

# “Keeping the Poor with Us”

## Conversations Handbook



This handbook was prepared to provide resources and materials to support Diocesan constituent committees, commissions, institutions, and congregations in fulfilling Resolution 2013-1.

As stated in Resolution 2013-1, each aforementioned group is expected to include as a part of every meeting from September 2013 through November 2013 or any other three consecutive month period between March 1 2013 and the 2014 Diocesan Convention, no matter what the purpose, the following agenda item: “How will what we are doing here affect or involve people living in poverty?”

**The MDG Task Force of the Diocese of New Jersey**

**2013**



# The Diocesan “Keeping the Poor with Us” Campaign

This Handbook is part of an overall campaign that includes five components:

## (1) “Keeping the Poor with Us” Conversations.

- Resource: This “Keeping the Poor with Us” Conversations Handbook. Extra copies available at <http://tinyurl.com/povertyconversations>. Hard copies can be purchased through the Diocesan Offices for \$2 each. Contact Sarah Paige at [spaige@newjersey.anglican.org](mailto:spaige@newjersey.anglican.org) or call 609-394-5281.
- Forums and Preaching: MDG Task Force members are available to lead forums and training sessions for committee chairs and to preach. Contact [mdgtaskforcenj@gmail.com](mailto:mdgtaskforcenj@gmail.com) for more information.

## (2) Bread for the World Sunday and Offering of Letters.

This event can be parish wide. It is writing letters to the US President and our representatives in the US Senate and Congress. The purpose of the letters to ask them to help eradicate poverty by being mindful of the effect of the budget cuts to the farm and foreign aid bills. Many of our parishioners will be affected by the cuts.

Suggested Date: Sunday, September 22<sup>nd</sup> or any Sunday through October 14<sup>th</sup>  
Informational Materials: [www.bread.org/go/OL](http://www.bread.org/go/OL)

## (3) Seeking Communion with the Poor: Mission, Human Rights & Development - A Half-Day Workshop

Keynote Speaker: Noah Bullock, Executive Director of Foundation Cristosal, El Salvador

The purpose of the workshop is to discuss the importance of promoting human rights and justice, both at home and abroad, as part of our baptismal covenant. In addition to Noah’s presentation about his experience in El Salvador, there will be small group discussions about how human rights relate to our baptismal covenant, how the situation in El Salvador relates to our experience in the United States and how we as Christians might be called to be prophetic voices in promoting a human rights approach to suffering.

Date: Saturday, October 19<sup>th</sup> from 10 am until noon.

This will be followed by a brown bag lunch and slide show on the MDG Task Force sponsored trip to El Salvador hosted by Foundation Cristosal.

Location: St. Matthew’s in Pennington

Contact: Sarah Paige at [spaige@newjersey.anglican.org](mailto:spaige@newjersey.anglican.org) or call 609-394-5281 to sign up and for more information.

Suggested Donation: \$20 for the benefit of Cristosal

#### **(4) Diocesan-wide Soles for the Harvest 5 K and Fun Run**

Date: October 26<sup>th</sup>, 2013 – 7:45 check in; 8:45 fun run and a timed 9 am race

Location: The loop course starts at the Cream Ridge Winery, and winds past horse farms and through historic Walnford Park in Cream Ridge, New Jersey.

Proceeds: Benefits Allentown Food Pantry, the Trenton Soup Kitchen and global hunger relief programs run by Episcopal Relief & Development.

Contact: [solesfortheharvest5k@gmail.com](mailto:solesfortheharvest5k@gmail.com)

#### **(5) Diocesan-wide Workshop at Conclusion of Campaign**

Date: Spring of 2014 (after the Diocesan Convention) To be determined.

Location: To be determined

Invited: Everyone

Purpose: To evaluate the outcome of the Campaign and to determine next steps.

Contact: [mdgtaskforcejn@gmail.com](mailto:mdgtaskforcejn@gmail.com)



*But this is my belief: that at the heart of Christianity is a power that continues to speak to and transform us... It doesn't promise to solve or erase suffering but to transform it, pledging that by loving one another, even through pain, we will find more life.<sup>1</sup>*

## **“Keeping the Poor with Us” Conversations Handbook**

The goal of these conversations is to create a safe space to explore the reality of poverty in a way that transforms how we understand ourselves as individuals and as Christians in “seeking and serving Christ in all people.”<sup>2</sup>

Although the intention of these conversations is initially reflection, we hope everyone involved will become inspired to take action to prevent poverty and the unnecessary suffering caused by it.

*This Handbook is a resource. We hope that you will use it in whatever way works best for your group. Feel free to try other ideas. We just ask that your activities are consistent with the overall goal for these conversations.*

**The MDG Task Force would like to thank all the people who dedicated their time to write stories and related materials for the Conversation Topics as well as everyone who has been and is committed to the eradication extreme poverty at home and abroad.**

Thank you in advance for participating in these  
“Keeping the Poor with Us” Conversations.

Additional copies of this Handbook are available online at  
<http://tinyurl.com/povertyconversations>.

Hard copies of this Handbook can be purchased through the Diocese for \$2 for each copy. Contact Sarah Paige at [spaige@newjersey.anglican.org](mailto:spaige@newjersey.anglican.org) or by calling 609-394-5281.

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<sup>1</sup> <sup>1</sup> Sara Miles, “take this bread” (Ballantine Books, 2008) p. xv-xvi.

<sup>2</sup> Baptismal Covenant

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More Questions: Contact [mdgtaskforcenj@gmail.com](mailto:mdgtaskforcenj@gmail.com)

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## **I. GUIDELINES FOR CHURCH CONVERSATIONS CHAIRPERSONS**

This Handbook is a resource and guide for you and your parish. We encourage you and your committee chairs to modify these suggestions or develop your own ideas about how to fulfill the Diocesan Resolution 2013-1 and achieve the overarching goal of this campaign.

### **Role of Conversation Chairperson:**

- **Establish 3 Month Period for the Conversations:** Work with the rector, priest in charge, or interim priest and/or the outreach committee to decide the optimal three consecutive months prior to the March 2014 Convention. The MDG Task Force suggests from mid-September through mid-December.
- **Obtain Vestry Support:** It is best to present your plan to the Vestry prior to beginning your campaign. In light of the tight time constraints, you might consider meeting with your senior and junior warden to inform them of your plans with the understanding that you would follow-up with a vote at the first possible vestry meeting. This way you can move forward with the key people appropriately informed. ***A sample vestry resolution is in Section V of this Handbook***
- **Inform and Educate Committee Chairs:** We suggest that you meet with all committee chairs together in order to inform them about their responsibility as defined in the Diocesan Resolution 2013-1, allow them to share ideas and concerns.
- **Submit the attached “Keeping the Poor with Us” Conversations Participation Form:** Let us know when you have decided to start your conversations so that we can keep track of and report on your participation. We would also like to know who to contact with additional resources and updates. ***Section V of this Handbook contains the Conversations Participation Form.***
- **Provide Committee Chairs with Handbook:** Each committee chair needs a copy of the Handbook to guide them in leading the conversations. Committee chairs should feel free to ask committee members to take turns leading these discussions. Additional hard copies of the Handbook can be obtained from Sarah Paige at the Diocesan Offices ([spaige@newjersey.anglican.org](mailto:spaige@newjersey.anglican.org) or 609-394-5281) \$2 for each copy. The Handbook is also available at no charge at: <http://tinyurl.com/povertyconversations>.
- **Initiate the Conversations with a Church-wide Forum:** The conversations are intended to be a congregation-wide experience. We strongly encourage Conversations Chairs to start their Church’s conversations with a forum. The forum could be led by an MDG Task Force Member or by you. The MDG Task Force has everything you need to run a forum including opening prayers, a power point with script and questions for small group discussions. Go to <http://tinyurl.com/povertyconversations> or e-mail [mdgtaskforcenj@gmail.com](mailto:mdgtaskforcenj@gmail.com) for more information.

- **Consider a Weekly Study Group:** There may be people who would like to participate in the conversations who are not on committees. Create a weekly study group that is open to everyone. There may even be committee members who want to discuss these issues more than time allows during normal meeting times.
- **Use with Youth Groups and Sunday School Classes:** These are powerful and compelling stories. Use them as part of your regular youth group activities or in your Sunday School Classes. Modify them as you see fit.
- **Maintain Communications with Committee Chairs:** Throughout the campaign keep in touch with committee chairs to find out how things are going and to see if you can provide assistance in any way.
- **Share Information and Stories:** Include reflections and stories in Sunday bulletins and newsletters about how these conversations are touching those involved. Sharing some of the conversation experiences in sermons would help engage the entire congregation.
- **Keep Connected to the MDG Task Force:** You are encouraged to contact us if you have any questions or concerns. We would also appreciate monthly information about how the conversations are progressing. Helpful information would include: (1) How many meetings were held by what groups; (2) What discussion prompts were used, if any; and (3) Ideas, concerns or suggestions that grew out of meetings. Contact us at [mdgtaskforcenj@gmail.com](mailto:mdgtaskforcenj@gmail.com). *Section V of this Handbook contains the Parish Conversations Report Form.*
- **Encourage Church Member Involvement in Other “Keeping the Poor” Campaign Activities:** The second page of this Handbook provides details on the following Diocesan-wide activities. They include:
  - (1) Inviting a MDG Task Force Member come and preach and/or lead a forum at your church.
  - (2) Attending the Seeking Communion with the Poor: Mission, Human Rights & Development Workshop on October 19th.
  - (3) Participating in a Bread for the World Sunday and Offering of Letter one Sunday in September or early October.
  - (4) Participating in the Diocesan-wide Soles for the Harvest 5 K and One Mile Fun Run on Saturday, October 26<sup>th</sup> at the Cream Ridge Winery in Cream Ridge, NJ.
  - (5) Joining us for the Spring Diocesan-wide “Keeping the Poor with Us” Workshop to help determine next steps.
- **Conclude the Conversations with A Church-wide Forum:** This would be an opportunity to share experiences and to explore what these conversations might mean to the church as a whole. Throughout the campaign we would encourage newsletter blurbs about conversations as well as other forms of information sharing. At this forum it is important to share ideas and make plans for the next steps.

## II. GUIDELINES FOR COMMITTEE CONVERSATION LEADERS



### **Start each Meeting by Reading the following Comment:**

We are starting this meeting tonight with twenty minutes dedicated to a discussion about the reality of poverty in our neighborhoods, our country and throughout the world. Our hope for each participant is that your heart will be opened up to the suffering of those who are in poverty in a way that leads you to thoughtful and compassionate engagement. We hope and pray that in becoming mindful of the reality of hunger and poverty you will also recognize that there is no excuse for such suffering and so we begin this meeting with the counting prayer<sup>3</sup>: Let us pray:

*The world now has the means to end extreme poverty, we pray we will have the will.*

### **Guidelines for Conversation Leaders:**

- Start each meeting with an agenda item related to the topic of poverty.
- Encourage people to do mindful listening. This means truly listening to one another as opposed to merely waiting for your turn to speak.
- Create a sense of trust within the group.
- Encourage patience. Patience is not static; it is a key part of the discernment process.
- Inform the group that feelings of discomfort are to be expected in the midst of these difficult stories and personal sharing. God will transform such emotions into greater clarity and understanding.
- Keep going back to personal experience and feelings. Keep away from hypothetical.
- Ask open-ended questions.
- Allow everyone to comment once before participants talk again.
- Allow space and time for reflection before responding. You might ask group members to jot down their thoughts before responding.
- Promote nonjudgmental conversation.
- Establish ground rules upfront such as how much time is available and what is expected of all participants.

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<sup>3</sup> The Counting Prayer. To be prayed as often as possible by as many as possible until the MDGs are achieved.

- End each meeting with a decision about who will lead the discussion at the next meeting and who will report on the meeting for the MDG Task Force.
- Check-in with everyone at the end of meeting to see how they felt about the discussion.
- Open and close with prayer.

### **Reiterate the Guiding Principles for Discussions at Each Meeting:**

- The purpose of these conversations is to share in an open and accepting space. There is no right or wrong comment.
- This is about those who are economically poor.
- Conversations are to be from the heart.
- Avoid hypothetical or theoretical statements.
- Discomfort is an inevitable part of such open hearted and honest sharing about poverty.
- Members of the group should only share what they feel comfortable sharing.
- Participants are encouraged to say what they feel or believe as opposed to responding to comments other people may make.
- Everything that is shared during this time should be viewed as confidential.

### **III. HOW THE MDG TASK FORCE CAN SUPPORT YOUR CONVERSATIONS**

- Leading forums and preaching.
- Providing resources to assist you in leading your campaign.
- Distributing Monthly e-mail newsletters about what is going on in the Diocese to help inspire each other. E-mail [mdgtaskforcenj@gmail.com](mailto:mdgtaskforcenj@gmail.com) to be added to our mailing list.
- Recognizing all participating churches in the MDG Task Force newsletters, on our FACEBOOK Page and the Diocesan FACEBOOK Page, at the ongoing Diocesan events as well as at the Convention. ***Please make sure to fill out the Parish Conversation Participation Form so that we can better track and support your activities.***
- Collaborating with participating churches to develop a strategy for encouraging more empowerment, advocacy and accountability related activities on both a parish and a Diocesan-wide basis.  
Contact us at [mdgtaskforcenj@gmail.com](mailto:mdgtaskforcenj@gmail.com).



#### **IV. POSSIBLE CONVERSATION TOPICS, STORIES, REFLECTIONS & PRAYERS**

The rest of this handbook offers many different lenses on poverty. Each one includes a personal story, a scripture reading, reflection questions and a prayer. In these conversations you may wish to read the story and follow all of the prompts as written or just use one section. Consider what works best for you on a meeting-by-meeting basis, and feel free to develop your own ideas. It is most important that you begin and end each section with prayer—how you encourage the conversation in between is up to you. Please share with us any ideas or resources that you would find helpful or would like to offer for others' use.

Take some time to consider which of these topics your committee might be able to relate to most at this time. Try to cover a range of topics over the three-month conversations period in order to grow the people in your group as much as possible. Listen carefully to your group and be respectful of their limits while keeping them open to new ways of viewing the world and their role in it.

We encourage each group to start with Topic One before moving on to other topics.

A list of the conversation topics included in this handbook follows:

Topic 1: Personal Experiences

Topic 2: The Reality of Living under the Poverty Level

Topic 3: The Invisible Nature of Poverty – Your Neighbor by Donna Freidel, MDG TF

Topic 4: The Invisible Nature of Poverty - Immigrants (My son-in-law)

Topic 5: The Invisible Nature of Poverty – Human Trafficking by Captain Louis Cavaliere, US Navy, retired, MDG TF

Topic 6: The Face of Global Poverty - Manou by Bishop Elect Stokes, Diocese of New Jersey

Topic 7: The Arbitrary Nature of Poverty by Keith Adams, Diocese Disaster Relief Coordinator

Topic 8: The Violence of Poverty by Clara Gregory, Diocesan Jubilee Officer

Topic 9: The Trauma of Poverty by Phyllis Jones, Chief Financial Officer for the Diocese.

Topic 10: Cynicism and Poverty by Dean Rene' John, Trinity Cathedral

Topic 11: How Well Do We Listen by William Hoffman, MDG TF

Topic 12: Cause for Hope by Kathy O'Hagan, MDG TF

Topic 13: The Power of Community by Lisa Caton, MDG TF

## **Topic 1: Personal Experience**

We encourage all groups to start with this topic as a way to face the truth about our understanding of the reality of poverty. It is also intended to help us acknowledge our preconceived attitudes about poverty. Hopefully, this will ground the group in the truth of their own experiences before moving on to the stories of others.

### **EXPERIENCE:**

Sharing Our Own Stories: (1) What is the closest we have been to experiencing extreme poverty personally or in our family? (2) How has our experience or lack thereof informed us? (3) If you have never experienced poverty what is your frame of reference or source of information about the causes and reality of poverty?

### **REFLECT:**

- (1) We encourage you to begin by asking an open-ended question such as: In what way did this conversation touch you?
- (2) If that question does not seem to open up the conversation enough, other questions you might consider include: Might your experience with poverty or lack thereof influence your attitude toward people who are poor? What preconceived notions do you have about poverty? How do they inform your behavior? Are people who are poor treated with dignity – as we are called to treat people with dignity in our baptismal covenant? What does it mean to treat people with dignity? What are some of the obstacles to seeing the light of Christ in all people?

Scripture (Colossians 3:12-14): As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.

### **RESPOND:**

Concluding Prayer: Lord God, your Son came among us to serve and not to be served, and to give life to the world. Lead us by his love to serve all those to whom the world offers no comfort and little help. Through us give hope to the hopeless, love to the unloved, peace to the troubled, and rest to the weary, through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

-Adapted from the Lutheran Book of Worship

## **Topic 2: The Reality of Living Under the Poverty Level**

The purpose of this topic is to allow us to imagine what it would be like to live under the poverty level. The exercises suggested here will not take long. We suggest that everyone is given a piece of paper before beginning this discussion. Allow a few moments for people to consider the questions (writing down if desired) and then sharing their thoughts.

### **EXPERIENCE:**

Calculate how you would budget your income if you earned \$11 an hour (\$440 per week gross); 25% of all jobs in the country pay less than this amount. 15.1% live below poverty level – (\$18,000 for a family of three and \$22,000 for a family of four).

Take the “Could You Survive Poverty Test”

([http://www.thepovertychallenge.org/?page\\_id=108](http://www.thepovertychallenge.org/?page_id=108))

or consider trying to live below the poverty line for a period of time (<https://www.livebelowtheline.com>).

### **REFLECT:**

- (1) We encourage you to begin by asking an open-ended question such as: What is your reaction to this exercise?
- (2) If that does not generate sufficient conversation, you might consider one of the following questions: (a) What happens to your budget if anyone in the household gets laid off or becomes seriously ill, or if your rent is increased? (b) Can one live a life of dignity with such little income? Can one love others when one is barely able to survive? (c) How might people who earn such low incomes be empowered?

Reading: “God’s reign is already present on our earth in mystery. When the Lord comes, it will be brought to perfection. That is the hope that inspires Christians. We know that every effort to better society, especially when injustice and sin are so ingrained, is an effort that God blesses, that God wants, that God demands of us.”

-Archbishop Oscar Romero, Catholic Diocese of El Salvador

### **RESPOND:**

Closing Prayer: Lord, save us from trouble, but help us to be people who get in the way of injustice and trouble the waters of oppression. Thank you for whispering to us that we are beloved. Help us now to whisper your love to those who long to hear that there is a loving God. Amen<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Claiborne, Wilson-Hartgrove, Okoro, *Common Prayer*, (Zondervan, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 2010) p. 367

### **Topic 3: The Invisible Poor - Your Neighbor**

#### **EXPERIENCE:**

At a recent meeting of Fighting Poverty with Faith a woman introduced herself to the largely professional group by saying "I am just like you." And then she went on to tell her story. She lost her job and her healthcare the same year her husband was diagnosed with end stage pancreatic cancer and she was diagnosed with breast cancer. She survived; her husband lived a year to the day of his diagnosis. They have one son who is now in college. Her husband died three years ago and her savings are all gone, her house is in foreclosure, and she is, as she put it, "your neighbor. I am the poor and soon to be the homeless. I am college educated with an advanced degree and yet I no longer have any savings, no money and if it were not for the help of the Jewish Federation--and by the way, I am not Jewish but that did not matter to them--I would be on the street."

Poverty is debilitating, and it is very difficult to keep healthy when you are poor. It is difficult to be a good mom when you are poor. It is hard to hold onto your self-esteem and your identity when you are poor. This woman who is "just like us" is the new poor that the sustained economic difficulties the country has been in have produced--people who did "everything right" and find themselves in extremely tough circumstances that they have no way of coping with, and yet they must.

#### **REFLECT:**

- (1) We would encourage you to begin this discussion by asking an open-ended question such as: What was your immediate reaction to this story?
- (2) To the extent that does not generate sufficient conversation you might consider some of the following questions: Could you identify with the woman in any way? What is the cause of this problem? How might understanding the cause of the poverty inform how we as Christian determine how best to respond to the needs of the poor? How might this woman be empowered given her circumstances? What might the role of the church be in addressing this woman's unforeseen poverty?

Scripture (Deuteronomy 15:11): "Since there will never cease to be some in need on the earth, I therefore command you, 'Open your hand to the poor and needy neighbor in your land.'"

#### **RESPOND:**

Concluding Prayer - Dear Lord, who from your earliest words of instruction to us commanded us to care for the poorest of your children, reminding us that they are our brothers, help us always to remember your desire is for us to keep the poor of our lands in our hearts and to open our hands and hearts to them, providing help to all in need, whenever and wherever such need appears, no matter the cause. We do this because you ask it of us, and because we are all your children, and blessed to be brothers and sisters together in your land, this one earth. Amen.

Prepared by Donna L. Freidel, MDG Task Force

## **Topic 4: The Invisible Poor – My Son in Law**

Immigration is a complicated issue. The point of this topic is to become sensitive to the reality of the issues of immigration, the people and the families involved. We are not promoting any specific position, but it is important to be aware that we are dealing with real people and not merely policy issues. This could be your family too.

### **EXPERIENCE:**

Invisible? O God, I hope so. He's my son-in-law. He works hard and tenderly loves his wife and two little sons, ages 6 and 2. He's a great dad. He and his sons play soccer, swim, and go on adventures. A couple weeks ago, he took the boys on a whale-watching trip sponsored by their school. He does the laundry and cooks because my daughter works full time and on weekends. He has lived in this country for 15 years.

My son-in-law is an undocumented immigrant. Some people call him an illegal alien. He is one of 11 million. Can you see any of them? My son-in-law works at whatever job he can get – 12 hours a day of paving in the hot sun, asbestos abatement in protective gear, and construction – to supplement my daughter's wages. He is a skilled contractor. That will be his profession if he is allowed to stay in our country. If my son-in-law is deported, my daughter and her children will be literally walled off from him and will lose the little income he can provide, and, most devastating, the love of their lives.

### **REFLECT:**

- (1) We would encourage you to begin by asking an open-ended question such as does anyone have a reaction to this story they would like to share?
- (2) To the extent there is a need to prompt further discussion you might consider some of the following questions: Who in your community might be living here illegally on less than the minimum wage? Because they are illegal, they have no voices, no rights and risk being deported to a life that is far more difficult than what they experience here. What must their lives be like back home to compel them to come to a country where they have to live in the shadows? Should human rights be protected when people cross into our country?

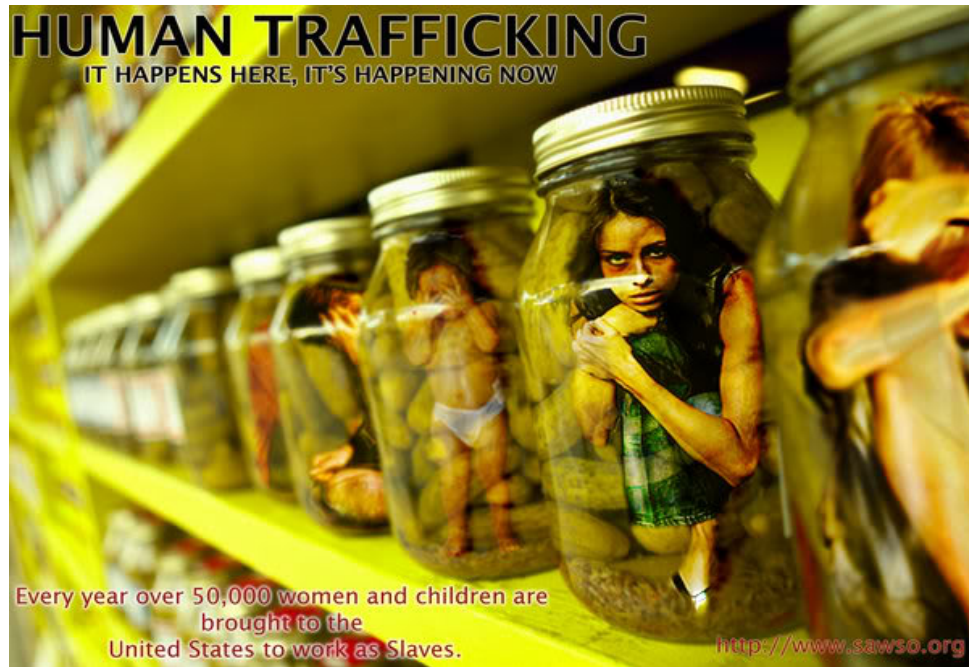
**Scripture (Mark 7:45-30):** Jesus entered a house and did not want anyone to know he was there... but a woman whose little daughter had an unclean spirit immediately heard about him, and she came and bowed down at his feet. Now the woman was a Gentile, of Syrophenician origin. She begged him to cast the demon out of her daughter. He said to her, 'Let the children be fed first, for it is not fair to take the children's food and throw it to the dogs.' But she answered him, 'Sir, even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs.' Then he said to her, 'For saying that, you may go—the demon has left your daughter.' So she went home, found the child lying on the bed, and the demon gone.

### **RESPOND:**

**Closing Prayer:** Father, your love knows no borders, no boundaries. Break down the fences of fear, the walls of ignorance, and the towers of hatred that blind us. Dazzle us with the light of your mercy so that our hearts and minds become shining sanctuaries of welcome for all your children. In Jesus' name, we pray.

- Prepared by a parishioner in Princeton

## Topic 5: The Invisible Poor – Human Trafficking



### **EXPERIENCE:**

Did you say that slavery exists in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century? Yes, Slavery is big business these days: a multibillion-dollar industry worldwide, right behind drugs and arms dealing.

- 27 million adults and children are in forced or bonded labor, and forced prostitution around the world, according to the US State Department.
- 56 percent of these victims are women and children.
- Victims are subject to gross human rights violations including rape, torture, forced abortions, starvation, and threats of torturing or murdering family members.

Human trafficking is fuelled by poverty, which is often aggravated by violence, injustice, and the lack of opportunities that makes people vulnerable to this heinous crime. The problem is so large and it seems overwhelming to try to address it. Yet, in our own small way, we can help those who are victims of human trafficking.

For example five ordinary middle class women participated in a race to row across the Atlantic Ocean in 2012. That's right, row! Their team was known as Row for Freedom and their objective was to raise \$1.5 million for the victims of human trafficking. The team completed their row in a grueling 45 days, from the Canary Islands to Barbados, receiving international recognition because they broke the woman's world record. However, these young women avoided publicity for themselves, and focused on the plight of trafficked people over that 45 day period. So while all of us were busy enjoying Christmas and the New Year, the Row for Freedom team had been rowing day and night in a very large and often hostile ocean environment to remember the hostile environment of those who are being trafficked.

Almost everyone is familiar with the hymn "Amazing Grace, How Sweet the Sound". While this hymn was an inspiration to the Row for Freedom team, most people do not know the author of the hymn, John Newton, and his connection to the modern day trafficking problem. John was a sea captain in the British Navy in the late 1700's. He was assigned to the merchant navy slave trade to transport slaves from Africa to the Caribbean and North America. John took this assignment with a sense of duty very much the way that I approached my career as a Captain in the United States Navy. He was initially blind to the horrors of slavery just as I was unaware of how slavery continues today.

Through God's unbelievable and great mercy, John Newton's eyes were opened. He was led by the Lord on a great mission that started by his leaving the slave trade and returning to England where he gave his life to Christ and became an Anglican priest. His mission continued as a great preacher and as a spiritual mentor to William Wilberforce who led the political movement in Parliament to abolish the slave trade and to emancipate all slaves in the British Empire. This eventually led to emancipation of slaves in the USA in 1863. As such, we all owe a great debt to John Newton because his message and his song "Amazing Grace" continue to resonate with us today and with others like the Row for Freedom team.

### **REFLECT:**

- (1) We suggest you begin with an open-end question such as "Does anyone have a reaction to this story?"
- (2) To the extent there is a need to provoke further discussion you might consider one of the following questions: People in poverty are at risk to encounter many problems, one of which is being trafficked and sold into slavery as a domestic, a migrant worker, a prostitute, a child soldier or being harvested for bodily organs. These are people we probably encounter in our daily lives. Consider who you might encounter in your daily life that might be trafficked? Do you know their names? What might empowerment look like for these vulnerable people?

Scripture (Micah 6:8): "He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?"

### **RESPOND:**

Concluding Prayer: Open our hearts, Lord,  
make them real.  
Teach our hearts, Lord,  
how to feel.

Take our hands in the dark,  
we are reaching out to you.  
Help us make a brand new start.  
This is our prayer to you.  
- From "Prayer," by Sam Hensley

-Prepared by Captain Louis Cavaliere, US Navy Retired, MDG Task Force



## Topic 6: The Face of Global Poverty – Manou



### **EXPERIENCE:**

In 2007, the leadership of my church, St. Paul's in Delray Beach, and St. Gregory's in Boca Raton joined forces to support the people of Haiti in an initiative called The South Florida Haiti Project. This project focuses on education and hunger. In 2008, a mission group from St. Gregory's and St. Paul's travelled to Bondeau in June to celebrate the feast of Ste. Marie Madeleine.

During that visit, a young man from Bondeau whose name was Manou tagged along with us everywhere we went. He was an exceptionally bright young man who seemed to be about 16. We later discovered he was 18. Manou spoke English very well, and was completely fluent in French as well as his native Haitian-Creole. He wanted to assist us in any way he could. He had a smile and personality that was infectious.

On our third day, Manou told us he wanted to show us his home. Until that time, we had little realization of where the people of Bondeau actually lived. Our days were mostly spent on the school campus which was made up of concrete block structures. At night, we went to a retreat house in the town of Jeanette, some distance away. During the days in Bondeau, people just seemed to appear at Ste. Marie Madeleine from nowhere.

We couldn't refuse Manou's enthusiastic invitation to see his home, and so a group of us followed him back into the woods, just a few hundred feet from the edge of the school property. "Here is my house," he announced, pointing to a simple one room stick hut built over a dirt floor in which he, his mother and his two siblings lived. There was no plumbing, no toilet, no running water, no heat, no air-conditioning. He pointed to another area, "This is our kitchen." It was no more than a lean-to with one large kettle that met the family's need when food was available. His two siblings sat on stones outside, lethargic in the 90 plus degree heat, intrigued by us.

Manou was smiling as he showed us where he lived. He was not trying to impress us with his riches or his poverty. He simply wanted us to know him better. To him, this was home. Nonetheless, I couldn't help feeling for this personable young man. What would become of him? What was in his future?



## REFLECT:

- (1) We encourage you to begin discussion with an open-ended question such as “Does this story remind you of anything that you have seen or experienced?”
- (2) If additional conversation prompts would be helpful, you might consider one of the following: What is your experience of poverty? Can you put a face or a person, like Manou, to your understanding of poverty or is poverty simply an abstraction for you? Do you think this makes a difference in how you approach the problems of poverty?

It is often suggested that there are enough problems in the United States, in our own towns and communities, that demand our attention, that our resources are limited, and that we need to expend our resources locally. What do you think about this? What do you think God’s call to us is, especially with respect to countries like Haiti, which is the poorest country in the western hemisphere?

Scripture (Luke 10:27): “He answered, ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself.’”

## RESPOND:

Concluding Prayer: O God, you have taught us to keep all your commandments by loving you and our neighbor: Grant us the grace of your Holy Spirit, that we may devoted to you with our whole heart, and united to one another with pure affection; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever. *Amen.* (BCP, Collect for Proper 9, BCP p. 230)

-Prepared by The Rev. Canon Chip Stokes – Bishop-elect of the Diocese of New Jersey

## **Topic 7: The Arbitrary Nature of Poverty - Homelessness**



### **EXPERIENCE:**

Home, sweet home. There is no place like it, and we're told it's where the heart is. In our culture, having a place to call home is key to our safety and security, both physically and spiritually. In late October of 2012, Hurricane Sandy battered the Atlantic Seaboard. Making landfall, just North of Atlantic City; the super storm smashed into our beloved Jersey Shore destroying thousands of homes. Thousands more would be damaged by flooding in the following days.

Nancy, who had evacuated inland, returned to her home in Little Egg Harbor where she has lived for over forty years. Now widowed, she and her husband raised eleven children in this modest home on a lagoon off of the West Creek. Four were even born here! The house had weathered many storms in the past, but Sandy was different. Nancy's home had been flooded throughout. Furniture and appliances were destroyed. Wall and floors were unsalvageable and in need of replacement. The furnace and hot water heater ruined. Nancy did not have flood insurance, as she could not afford it. Living in a motel, she despaired of ever again having a "home". Now with the help of faith based volunteers, her home is being repaired. Nancy says "After the storm I thought I was homeless. Now, because of these folks who have helped, I know that I am just houseless!"

Sixty two years old and disabled, Sal always dreamed of living near the Jersey Shore but never thought he afford to do so. In 2011, after years of health, family and financial problems, Sal finally felt things were improving when he found an affordable apartment two blocks from the beach. Within a year, he would become homeless for over six months and lose almost everything he owned. The night before Sandy hit, Sal was forced to evacuate. During the hurricane, fourteen feet of seawater infiltrated his apartment, destroying his bed, furniture and all of his other personal belongings. Following the storm, Sal remained in a shelter for several weeks, transitioning to a hotel when he finally received some FEMA assistance. He has recently found an apartment, but the security deposit drained what was left of his meager savings. With no furniture and no money to buy any, Sal makes do sleeping on the floor.

Disasters, do not affect all members of society equally. Indeed, they are as much the products of the social, political, and economic environment, as well as the natural events that cause them.

**REFLECT:**

- (1) It is often helpful to start with an open-ended question such as “Do these stories remind you of anything you have seen or experienced?”
- (2) Additional questions you might consider include: Could you identify with Nancy or Sal? Can you think of a time that you were vulnerable and needed the help of others? What should we as Christians be doing to help others in disasters? What opportunities lie in the tragedy of disasters for Episcopalians to live out their baptismal covenant? How can you be prepared for a disaster at your home, in your church, or community? How can we, as individuals and as a church; be advocates for safe, sustainable, and affordable housing?

Scripture (Psalm 102:17): “He will look with favor on the prayer of the homeless; he will not despise their plea.”

**RESPOND:**

Concluding Prayer: God of the vulnerable, you yourself knew dependence. You knew the frailty of a newborn. You knew poverty. You knew displacement and homelessness. You knew the generosity of others. You fell and were lifted. You suffered and were comforted. You died, and you were raised from the dead. And in your resurrection you still rely on us: to be your hands and feet, to bear your word, to bring your love to a hurting world. Help us to be vulnerable, and to be courageous, and to be wholehearted; as you are. We pray in Jesus name. Amen.

-Prepared by: Keith Adams, Diocesan Disaster Relief Coordinator

## Topic 8: The Violence of Poverty - Lack of Hope Among Young Men



### EXPERIENCE:

After a long and exhausting morning of picking up and delivering Jersey Fresh produce to residents of a senior affordable housing community in Trenton, I returned to The Healthier Heart Farmers Market At Trinity Cathedral to begin our weekly set-up process. Once the process was complete, I sat alone and had time to reminisce about the smiling faces of those who earlier stood patiently in line waiting to purchase food and chat about the “good ole days.” You see, they shared stories of how “it used to be,” even reminiscing of those times when we grew our produce.

As I smiled and thanked GOD for doing the “right” thing that morning...out of the corner of my left eye I saw this gentleman approaching me. As he came closer, I noticed that he was walking without his shoes, his shirt was tied around his neck and his trousers were wrinkled and soiled. Once he was directly in front of me, I yelled, “Would you like to have lunch with me?” He stopped and approached me with caution. Are you talking to me, he asked. “Yes, they are serving lunch inside and I need someone to get two plates of food, one for me and the other for you,” ...I answered. He immediately sat down and put on his shoes and shirt. He explained to me that he had been taught during his childhood not to approach GOD’s house “out of order.”

When he returned with the two plates, and a large cup of “cool water,” he began to open up about his childhood and talked about serving our country, returning home and not being able to find a job. He became friends with drug users and stated to experiment with various illegal drugs. Unfortunately, the use and selling of drugs led to his incarceration. He was living with friends and relatives....just trying to get his life together. My parting words were, “GOD loves us just the way we are.” He smiled and walked away. I continue to see this young man; he is a frequent visitor at the Thursday evening dinner served at the Cathedral

## REFLECT:

- (1) We encourage you to begin discussion with an open-ended question such as: “Does anyone have a reaction to this story?”
- (2) Additional questions that might be considered if time allows include: How do we define violence? As Christians, do we dare affirm that poverty is a form of violence? Do we see the face of Christ in all persons that we meet? Are we equipped with programs that define human need and social justice issues? Are we willing to advocate for such programs?

Scripture (Luke: 10:29-37): “And who is my neighbor?” <sup>30</sup> In reply Jesus said: “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he was attacked by robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. <sup>31</sup> A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. <sup>32</sup> So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. <sup>33</sup> But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. <sup>34</sup> He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn and took care of him. <sup>35</sup> The next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper. ‘Look after him,’ he said, ‘and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.’ <sup>36</sup> “Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?” <sup>37</sup> The expert in the law replied, “The one who had mercy on him.” Jesus told him, “Go and do likewise.”

## RESPOND:

Concluding Prayer: *Christ Has No Body*

Christ has no body but yours,  
No hands, no feet on earth but yours,  
Yours are the eyes with which he looks  
Compassion on this world,  
Yours are the feet with which he walks to do good,  
Yours are the hands, with which he blesses all the world.  
Yours are the hands, yours are the feet,  
Yours are the eyes, you are his body.  
Christ has no body now but yours,  
No hands, no feet on earth but yours,  
Yours are the eyes with which he looks  
compassion on this world.  
Christ has no body now on earth but yours.  
Teresa of Avila (1515–1582)

-Prepared by Clara Gregory, Diocesan Jubilee Ministry Officer



## **Topic 9: The Trauma of Poverty**

### **EXPERIENCE:**

On an unseasonably muggy evening in mid-April in Camden, those of us who serve on the Board of UrbanPromise Ministries gathered around several slightly-unsteady classroom tables at the Camden Forward School to meet one of the newest members of the UPM staff. Rebecca Bryan came to UPM with some pretty impressive initials after her name – MSN (Master of Science in Nursing), CRNP (Certified Registered Nurse Practitioner). But around campus, she’s affectionately known as “Ms. Becky”, and she had come to talk to us about toxic stress and her Wellness Center project at UPM, which she started as a missionary last fall.

Any of you remember the “Straight Face Experiment”? It involved interaction between a mother and her infant. The infant is seated in a high chair and the mother comes in and plays with the baby for a short time, then leaves the room. When she returns, she sits in front of her child with a straight face. The child smiles at her. No reaction. Waves, makes sounds...still no reaction. As time goes on with no response from the mother, the child becomes more and more visibly upset until, finally, mom cracks a smile and re-engages with her baby. Even as a viewer for just a short period of time, this video is excruciatingly disturbing to watch.

But what if you lived in an environment where it never ended? What if that was your norm? Not just from a parental standpoint, but even from the larger community in which you live? Anger, frustration and depression at the overwhelming problems of living in poverty give way to physical and verbal abuse, neglect and violence. Generation after generation it continues, until you lose sight of even the idea or dream that it can be any other way.

According to Ms. Becky, research called the Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) study leaves little doubt about what happens: toxic stress occurs when stress is prolonged and overrides our coping mechanisms. It disrupts all sorts of things in a developing body, like brain size, nervous system regulation and hormonal changes which make it difficult to function. Symptoms in children and teens include hyper-vigilance, jitteriness, jumpiness, inability to sit still, memory loss, impulsive behaviors, promiscuity, early parenthood, and symptoms that mimic bipolar disorder or ADHD. Unaddressed this causes many chronic illnesses such as diabetes, heart disease, liver disease, fibromyalgia and chronic fatigue syndrome. All caused by chemical responses of our bodies to a constantly, unrelentingly, toxically stressful environment. Imagine, responses that, over generations, actually become genetically encoded. Wow.

The ACE study surveys children about experiences in the categories of Abuse, Neglect and Household Dysfunction, and scores them based on their answers as to the number and intensity of the experiences they report. Any score over 200 indicates a stress level that requires immediate and intentional intervention. At the UrbanPromise Academy (high school), in a class of just 10 students, the majority scored between 600 and 900, with two teens scoring over 1,000. As Ms. Becky anticipated, these levels largely resulted from the loss of a parent – either to jail or death – moving frequently, and experiencing violence or abuse.

How then, can we ever begin to move this mountain of a problem? I mean, it’s Camden, after all. Or Trenton. Or Elizabeth, or Newark or Detroit or LA or . . . wherever! We can’t. But God can. And all He needs us to do is just what that mother in that painful experiment did. We can re-engage. We can love, just as Jesus taught us to. We can be faithful and persevere in that love. We can create safe places where kids can be kids; where they can blow off steam, find trust, build

their own spiritual foundation, learn self-esteem and learn to dream again. Because as Ms. Becky will be quick to tell you, all that good stuff is the most effective way to reverse all the bad stuff. God's great commandment is the best medicine – love thy neighbor as thyself.

UrbanPromise's Trenton program is just entering its third year. For many of the eight StreetLeaders whose graduation we celebrated last month, that achievement was not on their radar when they joined the program as sophomores in 2010. Nor was any post-secondary education or training, but six of them will go on to community college and the other two to vocational or military training. It's amazing the transformation that can occur when we get back to building relationships and being the kind of loving community God wants us to be. And not just for the kids in the program, but for each and every one of us who becomes part of it as we live into and begin to recognize the face of Jesus in each other.

### **REFLECTIONS:**

- (1) You might begin this conversation with an open-ended question such as "Does this story remind you of anything you have seen or experienced?"
- (2) If time allows, some of the other questions you might consider include: How understanding do you try to be of other people's behavior, especially when it makes you uncomfortable? Do the findings that Ms. Becky reports surprise you? Enlighten you? Affect the way you might think about responding? Does the story encourage you or discourage you? Why? Can you find hope in doing little things faithfully in the face of big problems?

Scripture (Romans 12:1-2): "I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God – what is good and acceptable and perfect."

### **RESPOND:**

Concluding Prayer: Gracious and loving God, who in your compassion for the poor and oppressed sent your Son Jesus Christ to be your presence among us, to teach us how to help and heal and love one another; open our hearts and strengthen our spirits to be your hands and feet in the world around us. Help us to remember to actively seek and serve Christ in ALL persons, respecting the dignity of every human being. Encourage us in our border-crossing; embolden us when we fear to venture into unknown places, and bring us back over and over again to that richness of relationship that comes from trust in your transforming love. Give us grace so to follow in Jesus' ways that all who know us may come to know Him in whose name we pray. Amen.

-Prepared by Phyllis Jones, Chief Financial Officer for the Diocese

## **Topic 10 – Poverty and Cynicism**

### **EXPERIENCE:**

Volunteering one Saturday morning I took five youth from the Cathedral to deliver bags of foodstuff to a few members of the community who are home bound.

We did this as part of a collaborative effort with an organization called Crisis Ministry.

We wanted to participate in every effort aiming to address the needs of the poor in Trenton.

Trinity Cathedral Trenton, through hosting of Urban Promise Trenton After School Program and Trenton Area Soup Kitchen has always sought to work with all agencies concerned with the needs of the poor.

The experience of taking the foodstuff to the homebound seniors was an eye opener for our youth. (three of whom were my children) The youth who took the food-stuff with me came from working class homes, not homes of great privilege but they were all astonished at the living conditions of the homes we visited. It was more than disconcerting, that in the heart of Trenton, in one of our nation's richest states, New Jersey, such poverty exists.

After the visit as we drove back to the Cathedral, our young men and women were somewhat disturbed that we live in a country where we seem oblivious to the poverty in our midst. As we rush to and fro attending to our needs, are we really aware of the conditions under which others live?

### **REFLECT:**

- (1) You might consider beginning the conversation by asking “Does this story remind you of anything you have seen or experienced?”
- (2) If additional discussion points would be helpful you might consider one or more of the following: Will we ever eradicate poverty? How do we best serve the poor? What exactly does Jesus mean, when he says the poor will be with you always? Who was empowered in this story and why? What does this story suggest about empowerment?

Scripture (Matt 26:6-11): “Now while Jesus was at Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, a woman came to him with an alabaster jar of very costly ointment, and she poured it on his head as he sat at the table. But when the disciples saw it, they were angry and said, ‘Why this waste? For this ointment could have been sold for a large sum, and the money given to the poor.’ But Jesus, aware of this, said to them, ‘Why do you trouble the woman? She has performed a good service for me. For you always have the poor with you, but you will not always have me.’”

### **RESPOND:**

Concluding Prayer: Lord, make us an instrument of your peace,  
Where there is hatred, let us sow love;  
Where there is injury, pardon;  
Where there is doubt, faith;  
Where there is despair, hope;  
Where there is darkness, light;  
Where there is sadness, joy.  
O Divine Master,  
grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled, as to console;



to be understood, as to understand;  
to be loved, as to love.  
For it is in giving that we receive.  
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned,  
and it is in dying that we are born to Eternal Life. Amen.

Prepared by Dean Rene John, Trinity Cathedral

## **Topic 11 – How Well Do We Listen?**

### **EXPERIENCE:**

Not long ago at a summit of global leaders on food security, two of the world's most well-known and influential individuals in the fight against poverty were walking down the street. They had both sat through a long series of meetings and were on their way to a private lunch. As they walked, a farmer who owned a small plot of land approached them to say hello and thank them for their work. "Why don't you come to lunch with us?" said the one individual. "It's so important to learn what's *really* going on and to understand what *really* changes lives."

Some of the most powerful tools in the fight against poverty are our ears. We need to strengthen our ability to listen. Individuals living in poverty are economically poor. But their lives, hopes, aspirations and concerns are incredibly rich. We need to embrace and understand the complex lives of the poor. Relying on overly simplified, cartoon caricatures only separates us from knowing, understanding and ultimately serving our brothers and sisters in Christ.

Faith can guide us through the complexity of poverty. The magnitude of this grand challenge can be overwhelming and disheartening. But we can't let the size and complexity of poverty become our greatest roadblock. No single individual or institution can solve *the problem* of poverty. But as connected individuals in a community of faith, we can each address *a problem* related to it.

If we start to think of poverty as a series of connected and concrete problems, together we can achieve miracles.

### **REFLECT:**

- (1) To prompt discussion you might ask an open-ended question such as "What is your reaction to this story?"
- (2) Additional questions that may be used to encourage discussion include: How do you persevere and cope in other difficult and complex situations? How can the teachings of Christ help us to be better listeners? How might the insights and understandings gleaned from better listening be shared with others? How can we enable the dignity of those living in poverty so they have greater control over factors that impact their lives?

Scripture (Proverbs 18:13): "If one gives an answer before he hears, it is his folly and shame."

### **RESPOND:**

Concluding Prayer: Dear Lord, who from your earliest words of instruction to us commanded us to care for the poorest of your children, reminding us that they are our brothers, help us always to remember your desire is for us to keep the poor of our lands in our hearts and to open our hands and hearts to them, providing help to all in need, whenever and wherever such need appears, no matter the cause. We do this because you ask it of us, and because we are all your children, and blessed to be brothers and sisters together in Thy land, this one earth. Amen.

Prepared by William Hoffman, St. John's Episcopal Church, Somerville

## **Topic 12: Cause for Hope in the Midst of Poverty**



### **EXPERIENCE:**

Many in our diocese have supported the Good Shepherd Home in Cameroon. Most of the children are orphans. Their parents died and they are either ill treated by family members or they are shunned because their parents may have died of HIV/AIDS. At the home, children, are fed, sheltered, provided health care, educated and learn skills that will help them when they grow.

Many of the children have already lived lives that we cannot imagine. One such story is Pauline Mboma<sup>5</sup>. Her father died of AIDS when she was five and her mother also died from AIDS two years later. Pauline lived with her grandmother in the countryside, along with two other orphans. An uncle took Pauline to live with his family in the city as they needed house help. Pauline had attended school all along, but the abuse by the uncle's family kept her from further education. She ran away, back to her grandmother's and continued school. The uncle's wife convinced the grandmother that she would change and Pauline went back to the city. The aunt's vengeance was worse. Physical, verbal and mental abuse was dominant, to the point where Pauline was finally locked out of the house and forced to live on the streets.

Pauline told Canon Geitz: " ... for the past sixteen years I have lived a life of misery, desperation, stress, sorrow, regret and above all, I lived like a wanderer moving from place to place. But I finally have someone I can call "Mother" in the person of Sister Jane Mankaa. I have brothers and sisters in the Good Shepherd home who generously share with me. Mama has bought me new books, a uniform, school shoes, and I'm starting school first thing tomorrow morning....".

### **REFLECT:**

- (1) We encourage you to begin discussion by asking an open-ended question such as "Does anyone have a reaction to this story?"
- (2) Additional questions that might be pursued if needed include: Do we as a nation have a duty to continue providing aid to less fortunate countries? Why/why not? We say that

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<sup>5</sup> \*Taken from "I Am That Child by Elizabeth Geitz

we are a Judeo/Christian nation. What is stopping us from acting as such? What is our role in addressing poverty in other countries?

Scripture (Proverbs 14:31): "Whoever oppresses the poor shows contempt for their Maker, but whoever is kind to the needy honors God."

**RESPOND:**

Concluding Prayer: Praise God from whom all blessings flow. We thank you for your goodness and generosity in our lives. Help us to reach out to our brothers and sisters in need. Show us ways to give with open hands and an open heart. Let us see your way and not our own. Amen.

Prepared by Kathy O'Hagan, MDG Task Force

### **Topic 13: Power of Community Over Poverty**



#### **EXPERIENCE:**

The word shanty-town came to mind as we drove into Anemone in El Salvador. Dirt roads, homes literally patched together with corrugated tin, plywood and whatever materials were available. Doorways covered with old pieces of fabric. We met together with a group of about a dozen men and women ranging in age from 20 to the elderly to discuss gender issues. Each of us was asked to share a word that described him or herself. About six of the participants said they were strong or powerful.

A storm in 2009 turned their lives upside down, literally. They had lived in homes they owned on the side of a mountain, real houses made out of cement blocks, houses that they owned. A landslide occurred during a storm and washed away their homes down the mountain. They received no government assistance. With nowhere to go they gathered together as a community and squatted onto public land. They had to do it all at once to make it difficult for the government to tear their homes down. Over the past few years they were successful in their fight for water and electricity with the organization Foundation Cristosal by their side.

They are still fighting for the ownership of the land. Once obtained the families will be able to build real homes, like they had before the storm. It is not an easy fight for land is scarce in El Salvador but they are determined. The community knows that together, with the help of a human rights group like Cristosal, and belief in God, all things are possible.

## REFLECT:

- (1) We encourage you to begin by asking an open-ended question such as “What part of this story was most significant to you?”
- (2) Other questions you might pursue after the open-ended questions include: Have you ever experienced a situation when it was through a larger group effort that your needs were met? What does this story suggest about how change happens? How might this story inform what you might look for in deciding how to truly help those in the greatest need?

Scripture (Luke 18:1-8): Jesus told them a parable...He said, ‘In a certain city there was a judge who neither feared God nor had respect for people. In that city there was a widow who kept coming to him and saying, “Grant me justice against my opponent.” For a while he refused; but later he said to himself, “Though I have no fear of God and no respect for anyone, yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will grant her justice, so that she may not wear me out by continually coming.” ’ And the Lord said, ‘Listen to what the unjust judge says. And will not God grant justice to his chosen ones who cry to him day and night? Will he delay long in helping them? I tell you, he will quickly grant justice to them.”

## RESPOND:

Concluding Prayer: Lord God Almighty, you have made all of the people of the earth for your glory, to serve you in freedom and in peace: Give to all people a zeal for justice and the strength of forbearance, that we may use our liberty in accordance with your gracious will; through your Son Jesus Christ who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God forever and ever. Amen - The Book of Common Prayer

Prepared by Lisa Caton, MDG Task Force

## **V. RESOURCES FOR GETTING YOUR CAMPAIGN STARTED**

### **Vestry Resolution to Participate in the Conversations**

The vestry of \_\_\_\_\_ Church hereby commits to do its part in fulfilling Resolution 2013-1 passed at the Convention of the Diocese of New Jersey. This resolution stated that every committee include as part of every meeting from September 2013 through November 2013 or any other three consecutive month period between March 1, 2013 and the 2014 Diocesan Convention, no matter what the purpose, the following agenda item: "How will what we are doing here affect or involve people living in poverty?"

The vestry hereby establishes the three consecutive month period from \_\_\_\_\_ through \_\_\_\_\_ and gratefully assigns \_\_\_\_\_ to serve as the Chairperson to coordinate and guide these conversations.

Signature of Senior Warden \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Rector or Priest-In-Charge \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

## **Parish Conversation Participation Form**

**Name of  
Parish**\_\_\_\_\_

**Rector Name**\_\_\_\_\_ **Rector E-mail**\_\_\_\_\_

**Town**\_\_\_\_\_ **Convocation**\_\_\_\_\_

**Parish Rep/Conversation Chair Person** \_\_\_\_\_

**E-mail**\_\_\_\_\_ **Cell** \_\_\_\_\_

**Three-Month Period Selected for  
Conversations**\_\_\_\_\_

**What do you plan to do to Facilitate Conversations?**

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**Are you interested in having an MDG Task Force Member provide you with additional support such as preaching or leading forums? Please indicate how the MDG Task Force might be helpful.**

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**Please send this form to [mdgtaskforcenj@gmail.com](mailto:mdgtaskforcenj@gmail.com)**



## **Parish Conversations Report Form**

Please take time either each month and at then end of your conversation period to let the MDG Task Force know how you are doing and what the parish is doing to work towards implementing the Diocesan Resolution. Here is a Parish Conversations Report Form that may help you keep in touch. We will use the information on the diocesan website and Facebook pages and for presentation at the annual Convention. It will be particularly helpful in guiding where we should go from here. Thank you for your participation.

***Please send the form to [mdgtaskforcenj@gmail.com](mailto:mdgtaskforcenj@gmail.com) or mail it to MDG Task Force 808 West State St. Trenton, NJ 08618.***

**Parish/town**\_\_\_\_\_

**Contact Name** \_\_\_\_\_ **email** \_\_\_\_\_

**Pbone**\_\_\_\_\_ **Date Submitted**\_\_\_\_\_

(1) What was/is your time frame for your Conversations?

(2) How many meetings were held by what groups?

(3) What discussion prompts were used, if any?

(4) What worked for your groups?

- (5) What did not work for your groups?
- (6) In what ways the Handbook helpful or not helpful for your groups?
- (7) What are your parish's plans to continue the discussions? Any actions planned for the future?
- (8) Ideas, concerns or suggestions that grew out of the meetings.
- (9) Did or does your parish plan to participate in any of the *other Keeping the Poor with Us* Campaign activities listed on page 2? Please elaborate.
- (10) Is there anything that MDG Task Force can help you with as you move forward?

## **Prayers**

### **Insert for Prayers of the People During the 3 Months of Conversations:**

Open our hearts during these 3 months of reflection on poverty. Help us to recognize that being a Good Samaritan on life's roadside is the first step. Help us to see that the whole Jericho road must be transformed so that men and women will not be constantly beaten and robbed as they make their journey on life's highway. Expand our hearts and understanding so that we may be instruments of your justice and peace.

Or

Give bread for those who are hungry; give hunger for justice to those who have bread.<sup>6</sup>

### **Opening Prayers for MDG Task Force Workshop:**

<http://tinyurl.com/povertyconversations>

### **Other Prayers:**

More prayers can be found at <http://tinyurl.com/povertyconversations>

We pray for people  
so poor  
that they cannot help themselves;  
whose subsistence  
crops have been destroyed by climatic disasters;  
for people who live in areas  
where rainfall is unreliable  
and varies from year to year.  
we pray for small children  
who die of malnutrition,  
and others who suffer from disease  
because their mothers do not understand  
the value of different kinds of foods.  
we pray for little children,  
too young  
to pray for themselves.

-Written by young people in Kenya

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<sup>6</sup> Alkire and Newell, *What Can One Person Do?* (Church Publishing Company, 2005) P. 41

Most Loving God,  
As your desire for mercy for the poor is unrelenting,  
may we be unrelenting in our pursuit of mercy for all;  
as your compassion for the suffering of the poor has no limit,  
may our hearts overflow with compassion for all;  
as you long for justice for the poor,  
may we strive for justice for all.  
Open our eyes to the structures of oppression from which we benefit,  
and give us courage to accept our responsibility,  
wisdom to chart a sound course amid complexity,  
and perseverance to continue our work until it is finished.  
Breathe your life-giving Spirit afresh into your Church  
to free us from apathy and indifference;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

-Episcopalians for Global Reconciliation

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**Creator God,  
You loved the world into life.**

Forgive us when our dreams of the future  
are shaped by anything other than glimpses of a kingdom  
of justice, peace and an end to poverty.

**Incarnate God,  
you taught us to speak out for what is right.**

Make us content with nothing less than a world  
that is transformed into the shape of love,  
where poverty shall be no more.

**Breath of God,  
let there be abundant life.**

Inspire us with the vision of poverty over,  
and give us the faith, courage and will to make it happen.

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May God bless us with discomfort  
at easy answers, half truths, and superficial relationships,  
so that we may live deep within our hearts.

May God bless us with anger  
at injustice, oppression, and exploitation of people,  
so that we may work for economic justice for all people.

May God bless us with tears to shed for those who suffer  
from pain, hunger, homelessness and rejection,  
so that we may reach out our hand to comfort them  
and to turn their pain into joy.

And may God bless us with enough foolishness  
to believe that we can make a difference in the world  
so that we can do what others claim cannot be done.

(From Education for Justice - [www.educationforjustice.org](http://www.educationforjustice.org))

## **Sample Bulletin Insert/ Monthly Bulletin Reminder**

### Three Months of Reflection on Poverty

\_\_\_\_\_ (Your church Name) has committed to dedicate time at the beginning of every church related gathering from \_\_\_\_\_ through \_\_\_\_\_ to reflect on poverty. This is in fulfillment of Diocesan Resolution 2013-1 that was introduced in response to an Episcopal Church Resolution that was passed at the General Convention in the summer of 2012. Resolution 2013-1 is not a plan to alleviate poverty or a fundraiser. Rather, it is an effort to cultivate mindfulness about the causes and impact of poverty in our communities and the world. In addition to exploring of the issue of poverty at all church gatherings and considering possible action to help eradicate poverty we encourage all members of our congregation to pray the ***Counting Prayer*** each day as part of daily grace or personal prayer time. It is a prayer that has been and continues to be repeated by people all over the world for the past 13 years. Let us join them. ***"The world now has the means to end extreme poverty, we pray that we will have the will."*** For more information contact our Conversations Chairperson \_\_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_\_\_.

## **VI. RESOURCES FOR LEARNING MORE**

### **Movies -**

The Line: *Sojourners* Magazine recently came out with this excellent movie about poverty. They also provided study guides for discussing the many stories and issues raised in the movies. To order movie go to [www.store.sojo.net](http://www.store.sojo.net). A discussion guide and hosting toolkit is available at [www.thelinemovie.com/dg](http://www.thelinemovie.com/dg).

A Place at the Table - *A Place at the Table* is a well-reported documentary that raises important questions about the state of hunger in America culture. It can be purchased on-line or rented through Amazon streaming. *Bread for the Word* has prepared a study guide to use with this movie. Go to [www.bread.org/go/ol](http://www.bread.org/go/ol).

**Magazine** - *Sojourners* is a national Christian organization committed to faith in action for social justice. They seek to inspire hope and build a movement to transform individuals, communities, the church, and the world. Working through *Sojourners magazine*, Sojourners' website [sojo.net](http://sojo.net), public speaking events, **media outreach**, **educational resources**, books, **advocacy**, and trainings, Sojourners is an internationally influential voice at the intersection of **faith**, **politics**, and **culture**.

### **Experiential Learning-**

Could You Survive Poverty Test ([http://www.thepovertychallenge.org/?page\\_id=108](http://www.thepovertychallenge.org/?page_id=108))

Living below the poverty line live below the poverty line for a period of time (<https://www.livebelowtheline.com>).

## **VII. ORGANIZATIONS THAT PROMOTE EMPOWERMENT, ADVOCACY & ACCOUNTABILITY**

There are many organizations that promote empowerment, advocacy and accountability. The following list includes ones that are mentioned in the body of this handbook, as well as others with which the MDG Task Force Members have had a positive experience.

### **Advocacy and Accountability Groups:**

- **Bread for the World:** Advocates for government programs that prevent hunger: [www.bread.org](http://www.bread.org)
- **Episcopal Public Policy Network:** Our lobbyists in Washington provide updates on key public policy issues agreed upon at Convention: <http://episcopal.grassroots.com>
- **Fighting Poverty with Faith:** A movement to reduce poverty in this country: [fightingpovertywithfaith.com/](http://fightingpovertywithfaith.com/)
- **ONE:** A grassroots campaign of more than 3 million people committed to the fight against extreme poverty and preventable diseases. [www.one.org/](http://www.one.org/)
- **Organization That Address Human Trafficking in New Jersey include:**  
<http://www.nj.gov/oag/dcj/humantrafficking/>  
<http://www.njhumantrafficking.org/>
- **Polaris Fighting Human Trafficking:** [www.polarisproject.org](http://www.polarisproject.org)
- **The United Nations:** Established the MDG goals and seeks to fight poverty as its number one goal. Search on the site for poverty and other topics. [www.un.org/millenniumgoals](http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals)

## **Empowerment Organizations:**

- Episcopal Relief & Development (Empowers and supports communities in their development): [episcopalrelief.org](http://episcopalrelief.org)
- Foundation Cristosal (El Salvador): [cristosal.org](http://cristosal.org)
- Good Shepherd Home in Cameroon: [www.goodshepherdhome.org](http://www.goodshepherdhome.org)
- Jubilee Ministry in the Diocese of New Jersey:  
<http://newjersey.anglican.org/outreach/jubilee/>
- Thistle Farm for Survivors of Human Trafficking: <http://www.thistlefarms.org>
- Urban Promise Trenton and Camden: [urbanpromisetrenton.org](http://urbanpromisetrenton.org), [urbanpromiseusa.org](http://urbanpromiseusa.org)

## **VIII. SHARE YOUR STORIES & LEARN WHAT OTHERS ARE DOING**

**A. Share:** Please share any resources you have found such as stories, studies or prayers. We encourage you to tell us what has worked for you and how these conversations have been received in your parish. Share on our Facebook page:

MDG Task Force - Diocese of New Jersey

or

E-mail us at: [mdgtaskforcenj@gmail.com](mailto:mdgtaskforcenj@gmail.com).

**B. Learn:** To learn what others are doing, to explore other available resources or to get additional copies of this Handbook go to <http://tinyurl.com/povertyconversations>.

Sign-up for our newsletter by e-mailing: [mdgtasknj@gmail.com](mailto:mdgtasknj@gmail.com)

The newsletter includes stories about what is going on in parishes throughout the diocese related to the “Keeping the Poor with Us” Campaign and other MDG Task Force activities.