to a relief ministry:

Assess the program as it is now	What happens to a participant now?	What do we want to have happen to a participant in the future?	Make a list of who needs to be part of the design change (always include a few participants in the design changes)
Define what needs to change (include a few participants in this step)	Define success: A participant in this program is successful when... (define the behavior change you want to see) e.g.: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Passes GED• Saves \$40 month towards asset• Removes \$500 debt	Gather a group of stakeholders and design the program to achieve the changed behaviors you want to see.	Test the design ideas by running them past some additional past program participants and getting their feedback.
Make the Changes	Recruit the people and set the times and places to try the new program design on a small scale with a few participants.	Evaluate and modify the program based on this experience.	Based on what works, develop new policies and procedures. Get formal approvals if they are needed.
Scale Up	Create a budget and raise funds as needed.	Add staff as needed.	Constantly grow through ongoing evaluation and feedback.

6. After the Transition: Evaluating the New Ministry

Programs change and improve when there is a process of evaluation. Evaluations ask hard questions such as

- Is this program doing what it was designed to do?
- Is this program doing what we want it to?
- What is best about this program?
- What is most fruitful about this program?
- How can we increase program performance and effectiveness?
- All programs and ministries should have some time set aside for evaluation. This process should include community stakeholders in addition to ministry actors.

Here are some Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) to help you as you review and assess as a ministry group. Specific questions and processes can be developed to fit your local situation. You can use our FAQs as a guide.

1. How often should we get back together?
There are two answers to this question:
 - a. Frequently: to review implementation of individual steps, celebrate great developments and results in the lives of participants and ministry implementers, troubleshoot, etc.
 - b. Periodically: (quarterly or semi-annually) to look at the big picture of what is happening.
2. Who should attend the big-picture review sessions?
People from inside and outside the ministry implementation team. Include other deacons, the pastor, some church members who have knowledge and skills about helping others (personally or professionally), and some program recipients.
3. What are some reasons congregations do not ask participants for input on ministry planning and evaluation?
 - a. Distrust of their motives
 - b. The assets used are the church's, not the community's
 - c. We have more knowledge, etc. than they do — we don't need them as much as they need us
 - d. Programs often express unity within our denomination
 - e. Jesus told us to serve the poor (them)
 - f. We have always done our programs this way
 - g. We never thought to ask them
4. Why include program participants when planning or evaluating congregational outreach programs?
Program participants can give you insight into things such as:
 - a. whether they feel respected and valued as a part of your ministry
 - b. how well Jesus is portrayed in your actions toward them
 - c. what is working well and what needs to change
 - d. how others in the community see and assess your program

- e. whether your program is hitting or missing the mark in their lives
 - f. how to tell if participants are acquiring new knowledge, skills, and abilities
 - g. specific steps to improve the ministry or program
 - h. whether we are open to discover what participants have to offer: there may be a participant who is ready to serve as a partner in your ministry
 - i. securing wider community support for the ministry
5. What is a good basic agenda for periodic ministry assessment meetings?
- a. Opening prayer
 - b. Review ministry mission or purpose statement and discuss briefly
 - c. Outline the specific definition of change and the specific improvements in knowledge, skills, or abilities for program participants
 - d. Develop lists of what is working and what is not
 - e. Celebrate successes and understand why they worked
 - f. Troubleshoot what is not working well and recommend corrective actions
 - g. Discuss how effectively the ministry's stories are communicated to the congregation and the community and determine how to improve communication
 - h. Other matters of importance to your team, including listing additional resources needed and who will be responsible for securing them
 - i. Closing prayer

6. What is the advantage of holding periodic reviews as recommended? How could things go wrong with the ministry if we don't?

Programs succeed or make changes for success as a response to *feedback*. When a ministry implementation team receives meaningful feedback, its further actions are influenced. Consider how you drive your car. To ensure you get where you want to go, you have to read all your gauges and understand traffic patterns and environmental markers. Leave out critical pieces of information and you might not get where you want to go safely or in a timely manner. Without the periodic checks we suggest, you might not 1) see the big picture, or 2) make meaningful changes as you seek to help people increase their knowledge, skills, and abilities.

7. Looking More Closely at Developmental Ministries

Here are some outreaching ministries that can help your church move its outreach from relief to development. As you discuss them and perhaps seek to implement all or part of any one of them, continue to reflect on:

- Relief, Betterment, and Development (strive to achieve development)
- “In”, “To”, and “With” the community (strive to achieve “with” the community)

A. Financial Literacy

Program/Ministry Goals

Church-based financial literacy ministries or programs are numerous and have various goals. Some goals are:

- encourage people to adopt or use a budget
- understand the importance of credit and improve credit scores
- reduce debt
- establish a better link to financial institutions
- adopt a savings pattern
- prepare for home ownership or further education or start a small business
- teach children and youth about good money management habits
- study biblical principles about financial stewardship

Your church might choose one or more of these goals to pursue.

Program/Ministry Outcomes

Some churches have developed financial education programs and ministries around short-term or single events. Some examples are:

- one-half or full-day conferences centering on one or two key themes with speakers and break-out sessions
- tax preparation services including earned income tax credit (EITC) work

Projects such as these have limited expectations of participants and do little to ensure the increase of their knowledge, skills, or ability. Providing some educational or tax benefits is the key outcome, but the valuable work is provided by the church. Long-term sustainable change for the participant generally cannot be demonstrated. Hence, these kinds of projects are either of the relief or betterment sort.

Some programs and ministries emphasize certain activities or processes that the financial ministry leaders know best or are most familiar with. Success is determined by consistent implementation of key activities, including:

- number of sessions completed in a specific curriculum
- number of participants setting up a budget

- involvement of mentors
- use of financial institution experts to teach classes

Programs whose primary focus is activities such as these might properly be called “betterment” programs. They focus on creating a positive, caring, beneficial environment and relationships that offer participants respite or positive experiences.

Other programs emphasize actual anticipated changes in the knowledge, skill, ability, or condition of the participants. Program staff and key stakeholders together can determine their success by the degree to which participants achieve expected changes, such as:

- saving at least \$20 per month for six months
- reducing personal debt by 50% over one year
- improving credit scores by 20% within 18 months
- buying a first home within 24 months
- opening a checking or investment account

Programs such as these are development programs requiring real exchanges between real people, not merely seminar attendance. They might use the same activities and strategies as a betterment program, but the main features are the changes the participants make, not the steps the program leaders take.

Program/Ministry Resources

There are many excellent resources including curricula around which to build a financial education program or ministry. A simple internet search using words like “financial literacy curriculum” or “financial education” will reveal a wealth of resources. An exceptional web address from which to begin your search is <http://www.nefe.org/amexeconfund/>.

Many banks, credit unions, insurance companies, the FDIC, Fannie Mae, and other financial institutions have their own financial education curriculum. Some of their expert staff might also volunteer to teach workshop sessions.

Another excellent source of potential resources and resource people are your local colleges and universities.

Of course, you should also search within your congregation and its neighborhood for knowledgeable and skilled people to help lead a financial education ministry, teach, coordinate, and/or mentor.

Other Program/Ministry Distinctives

Some interesting distinctives your church might consider in its financial education program or ministry include:

- Providing a financial match of \$25 towards the next debt, payable to the vendor, for a participant who successfully pays off one debt, up to specified amount of match

- Providing a 2:1 or 3:1 match for every dollar a participant saves towards buying an asset such as a house, education, starting a business, etc. Remember to pay your match directly to the vendor. Be cautious about providing your match to things whose values predictably degrade rather than increase over time.
- Offering a voucher or other incentive for people who complete a milestone in the program.

Check out this website for some fascinating true stories about financial education programs:
<http://www.cityvisioninc.org/Family%20Budgeting.htm>.

B. Employment

Program/Ministry Goals

Church-based employment ministries or programs are numerous and have various goals. Some goals are:

- acquaint participants with available jobs
- use internet vocational resources
- create resumes and help people hone job interviewing skills
- develop jobs via direct contacts with employers
- conduct job fairs
- teach entrepreneurship
- assist fledgling entrepreneurs
- provide counseling on career selection and advancement
- support employed people through providing child care and transportation
- encourage job retention through training to manage work-related conflict and stress
- study biblical principles about labor and management

Your church may choose one or more of these goals to pursue.

Program/Ministry Outcomes

Some churches have developed employment programs and ministries around short-term or single events. Some examples are:

- job fairs
- teaching resume writing and holding mock employment interviews
- posting available job openings

Projects such as these have very limited goals and expectations of participants. Providing basic information or making simple introductions possible is the key. The program provider has no investment in ensuring the participant develops and uses new knowledge or achieves a long-term change in his or her condition.

This puts such projects in either a relief or betterment category.

Some programs emphasize certain processes or activities that the employment ministry leaders know best or are familiar with. They determine their success by consistent implementation of key activities including:

- teaching computer literacy
- counseling on career selection or career advancement
- teaching entrepreneurship
- providing supportive child care or transportation

Programs whose primary focus is on activities such as these might be properly called “betterment” programs. They focus on creating positive, caring, beneficial environments and relationships that offer participants respite or positive experiences.

Other programs emphasize actual anticipated changes in the knowledge, skill, ability, or condition of the participants. Program staff and other key stakeholders determine their success by the degree to which participants achieve expected changes such as:

- securing a job and keeping it for at least three months
- starting a small business and earning at least \$1,000 every three months
- developing skills to manage and cope with work-related conflicts and stresses

Programs such as these are development programs. They might use the same activities and strategies as a betterment program, but the main features are the changes the participants make, not the steps the program takes.

Program/Ministry Resources

There are many excellent resources including curricula available around which to build an employment program or ministry. A simple internet search using the words “employment programs” or “job development programs” will reveal a wealth of resources. An exceptional web address from which to begin your search is <http://www.hopeworksmich.org>.

Your community might also have a government-sponsored welfare-to-work, employment security, or unemployment office nearby that might assist. Also there might be a local business CEO who champions hiring TANF or welfare recipients; he or she might be an excellent resource for your church.

For information on a creative, exciting program that helps high school students prepare for entering the job market, check out <http://www.s2cprogressions.org>.

Of course, you should search within your congregation for knowledgeable and skilled people to lead a financial education ministry as well as teach, coordinate, and mentor. People who live in your church’s neighborhood might also serve with you in any of these capacities.

Other Program/Ministry Distinctives

Some interesting distinctives your church might consider in its employment program or ministry include:

- Challenging employers in your church or other churches with whom yours is affiliated to hire one or more of your congregation's unemployed or underemployed members or neighbors
- Partner in any number of ways with a smaller, perhaps faith-based, job development agency

A true story:

Employment WISE: A Fresh Contribution to Economic Justice by Earl James

Economic justice is a tough nut to crack. Many of us who commit ourselves to it, be it through a desire to lessen the devastation of poverty or for spiritual reasons, wrestle with key strategies like ensuring fair incomes for persons and families in poverty. There are many approaches to such strategies. In this article, we showcase an exceptional effort by Jubilee Jobs, Inc. of Grand Rapids, Michigan. Jubilee Jobs is an employment assistance ministry that partners with City Vision, a Christian community development organization also located in Grand Rapids.

Jubilee helps many men and women secure meaningful employment. But, like many organizations that sincerely track long-term job placements, Jubilee observed that too large a percentage of its participants quit fairly soon after securing their jobs, either because of conflict or ongoing stress. Executive Director Chana' Edmond-Verley and her team prayerfully wrestled with this dilemma, and developed a response they call *Workforce Intervention for Successful Employment (WISE)*.

Edmond-Verley believes that God often disperses pieces of his purpose among several people, as opposed to giving his total vision to one person. He did just that, she says, with WISE. She and two key staff members, John Gardner and Earlina Libbett, worked out a rubber-meets-the-road program that helps Jubilee participants learn and adjust well to the often hidden middle-class rules that dictate how many of our organizations and businesses operate. The strategy they developed has four key parts: Peer Group, Employment Assistance, Counseling, and Health Care. This holistic response is customized to the needs of the individual participant.

Jubilee launched WISE for Men over three years ago. Many of the original participants had prior or current criminal records, were involved in community service and/or were active participants with Jubilee or Baxter Community Center, a partner organization of Jubilee Jobs. John Gardner, program coordinator, observed that the men often have fears about putting their best foot forward to better their lives. Gardner found that how men handle conflict with spouses, with significant others, or in the workplace can derail their attempts to implement positive plans for fruitful lives. Hence, the Peer Group component for WISE for Men surrounds four things: 1) positive decision-making in conflict situations, 2) staying clean of substances, 3) spiritual growth, and 4) budgeting. Jubilee developed the curriculum, which frequently undergoes redesign considerations to keep it on the edge of promoting change in how the men manage tension and gain skills for positive living. John and others facilitate group meetings. Jubilee has contracted with a social worker/therapist to provide more in-depth psychological assistance to men.

Currently, 13 men are in the group. 195 men have used some part of the WISE program so far this year. Jubilee, with some consultation from City Vision, is investigating additional points of intervention. One such point of intervention is how well WISE men are shouldering their child support responsibilities. Jubilee's concern is that each man handles these responsibilities without derailing their development in other portions of their lives. WISE believes that to be the best man you can be, you must be the best father you can be.

Planning for WISE for Women began in 2000. Libbett, program coordinator, discussed with Edmond-Verley many of the workplace difficulties female participants encounter. Basically, women were coping with stresses and struggles over values. Libbet, Edmond-Verley, and members of the community fashioned a 15-week curriculum, similar to that of WISE for Men but crafted for women. The curriculum emphasizes home management, spiritual growth, and making sound decisions. At each meeting, participants share about the hurts they have to endure, and affirm each other. In most cases, Libbett said, the stress levels do not drop for participants. What does change is how they manage their stresses and make decisions while under pressure. Without any formal advertising, WISE for Women has served 30 participants in peer groups in 2001. Many other women benefited from employment assistance and counseling.

An interesting and crucial feature of both programs is the use of reflection logs. Normally, each weekly session begins with participants writing in their journals about their week, including in it events, changes, what they felt, and what they learned. They turn their reflection logs in each week for Edmond-Verley to assess them as part of the program evaluation process.

What are some of the impacts of the WISE programs?

1. Many participants, even those who have previously rejected church and God, find fresh reasons to commit their lives to Jesus. (Just last month, a man gave his life to God and asked to be baptized then and there in Jubilee's office. A pastor who volunteers with WISE got water from the drinking fountain and, in front of staff and other WISE participants, baptized this new brother in Christ into the Kingdom of God!)
2. A number of participants have secured and maintained meaningful employment.
3. Some participants call Jubilee from their jobs to say "*They are hiring here. Send somebody over!*" They want to help others as they have been helped.
4. Other participants enrolled in school to pursue academic or vocational programs.
5. Several are now saving money toward buying their first homes.
6. Many are powerful encouragers of others who are where they used to be.
7. For many, self-worth is rising. They are not settling, but are embracing the challenge of change in order to reach their goals and potentials.

C. Food Pantry

Many churches in many locations have, or know of, a community food pantry. The average pantry provides relief to participants because it enables them to pick up groceries for little or no money in order to get them through a tight time. Accessing "how-to" information about establishing a pantry and identifying food resources can be secured by calling pantry operators and visiting pantries while they are operating. In some locations, pantries are coordinated in a

city, county, or other region. Those coordinating organizations are excellent resources as well. ACCESS (All-County Churches Emergency Support System) is one such county-based coordinating agency. Their web address is: <http://www.accessconnects.org>.

Some churches have developed creative, exciting food pantry operations. One exciting idea involves:

- Developing with participants a plan they can achieve within 24 months maximum (can include buying a home, eliminating debt, paying for educational tuition, securing therapy, buying a car, etc.)
- Permitting participants to get food weekly from the pantry
- Redirecting saved food money to funding the developed participant plan

Here are some stories:

Transformational, Developmental Food "Pantrying" **by Earl James**

Many of our churches and non-profits serve poor and in-need folks through food pantries. Typically, they provide two or three bags of groceries they pre-packaged. They document each gift to ensure a fundamental fairness (evenly spread the food around) and for their protection (from unscrupulous recipients). And, of course, there are the numerous hours of behind-the-scenes work regarding funding, stocking, packaging, and praying.

These food pantries bless. They help folks through crisis periods with loving touches from the church or other pantry operators. But how do we know if our relief and loving touches are *really* what's needed? I doubt we generally can know. We don't interact nearly enough to know. Typical pantry operations don't bring Christ-centered redemptive power and presence to bear on *why* a person or family needed the pantry in the first place. If the power in the Gospel is transformational, then little of that power is brought to bear here because little to nothing is ordinarily transformed. In this article, I showcase three City Vision partners. Each is proven as a redemptive, transformational, developmental ministry; each intends to help recipients make long-term, sustainable, self-sufficient changes in their lives.

Rosa Fernandez serves as family services worker for Roosevelt Park Ministries (RPM). A few years ago, a couple came to Rosa for help. They were tired of transient living and wanted to bring aspects of their lives under control. For one, they wanted to buy their first home. Rosa spent hours with them—listening, clarifying, and praying. As with many who seek her assistance, she helped them find the words for what they wanted to set as goals. Rosa promised to think and pray over their discussion, and recommend some next steps at their next appointment.

Three or four days later, Rosa was ready. She brought to that meeting a written agreement she prepared based on the couple's expressed desires. The agreement contained two goals: 1) to eliminate three specific sizable debts and 2) to save money for a down payment on their first home. To facilitate the agreement, RPM allowed the family weekly access to its food pantry where they could select and take what food they needed. To gain access, the couple had to meet with Rosa. They had to prove to her by document that they transferred money normally spent

on food to paying down the bills or to a savings account. Rosa was their accountability coach, cheering them when they worked their plan well and pulling them up when they failed. And she prayed for and with them frequently. About 18 months later, that couple paid off those bills and bought their first home! Do you see what a food pantry can do when it is put to redemptive, transformational, and developmental use? Rosa helps replicate that blessing in the lives of others who need hope and long-term self-sufficiency development.

Syd Harvey, executive director of Oakdale Neighbors (ON), operates a food pantry similar to RPM. Like RPM's, ON's food pantry emphasizes the values of goal-setting, implementation, long-term relationships between ministry staff and recipients, and mutual accountability. At ON, after specific goals are set, such as eliminating bills or building a savings account, recipients earn vouchers for keeping accountability meetings, attending scheduled classes (for budgeting, savings, etc.), and doing between-class homework. The vouchers are turned in at ON for help with eliminating debt, or buying food, household appliances, and cleaning supplies from ON's pantries. Syd also firmly believes pantries must offer meats and cleaning supplies as those are items families need regularly, and provision can save them significant dollars. Syd recently told me about a woman who, over the past two years, paid down \$2,000 in debt and saved about \$600 because of how ON's pantry ministry blessed and empowered her for decisions and life.

Rev. Arthur Bailey, executive director of Abundant Life Ministries, operates a traditional food pantry, but chiefly distributes food for different purposes and using a different method. Abundant Life actively participates in a creative mobile food pantry program sponsored by a local food bank. Twice monthly, Pastor Bailey holds a mobile food pantry in one of four locations within Abundant Life's target area. A trailer brings 10,000 pounds of food to the site, and nearly all of it is distributed to the 100+ households (300-500 persons) each time. People take what they need, but before they do they hear something from the word of God, and teams of Abundant Life volunteers get from each of them demographic information and highlights of their key life challenges and prayer requests. Between each mobile pantry distribution, Abundant Life's staff and volunteers pray over each request. In some cases, they help unemployed folks secure jobs, bless troubled folks with counseling, and refer struggling persons to other need-meeting agencies and ministries. A few weeks ago, I suggested to Pastor Bailey that in three to five years, Abundant Life's neighbors will likely see it as a key catalyst for neighborhood-wide transformation and blessing, and that shift in shared neighborhood awareness could create complex issues for Abundant Life to handle. Pastor Bailey smiled and said God will be at that bridge, too.

The RPM and ON models exemplify how food pantries go deep to help persons and families achieve hope through self-sufficiency development. The Abundant Life model focuses on impacting a whole neighborhood. How do these three examples strike you? Would you like *your* ministry of food distribution to be far more redemptive, transformational, and promoting of long-term, sustainable change?

D. Strengthening Marriages and Other Adult Relationships

In many respects, marriages and families ought to be central to ministry in the church and in society. Healthy marriages and families could well be one of God's keys for ensuring more just and equitable societies and cultures.

To develop church-based marriage/family strengthening ministries and programs, consider the following:

- asking professionals in the field who attend church or live in the church's neighborhood to develop and serve in such a ministry
- partnering with community counselors and counseling agencies
- partnering with a nearby college or university with a social work or psychology department
- training members and neighbors to lead skills-oriented workshop series

Some great marriage/family strengthening programs/initiatives and their web addresses

- Family Wellness: www.familywellness.com
- Parenting Wisely: www.familyworksinc.org
- The Third Option: www.thethirdoption.com
- African American Healthy Marriage Initiative:
www.acf.hhs.gov/healthymarriage/aa_hmi/AAHML.html
- Hispanic Healthy Marriage Initiative:
www.acf.hhs.gov/healthymarriage/about/hispanic_hm_initiative.html
- Healthy Marriage Initiative: www.acf.hhs.gov/healthymarriage/about/index.html

MEETING NEEDS

MOVING FROM RELIEF TO INDIVIDUAL DEVELOPMENT

This book will help you discover the difference between relief and development ministries, and assess your church's programs. It provides step by step instructions for transitioning a program from relief to development, and suggests ideas for new programs that your church could consider.

This book is part of the *Communities First* series, designed to help churches and Christians bring unique gifts to their neighborhoods and communities. Combined with consultation, these materials will help you engage with your community and influence it in ways that will make life better for everyone here and now. As a result, you will see your community respond and change in surprising and redemptive ways. The Church and God's Kingdom will grow.

In addition to the cornerstone book simply titled *Communities First*, other workbooks include:

The Theology of Development: A Biblical Understanding of Christian Mission and Community Development

Through God's Eyes, With God's Heart: Building Readiness for Community Ministry

Meeting Needs: Moving from Relief to Individual Development

Case Management: Creating a Plan for Change through Covenantal Commitment

Developing a Community Vision

Community Strengthening

Community Organizing

Justice: Creating Policies, Laws and Systems that Work for Everyone



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