



SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

For complete instructions, visit www.baylor.edu/FCM_Journal

ACADEMIC ARTICLES

The editorial board specifically seeks articles on the following topics:

- research on the intersect of faith/religion on ministries that impact families and communities
- research that advances developmental and practice theory in congregational or faith-based settings

Manuscripts for full-length articles should not exceed 15 pages, including references and tables. The review process is anonymous. Three reviewers critique each manuscript and then make a recommendation for acceptance based on the following criteria: relevance of content to major issues concerning the topics of family and community ministries, literary merit, conciseness, clarity and freedom from language that conveys devaluation or stereotypes of persons or groups. Final decisions regarding acceptance will be made by the editor and associate editor.

Submit articles electronically to Tricia_Herrmann@baylor.edu.

COLUMNS/ESSAYS

The purpose of these submissions is different from the academic articles. These articles are not peer reviewed. Tone and writing style should be first person, straightforward, informal and accessible. Consider this a forum for networking with others in your profession and these articles as a way to share practical, helpful information and/or inspiration. We adhere to no one denomination but hope to draw from the best of all, and all language should reflect this approach.

Faith in Action

First-person accounts of family or community ministries that address specific needs and faithful practice.

Submit Faith in Action articles electronically to Michael Kelly at mkell17@luc.edu.

Reflections

Personal stories up to 750 words that convey a spiritual truth or revelation to encourage others in their faith journeys. Submit Reflections electronically to Vicki_Marsh-Kabat@baylor.edu.

Contemplative pieces

Throughout the journal are several opportunities for meditation and contemplation. We are especially interested in original poetry, hymns, artwork and short meditations. If you would like to submit your work for consideration in the journal, please send a hard copy as well as a digital copy to Michael D. Sciretti, Jr., 1824 Northcrest Dr., Waco, TX 76710, Michael_Sciretti@baylor.edu.

In My Opinion

An opportunity to explore topical local or global issues that impact families and communities to encourage dialogue and progress. Length is 1,200 words. Submit electronically to Vicki_Marsh-Kabat@baylor.edu.

COPYRIGHT ISSUES

- All contributors to the journal must sign an FCM Journal Publishing Agreement (available on our web)
- All submissions to the journal represent a certification on the part of the creator of the work that this is an original piece and that it, or no version of it, has been published elsewhere or is now being considered for publication elsewhere.

ADDITIONAL COPIES

Authors or creators of a published work will receive two copies of the journal issue. Additional copies may be ordered for \$10 each by contacting the journal staff.

Family and Community Ministries: Empowering Through Faith

One Bear Place #97120 • Waco, Texas 76798-7120 • 254-710-4496

FCMJournal@baylor.edu



This journal appreciates the generous support it has received from the CIOS Foundation, the Lilly Endowment, Inc., and our subscribers.

Family and Community Ministries

empowering through faith

Cover photo by Sterling Severns



- 3 Editor's Note**
Jon Singletary
- 4 Congregations who care for children**
Diana Garland, Michael Sherr, LeAnn Gardner and Jon Singletary
- 18 I Care and Am Willing to Serve©**
Poem by *Marian Wright Edelman*
- 19 What does the Bible say about children in poverty?**
Book excerpt by *Heidi Unruh and Ron Sider*
- 25 Forever Family?**
Poems by *Laine and April Scales*
- 26 Visiting Orphans and Widows**
Meditation by *Amy L. Sherman*
- 27 Poor children: the walking wounded**
Book excerpt by *Jennifer Coulter Stapleton*
- 35 'I'm listening, God'**
Photo by *Leslie Bright McKinney*
- 36 'We're losing them in the nursery'**
Susan Cowley, Talitha Koum mission group director
- 38 Children of promise**
Lyrics by *Peggy A. Haymes*
- 39 Faith in Action** by *Michael Kelly*
'Why do you care?': Pastors' roundtable
Living and teaching: Case study by *LeAnn Gardner*
- 48 Reflections**
Lessons in a free dental clinic by *Krista Petty*
- 50 Monday-to-Friday child care**
Child Care Research Summit report by *Vicki Kabat*
- 54 Books and Resources**
Edited by *Amy Castello*
- 64 This Too Shall Pass**
Vicki Kabat

Family and Community Ministries: Empowering Through Faith is a journal for the heart, head and soul, committed to helping congregations and religiously affiliated organizations to be the hands and feet of God. Through the journal, the Center for Family and Community Ministries seeks to provide resources for family and community that foster creativity, promote critical thinking and inspire contemplation.

EDITORIAL STAFF

Jon Singletary, editor
Diana R. Garland, senior editor
T. Laine Scales, associate editor
Michael Kelly, Faith in Action
Michael Sciretti, Jr., Contemplations
Amy Castello, Books and Resources
Shannon Daley-Harris, Children's Resources
Vicki M. Kabat, managing editor
Tricia Herrmann, assistant to the managing editor

REVIEW COUNCIL

John Roberto, *Lifelong Faith Associates*, CN
F Ellen Netting, *Virginia Commonwealth University*, VA
Gene Roehlkepartain, *Search Institute*, MN
Tim Shapiro, *Indianapolis Center for Congregations*, IN
Terry York, *George W. Truett Theological Seminary and Baylor University*, TX
Linda Openshaw, *Texas A&M-Commerce*, TX
Cynthia Franklin, *University of Texas School of Social Work - Austin*, TX
Virginia Rondero Hernandez, *California State University-Fresno*, CA
Beryl Hugen, *Calvin College*, MI
David K. Pooler, *University of South Carolina-Columbia*, SC
Amy Elizabeth Jacober, *George W. Truett Theological Seminary*, TX

EDITORIAL ADVISORY BOARD

Delvin Atchison, *Antioch Missionary Baptist Church*, TX
Randall Bradley, *Baylor University*, TX
Wanda Lott Collins, *University of Louisville*, KY
David Hester, *Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary*, KY
Eileen W. Lindner, *pastor and consultant*, NJ
Dennis Myers, *Baylor University*, TX
Julie Pennington-Russell, *First Baptist-Decatur*, GA
Rady Roldan-Figueroa, *Baylor University*, TX
Chuck Treadwell, *St. Paul's Episcopal Church*, TX
Heidi Rolland Unruh, *Congregations, Community Outreach and Leadership Development Project*, KS
Patty Villarreal, *Buckner Children & Family Services*, TX
J. Bradley Wigger, *Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary*, KY
Jim Young, *Baptist Child and Family Services*, TX

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

Family and Community Ministries: Empowering Through Faith (FCM) is a peer-reviewed journal published quarterly (ISSN: 1935-5408) by the Center for Family and Community Ministries (CFCM) in the Baylor University School of Social Work. The journal's purpose is to strengthen family and community ministries in congregational and denominational entities.

Views expressed by authors are their own and do not necessarily reflect those of the CFCM, the School of Social Work or Baylor University. Publication in the journal in no way implies endorsement or certification of the author's qualifications, ability or proficiency in pastoral care or social work practice. Baylor University, the CFCM and FCM do not assume responsibility in any way for readers' efforts to apply or utilize information, suggestions or recommendations made by CFCM, its publications or other resources.

Annual subscription rates for *Family and Community Ministries: Empowering Through Faith* (four issues) are \$30 for individuals and \$45 for libraries. International subscriptions are the base rate, plus \$13 (US). Subscription requests may be made online (www.baylor.edu/FCM_Journal) or sent to FCM Journal, Baylor University, One Bear Place #97120, Waco, TX 76798-7120. Subscribers in Illinois, New York, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Texas and Washington, D.C., should add applicable sales tax or provide a copy of a tax-exempt certificate.

COPYRIGHT © 2008 The Center for Family and Community Ministries Baylor University

HOW TO SUBSCRIBE

www.baylor.edu/FCM_Journal

or call 254-710-4496 for more information



How are the children doing?

The week after I finish writing this column, my colleague, LeAnn Gardner, and I will be taking 10 social work students to work with local associations that serve vulnerable children in Rwanda. In a nation where 90% of the population lives on less than \$2 a day, where 1 million people were killed in a genocide 14 years ago, and where hundreds of thousands live with HIV, tuberculosis and malaria, we will be learning from organizations that have made caring for orphans a priority.

During the week prior to my writing this, our CFCM offered a Congregational Child Care Research Summit with Buckner Children and Family Services. We shared the research reports offered in this issue and provided a setting for invaluable conversations among researchers, pastors and child care coordinators.

In looking forward and looking back, a particular question keeps coming to mind. The question I hear is one I imagine God asking a gathering of leaders from around our country: "How are the children doing?"

In order for us to live out a real sense of compassion and justice, of mercy and faith, we must also ask ourselves this question.

The "So what?" questions of our faith, such as this one, seem to be the most important ones. This question about the health and welfare of our children is certainly one of these "so what" questions of theology that we, as professionals, service providers and church leaders, lay and clergy alike, cannot ignore.

Children's Defense Fund President Marian Wright Edelman continually reminds us of the children left behind by the drastic revisions and funding cuts that have been made in recent years to Headstart, Medicaid, child care, after-school programming, and health care. We must find another way to live in order to assure a better future for all of our children.

"How are the children doing?" Well, for one thing, we are making it harder and harder for

their families to access child care in our state. More than \$5 million of child care assistance funds have been cut in Texas affecting tens of thousands of working poor families. There are too many other costs involved in raising our children, and child care assistance must be provided in this stage of life so that parents do not have to choose between being a responsible worker and a responsible parent.

The prophetic voices of people of faith are vital to strengthening civil society and promoting the welfare of our children. Each of us can do our part to assure our communities, our churches and our nation are doing more for our children in need. The costs are relatively low and the benefits will be an entire future of better opportunity and more life options for our children. Small steps toward real justice and real compassion require us to make real investments in our children. "How are the children doing?" A response that honors God demands nothing less than this level of care and concern.

In these pages, we hope you hear the stories of many individuals and communities of faith loving and nurturing children as they strengthen families and build communities.

Moreover, I hope you are inspired, as I have been, to take a next step in advocating on their behalf.



Jon Singletary

*Editor, Assistant Professor,
Director, Center for Family and
Community Ministries*



Congregations who care for children

This is a second of two articles reporting the findings of a national study of 101 congregation-based child care (CBCC) programs and of in-depth interviews with congregational leaders, CBCC program administrators, teachers, and parents. Congregations affiliated with mainline denominations are more than twice as likely to provide CBCC as other congregations. Most congregations are motivated to provide CBCC to meet the educational needs of children, not to recruit new members to their congregations. A large majority of programs (n=70) reported that faith was evident in how they loved and cared for the children and their families and more than half (n=57) indicated that religious content was part of the curriculum. The authors explore the benefits and challenges of child care programs hosted by congregations. Only 31% of the surveyed programs require the director and 12% require the staff teachers to be members of the congregation, and only 10% require that the director have any formal education in religion or congregational leadership. The authors conclude that child care professionals and congregational leaders need more preparation and resources for developing the potential of CBCC as congregational ministry. Authors: Diana R. Garland, Michael E. Sherr, Jon E. Singletary, and M. LeAnn Gardner.¹

Diana R. Garland
Dean, School of Social Work,
Baylor University



Michael E. Sherr
Assistant Professor,
School of Social Work,
Baylor University



M. LeAnn Gardner
Lecturer, School
of Social Work,
Baylor University



Photos by Sterling Severns

In most American families with young children, both parents are in the workforce. A significant proportion (20% to 33%) of their preschool children spend the majority of their days in group child (day) care² programs of congregations (Adams, Rohacek, & Snyder, 2005; Administration for Children and Families, 1999, p. V 19; Chaves, 2004; Cnaan, 1997; Cnaan, Boddie, Handy, Yancey, & Schneider, 2002; Hodgkinson & Weitzman, 1994; Orr & Filback, 2004). The landmark Child Care Project conducted more than 25 years ago discovered that for every child in Sunday School on Sunday, there were nine children in a church-housed child care center Monday through Friday (Lindner,

Mattis, & Rogers, 1982). There are indicators that the numbers of children in congregation-based child care (CBCC) are actually on the rise today (Bogle, 2001; Neugebauer, 2005).

Congregations providing child care have a unique opportunity to play a very influential supportive role in the lives of young families. Young parents – as well as grandparents and foster parents and all those who raise young children – need the supportive communities that congregations can be for them. Child care programs have the potential for being the hub of a whole array of ministries designed to strengthen families (Garland, 1999). Those ministries can include everything from parent and family life education to workforce education for low-income families. In fact, as we reported in an earlier article (“Who Cares for the Children?” *Family and Community Ministries*, Vol. 22.1), more than a third of child care programs (including but not limited to CBCC) offer family recreational events, drop-in care, in-home child care after hours by center staff, summer day camp, a resource library, and emergency support services. Some offer family counseling and parents’ night out, and a few provide care for sick children, family enrichment programs, and divorce recovery programs (Garland, Sherr, Dennison, & Singletary, 2008).

The challenge to family ministry leaders and child care providers, then, is how to help congregations to envision and develop the potential of CBCC as part of a larger ministry with families in their community. This article will present findings from a study of congregations that host CBCC, that explored what motivates congregations to provide CBCC, the kinds of care they offer to children and their families, the benefits and challenges that congregational leaders and early childhood educators face when congregations provide child care, and the ways faith is or is not integrated into CBCC programs. The article concludes with implications for congregational leaders and child care providers who seek to make CBCC an effective and significant support and hub for other supports for vulnerable families with young children.

WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT THE RELATIONSHIP OF CONGREGATIONS AND THEIR CHILD CARE PROGRAMS

CBCC programs are related to their host congregations in three ways: (1) direct operation, with the staff of the center employed directly by the congregation and the congregation assuming direct fiscal responsibility; (2) as a separate nonprofit organization, with accompanying protections to each entity from liability for the other and congregational representation on the center’s controlling board; and (3) congregation as landlord and a separate nonprofit child care organization that simply rents or leases space from the congregation with no other ties (Neugebauer, 1998, 2000). Cross-faith partnerships such as the Ecumenical Child Care Network have encouraged CCBC programs to incorporate separately, believing that they can more single-mindedly develop quality programs than can a congregation that also has competing interests. Also, few congregational leaders have the knowledge and skills to direct early childhood education programs (Bogle, 2001).

CONGREGATIONS’ MOTIVATIONS FOR PROVIDING CHILD CARE

Bogle (2001) has suggested that the post-World War II building boom of church educational wings occurred at the same time increasing numbers of mothers of young children were entering the workforce in the United States. Congregations were building the new child-friendly buildings in order to accommodate the Sunday School needs of the baby boom generation, and then both congregational leaders and advocates for young children began to eye these buildings, idle during much of the week, with a view to putting the space to additional use. Child care was a natural fit, and, for some, it also had the potential for contributing to the cost of the buildings or even generating income for the congregation. From the perspective of child care providers, the location of congregations in the heart of neighborhoods and towns placed them both near family homes and places of work, and their tax-exempt status made them ideal locations.

The Child Care Project conducted by the National Council of Churches in 1982 found

that congregations developed CBCC for reasons beyond cost effective use of their buildings (Lindner et al., 1982), however. First, providing care for young children is congruent with the mission of many congregations. Second, CBCC is a means of providing care for families within the congregation. Third, some congregations developed CBCC as a community service, believing that they have responsibility to care for the needs of neighbors beyond the congregation's members. Fourth, some congregations saw child care as another aspect of their religious education, providing religious program content as well as an environment that nurtures the spiritual and religious growth of children. Finally, some congregations were motivated by a commitment to social justice, reaching out to vulnerable populations such as low-income families or children with special needs.

Of course, most congregations probably have multiple reasons for providing CBCC. The 1982 study concluded that the community service motivation was most dominant. In more recent years, some have observed that religious education of children and evangelizing their families appear to be increasingly common reasons for congregations to develop CBCC programs (Bogle, 2001; Neugebauer, 2005). Goals of fostering love, sharing and cooperation, and a sense of positive self-worth were dominant 26 years ago (Lindner et al., 1982); recent studies suggest that spiritual development has also become an important goal for many congregation-based centers (Neugebauer, 2000).

At least in part, congregations may be attending more to the religious education of children in their CBCC programs because leaders in the field of early childhood education are emphasizing children's spiritual development in all child care, not just religious settings (Scott, 2003). Publishing houses began marketing curriculum materials for child care programs that had religious and spiritual development as their goal (Collins, 1990). Moreover, observers have

found that the everyday religious practices of life together, such as praying before eating, are frequently engaged in by teachers, whether or not there is a formal curriculum (Bone, 2005).

THE BENEFITS AND CHALLENGES OF CONGREGATION-BASED CHILD CARE

There appears to have been no study of the perceived benefits and challenges of locating child care programs in congregations. It would seem that congregations are unique settings for providing early childhood education that would present both possibilities and problems. Congregations present particular challenges, constraints, and opportunities that are different from other private and public social service or educational settings (Garland, 1992). Anecdotal evidence suggests that, unless early childhood education administrators are knowl-

edgeable about congregational life as the ecology of their work and skillful as congregational leaders, the early childhood education programs they lead may be peripheral to the life of the congregation, not a program central to the life and mission of the congregation and centerpiece for the congregation's family resource services. Consequently, when these programs become removed from the central life and mission of the congregation, they may lose touch with the vision and, more

important, the calling that likely prompted them to begin offering CBCC programs in the first place.

METHODOLOGY

This article reports findings from the Congregation-based Child Care (CBCC) Study, which used a national sample of licensed child care centers to: (1) compare CBCC programs with programs in other organizational contexts; (2) identify the reasons congregations provide CBCC programs; and (3) describe the relationship between CBCC programs and the congregations in which they are housed.

There appears to have been no study of the perceived benefits and challenges of locating child care programs in congregations.



RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This article attempts to answer the following questions specific to child care in congregations:

1. What are the denominational affiliations of congregations providing CBCC?
2. How are CBCC programs organizationally related to the congregations in which they are housed?
3. What are the reasons congregations provide child care programs?
4. What role does religion or faith play in CBCC programs?
5. What are the benefits and challenges of CBCC?

SURVEY INSTRUMENT

From December 2005 through April 2006, the first author conducted in-depth, structured interviews with the program director and pastor, as well as teachers, congregational staff members, and parents from each of the four programs. In all, 30 key informants in the four CBCC programs were interviewed. All four centers were located in urban areas: Chicago, New York City, Atlanta, and Dallas. They were purposively chosen to represent as much denominational, congregational, and cultural diversity as possible in order to maximize the range of experiences of these centers and congregations (Garland, et al., 2008).

Those interviews identified significant con-

structs and variables from the perspectives of those closest to the issues of early childhood education, enabling the research team to construct a survey instrument using language appropriate to those we would be surveying. National experts in early childhood education as well as local child care providers then critiqued the draft survey. The final survey included 33 items divided into five sections. Questions in sections one through four

included items relevant for all child care programs on the topics of types of services provided; whether or not programs are accredited and by what entities; program purposes; demographics of children and families served, the role of religion, faith, and spirituality in programming; and staffing. The final section provided opportunity for those programs connected to congregations to describe that relationship. The team mailed the finalized survey to center administrators in October 2006.

THE SAMPLE

We developed a representative sample of licensed child care programs in the United States by selecting one state from each of the 10 federal regions of the country: Alabama, Georgia, California, Minnesota, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, North Carolina, Texas, and Wisconsin. We randomly sampled 1,800 child care providers from the entire listing of licensed providers in the 10 states. A total of 418 providers returned surveys, although we subsequently eliminated 30 because they were incomplete. The final sample included 388 child care programs, a response rate of 21.5%. There were 101 programs located in congregations.

CASE STUDIES

To explore further the meaning of the survey findings from these 101 CBCC programs, the team visually scanned incoming surveys

to identify those that appeared to be engaged in services to the families of children in their CBCC programs, such as parent education, family recreational programs, and educational newsletters. The team identified 20 congregations with child care programs for further study. We developed phone interview protocols and one team member completed 10 interviews with center directors and four of the pastors of those centers. The team member wrote 10 case studies, with identifying information carefully changed to protect the anonymity of respondents. We have used those case studies, plus the 30 initial interviews, to illustrate findings from the national survey.

FINDINGS

In the earlier article, we reported our comparisons of CBCC programs with those in private nonsectarian and public (“other”) settings (Garland, et al., 2008). CBCC programs are significantly more likely to be located in suburban areas than are other programs (31% vs. 14%), and although they are almost as likely to be located in small cities and towns (30%), other programs are significantly more likely to be located there (48%).

CBCC programs also serve significantly more children from families with annual incomes of more than \$80,000 and significantly less from families with incomes of less than \$20,000 than do other programs. They charge significantly more fees from families and are much more likely to charge a flat rate for families (85% do so) than to depend on government financial resources. Only 6% of CBCC programs accept government funding, compared to the 30% of other centers. Finally, CBCC staffs are significantly more stable over time, even though their salaries are comparable to other centers. A teacher’s reason for working in CBCC illustrates this stability:

It is a personal call. It is not just for money. . . . I am happy here. I like the people we work with What I really like in this place, too, it is a church. It’s Christian-based and I was Christian-raised, but it is not like you are under

pressure of teaching religion all the time and it is pretty open and you know, that’s what I like. I really like relaxed.

DENOMINATIONAL AFFILIATION OF SPONSORING CONGREGATIONS

More than a quarter of all child care programs (26.4%, n=101) are located in congregations. The congregations represent 19 different denominations (see Table 1). Interestingly, half (n=50) of the CBCC programs are located in congregations affiliated with mainline denomi-

nations³, even though only 23.4% of American congregations are affiliated with these denominations, and these denominations represent the congregations of only 21.8% of Americans who are active in congregational life, according to the National Congregations Study (Chaves, Konieczny, Beyerlein, & Barman, 1999). In other words, congregations affiliated with mainline denominations are more than twice as likely to provide CBCC than other congregations. In contrast, the three largest affiliations of congregations – Roman Catholics,

Southern Baptists, and “nondenominational” churches – are church home for 48.8% of American attenders and are the identification of 41.2% of congregations in this country, yet they provide only 26% of the CBCC of those congregations in this study.

THE NATURE OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CBCC PROGRAMS AND CONGREGATIONS

Congregations are involved with CBCC programs in several different ways. Respondents indicated that 70% of the CBCC programs are incorporated separately from the congregations that host them. Nearly 60% (n=58) of the centers have members of the congregation serving on their controlling boards. Almost a third (n=31) have congregational leaders chairing their boards. In addition to organizational oversight, nearly half (n=49) of the child care directors were considered staff members of the congregation. One example is a child care center

Congregations
affiliated with mainline
denominations are more
than twice as likely to
provide CBCC than other
congregations.

Table 1
CBCC Programs by Denomination

<i>Denomination</i>	<i>CBCC Programs (n) N=101</i>
United Methodist	21
Lutheran	12
Nondenominational	11
Catholic	9
Southern Baptist	6
National Baptist, USA	6
Presbyterian, USA	5
Churches of Christ	5
Progressive National Baptist	5
American Baptist	4
Episcopal	3
Baptist Bible Fellowship	3
African Methodist Episcopal	3
Lutheran, Missouri Synod	2
Assemblies of God	2
Pentecostal Assemblies of the World	1
Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints	1
National Baptist, America	1
National Missionary Baptist	1

director who also serves as the administrative assistant to the pastor. Although a quarter of the centers (n=25) receive financial support from their congregations, 41 centers pay rent and/or utilities to the congregation.

The families they serve also connect CBCC programs to their congregations. Two-thirds (n=66) of the programs have children from the congregation attending child care. More than half (n=53) of the centers encourage families of children in care to attend congregation-sponsored activities (programs, classes, recreation, etc.). Moreover, in 28 centers, members of the congregation interact with children and families receiving child care. For example, one center director described how the pastor and other staff members frequently “hang out” in the center in the afternoons when parents are arriving in or-

der to greet and come to know families, and older adults “adopt” center children as “adoptive grandkids” and send them birthday cards and accompany them on field trips.

One pastor interviewed stated his belief is that they are separate entities, but accountable to church. He added, “I’m not so sure it’s a good thing or a necessary thing for church to be involved ... perhaps support, but not get involved.” He believes that they should function as separate entities, although the congregation should see the CBCC as an opportunity for outreach.

Nevertheless, 10% reported none of these formal or relational connections to their host congregations.

REASONS CONGREGATIONS PROVIDE CHILD CARE

From a list of 12 items identified by the initial qualitative interviews, administrators ranked the reasons they believe that their congregations provided child care. They chose three items most often. More than half (n=52) want to ensure quality education for children; 45 wanted to serve the community; and 35 wanted to provide children with religious education. Twenty-nine administrators said that congregations offered CBCC to demonstrate love for children and parents.

Only 18 see CBCC as a way to bring new families into the congregation. If some initially were motivated by that possibility, the interviews indicated that they either were disappointed or developed new reasons for providing the program. One pastor, whose congregation had been providing child care under his leadership for 25 years, described his early experience:

Our selling point with the congregation was, ‘Our church is going to grow, because people are going to come for day care and stay for church.’ And that wasn’t true. We didn’t know. Instead we found that many people that came to this program already came out of faith traditions and were active in one of the

churches nearby. There weren't any free-floaters, free agents, or there were very few. It did have an indirect impact on church growth, however. People saw kids playing in the play lot and got intrigued. They thought this might be a place where something is happening. So, that's where the real church growth occurred.

One CBCC is located directly across the street from a public school. Their after-school program began because of the need they saw in the community for children who had nowhere to go in the afternoons. The director believes that because the church also recognizes this need, they support their church housing a program that will help address this need.

Very few administrators (n=8) said that congregations were motivated to provide CBCC in order to help with general expenditures or turn the liability of an empty building into an asset (n=7).



ROLE OF RELIGIOUS FAITH IN CBCC

Religion or faith plays a vital role for most of the CBCC programs, although 14 administrators responded that religion or faith had no role in their programming. A large majority of programs (n=70) reported that faith was evident in how they loved and cared for the children and their families. As a Baptist pastor said in response to the interviewer asking him what his goal is for the program:

It is saying to parents that we don't care about your race, your socioeconomic background, your sexual orientation, your religious background or lack of it. If you give us a chance, we will love your children.

Another pastor was asked the strength of having a CBCC located in the congregation he pastors. He replied, "Because of our large immigrant population, some children who attend preschool here have never heard the Gospel. They hear it for the first time here and after they leave here they go on to public school. We may

be the only place they hear about Jesus."

Of the 101 CBCC programs, more than half (n=57) indicated that religious content was part of the curriculum, and 45 had sacred objects, texts, and pictures on their walls. Almost half (n=49) of the programs included a regular time of worship and 47 indicated that staff members pray for and with the children and their families.

Some parents expressed appreciation for the religious education of their children. As one mother said in an interview:

My son's first song was "Jesus Loves Me." We sing it at home, too. He's in the Superman, Batman, Robin Hood phase, and last week he was Goliath, one of the foes of the biblical stories.

The interviewer asked a director in a Baptist congregation's center how one would know that the CBCC is a place of faith. She replied, "Music, posters, toys, books, the teacher's attitude." She went on to say that the children hear Bible stories every day, read by teachers who are committed to the truths they hold, and children learn religious songs and Bible verses. A pastor of

another congregation with a child care program explained:

We're not heavy-handed. It's not recruitment evangelism at all. On the other hand, we are not apologizing for the fact that we are just not another nonprofit day care center. We are a church.

More than half (n=52) of administrators reported that religious faith was more evident in the milieu of the programs than in specific curriculums, songs, or readings. A Lutheran pastor said that the church has chosen to “serve rather than speak their concern for the well-being of the community.”

One CBCC director believes that teaching and embodying the fruits of the spirit are the primary ways faith is modeled in the preschool. Although Bible stories are included in the curriculum, the director believes that “proselytizing is not developmentally appropriate.”

Very few programs (n=12) required CBCC program teachers to be members of their congregation as staff and none limited their programs to families in their congregations or families with the same religious beliefs.

BENEFITS FOR CHILD CARE PROGRAMS OF A CONGREGATIONAL LOCATION

Table 2 summarizes the benefits of CBCC programs for centers and congregations. Center directors said that the program benefits mainly from the use of the congregation’s physical facilities, an improved community image because they are located in the congregation, and help with marketing their services. Other benefits include religious content for the centers.

Intergenerational contact with congregation members and a ready pool of volunteers are also benefits that almost a fourth of the directors named. In interviews, directors described how volunteers mend books, decorate the facility, provide “adoptive grandparents” for children and their young parents, send birthday cards to

children, provide special treats, and purchase needed supplies or equipment.

Child care programs often provide other supportive services to families of children in their care. Several CBCC directors described how their families are invited to participate in recreational activities of the congregation (a Father’s Day car show, a fall carnival, game nights, Easter egg hunts, parent banquets). Some offer before-and after-school care for school-age siblings. Interviewed parents described how much they appreciate the Wednesday night church supper; the center staff encourages them to come for the meal, even if they do not stay for the educational or worship programs that follow.

Some congregations offer parenting classes and include CBCC parents; one congregation offers their classes at the public library as well as in their facility. That congregation has also placed a webcam in each of the classrooms so that parents with computers in their offices can link remotely to the child care center and see “live” what their children are doing during the day and the care they are receiving. A United Methodist congregation offers to CBCC parents English as a Second Language courses, debt management courses, divorce recovery workshops, and an online newsletter.

Many congregations provide emergency assistance to persons in their community, and that includes families in the CBCC program. As one director said, “Church members are primed and waiting to hear what the needs are in the preschool; for example, when a family’s freezer broke, the church gave me gift cards to replace the spoiled food.” Staff members, too, provide help to families in a pinch. One direc-

Table 2
Benefits for Centers and Congregations

<i>Benefits for Centers</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>Benefits for Congregations</i>	<i>n</i>
Facilities	77	Community Image	66
Community Image	52	Members	62
Marketing	44	Opportunity to Serve	52
Religious Content	25	Financial Support	46
Intergenerational Contact	22	Improved Facilities	36
Volunteers	21		
Competitive Salaries	15		

tor described how a teacher takes a child home with her two nights a week because the parents work late, and another teacher took a parent to help her buy a car. The director noted these activities are “against policy” but also insisted that they will keep engaging in such activities because what they do is ministry, not just child care. That same congregation has an “encourager committee” that commits to praying for the needs of the child care program and also provides various forms of support for families. For example, when a pregnant mother was confined to bed and so unable to transport her child to the center, a member of the encouragement committee provided daily transportation.

Beyond these programs and services, the atmosphere of the child care program can be an important support to parents. A group of parents in a focus group said that they feel known, as though they are not alone in caring for their children. The evidence they gave for this is that the whole staff knows their children, not just their teachers:

They can talk to you about the child and they'll tell you things that you know, because you're the mom, but they know it, too. They have spent time with them. They know their habits. And [the center director] even knows all the children. They know all the kids; they are all theirs.

In turn, parents know the teachers and the other children; there is stability over time because there is lower staff turnover than in other centers (Garland, et al., 2008). One director interviewed talked about a nursery worker who had been in that particular CBCC for 10 years. The parents and the teacher worked collaboratively on issues that arose with the children and the parents trusted the worker – because of her experience and because she had cared for other children in the family.

BENEFITS FOR CONGREGATIONS THAT ACCRUE FROM SPONSORING CHILD CARE PROGRAMS

Congregations benefit mainly from an improved community image (n=66) because they are serving families, which is related to the CBCC providing the congregation with opportunities to serve its community (n=52),

as the volunteer opportunities described above illustrate. Although church growth is not a predominant motivation for providing CBCC, in fact, 62 program directors indicated that the congregation had added members as a result of the child care program.

The child care program has also resulted in financial support for the congregation (n=46) and improvements to the congregation's physical plants for more than a third (n=36) of these programs, although interviews indicated that improvements are often paid for by the congregation or are made with volunteer congregational member labor.

One director interviewed remarked that the financial status of the CBCC can heavily influence board members' opinions of the center. She stated, “When the center makes money, it's a great thing. When we lose money, they (board members) are quick to threaten closure.”

CHALLENGES

Despite the advantages of improved physical space, there are also legendary challenges created when educational space is shared between the weekday child care program and the weekend religious education programs run by volunteers for a different group of children; 55 respondents indicated that sharing space was a challenge. Illustrations include one program using another's supplies, changing bulletin boards and replacing the art work of one group of children with another, or leaving a room in disarray.

There are a number of other challenges presented by CBCC programs. The primary challenge was keeping salaries and benefits adequate (n=59). As noted above, however, very few programs reported problems with staff turnover (n=8); in fact, CBCC programs have significantly more stable staffs than child care programs in other contexts (Garland, et al., 2008). The fact is that salaries are woefully low in early childhood education. A study in 2004 found that the average director of an early childhood center earns \$35,000 per year, a lead teacher earns an average of \$23,000 per year, and a teacher aide earns an average of less than \$17,000 per year (Neugebauer, 2004).

RECRUITING A DIVERSITY OF FAMILIES

Other significant challenges included recruiting a diversity of families of all socioeconomic groups (n=42) and maintaining adequate enrollment (n=31). As noted earlier, CBCC programs serve very few low income families. They are significantly more likely than other centers to serve families with annual incomes of more than \$80,000 and significantly less likely to serve families with annual incomes of less than \$20,000.

FISCAL SUPPORT

Staying fiscally sound is a challenge for more than a fourth (n=28) of programs. But even those that rely solely on parent fees at least occasionally find ways to help financially strapped families. As one director explained:

I have one high school-age mother who came to us from Katrina [hurricane evacuee]. We do everything for free for that family. We have continued since she came through our doors. Then I have another young teen who is in high school who had a baby and can't afford care so we do for free. If a family has a financial need, then we may take that child for a while. We work it out.

A few of the directors interviewed indicated that they receive either contracts, grants, or vouchers from government entities so that they can serve low-income families. Some indicated that they therefore do not include any religious content in their program. Another director who received state funds said that they have religious content in the curriculum and that the children participate in regular chapel time and prayer. The funding does not require that they omit religious content; if it did, she said that they would have refused it.

Others who received government funding complained that it was not adequate to meet their costs. One director noted that they would not be able offer the same quality of services if they had many children on government subsidy; the full-fee children are essentially “subsidizing” children whose fees are paid by government programs.

One congregation interviewed received no less than six grants to fund various programs within the child care center. For example, there

is a full-time nurse on staff whose salary is paid by federal grants as well as a full-time community outreach staff member who focuses on home visits and counseling staff at the center. Forty percent of this center's operating budget is grant funded.

At the same time, almost half of administrators (n=46) indicated that location of the program in a congregation provides financial support as a benefit. Some interviewees indicated that the center was a line item in the congregation's budget, and that if there is a financial shortfall, the congregation will provide help.



KEEPING THE CONGREGATION INFORMED AND INVOLVED

Almost 25% of program directors indicated on the survey that they found it challenging to keep key congregational leaders involved (n=24). Several directors indicated in interviews how important it is to be included in congregational staff meetings, where communication among various congregational programs takes place and any challenges in sharing space or other resources can be addressed.

Part of the challenge may be that only 31% of the surveyed programs require the director and 12% require the staff to be members of the

congregation. Moreover, only 10% required that the director have any formal education in religion or ministry to prepare them for effective congregational leadership. Most of the directors are not even participants in the host congregations, much less participants in the decision-making bodies of the congregation.

Directors who were interviewed who were members of the host congregations believed that their membership was vital to the relationship between the program and the congregation. As one said, "Being a member of the church helps me to lay hold of the vision of the church and the school." She makes announcements about the program in Sunday worship services of the congregation and attends deacons' meetings, which helps the church stay informed of the program's activities. She thinks membership is so important that all but one of the staff members of the school are also church members. In contrast, another director who is not a congregation member expressed her frustration that she does not have ready access to communicating with the host congregation. Consequently, the congregation knows little or nothing about the child care program, or that they have a special ministry for children with physical (e.g., cerebral palsy) and developmental disabilities (e.g., Down's syndrome). In interview after interview, directors said that communication with the church could be better.

Further complicating communication and leadership, very few church leaders are equipped to lead child care programs, even though many are serving as chairs of the centers' boards. As one pastor said:

What I am learning is that I have never done church this way. I had no training for it. I had no education for it. It has been on-the-job training every day.

COMMUNICATING RESPECT FOR FAMILIES FROM DIVERSE RELIGIOUS BACKGROUNDS

Some directors indicated that they struggle with finding ways to provide religious content while being respectful of families from different faiths (n=19). Directors who were interviewed often said that families find out about the center from other parents who have had their chil-

dren enrolled there and who have had good experiences with the center. Quality of care is of greater significance to parents than the religious beliefs of the host congregation. CBCC programs therefore often have children from diverse religious backgrounds. For instance, the Baptist church program whose director described teachers reading Bible stories and teaching religious songs enrolls children from Hindu, Muslim, and Buddhist homes, as well as a diversity of Christian denominational backgrounds. Interviewed directors state that they explain the extent to which religious content is included in their program when parents apply to enroll their child(ren), but one director said that parents occasionally still express displeasure when their child is taught beliefs different from those of the parents.

IMPLICATIONS

Caution is in order in generalizing from these findings. Although the sample was drawn randomly from a representative sample of the United States, the 21% who returned surveys may not accurately represent all CBCC programs but rather those who are most invested in their work and in the connection between congregation and the CBCC program. Nevertheless, their responses have major implications for both congregations and early childhood educators. The mix of interviews and surveys allows us to understand some of the meaning behind the statistical analysis of the survey results.

Congregations affiliated with the mainline denominations are still twice as likely to provide child care programs as are other congregations, whereas Roman Catholic, Southern Baptists, and nondenominational congregations – the largest affiliations of congregations in the country – are only half as likely to be providing these programs as are other congregations. The impression that conservative and evangelical congregations are increasingly offering CBCC programs may be accurate (Bogle, 2001; Neugebauer, 2005), but if they are, they still are far behind mainline congregations. Although most centers are incorporated separately, they also have organizational ties to the congregations; most have boards controlled by the congregation, and half are represented by their director

on the congregation's staff. Moreover, many are financially supported by their congregations, either with direct funding (25%) or by rent- and utility-free use of building space (59%). It would seem that this kind of financial support would make it possible for congregations to offer lower-cost child care and even to make scholarship support available to children from low-income families. In fact, however, these centers actually charge significantly more. Likewise, they are more likely *not* to serve low-income families than the centers in other settings because they rely too exclusively on revenues from flat-rate fees and do not accept government funding.

If finding ways to use an empty building may have been an initial motivator for congregations to consider providing CBCC (Bogle, 2001), administrators from these centers do not see that motivation as being a significant continuing factor. Only eight indicated that congregations use their CBCC program to generate financial support for the congregation or help pay for its facility. The Child Care Project concluded that the community service motivation was the dominant motivation of congregations, but that congregations also were motivated to provide care for the children of families in the congregation, to provide religious education, and, finally, to work for social justice demonstrated in caring for children from impoverished homes or with special needs (Lindner, et al., 1982). Although those reasons are still the motivators for the host congregations in this study, their relative strengths have shifted somewhat. Now, two-thirds of CBCC programs include children from families within the host congregations, and congregations are far less likely to provide care for children from low-income families than are other child care centers. Moreover, only 18% of center directors indicated that congregations see CBCC as an attempt to attract families to join the congregation.

In this survey, a minority of center directors (n=45) indicated that congregations are motivated to serve their communities. More-

over, the communities they serve appear to be middle- and upper-middle class, not children in poverty. The focus may be on providing quality early childhood education, but it is not for the most vulnerable children in our society.

Part of the challenge for congregations is that location is critical to child care programs. Ideally, the program is located either near the families' homes or near the parents' employment or school. It is unreasonable to assume that low-income parents who rely on public transportation will be able to enroll their children in affluent suburban congregations, even if those programs accept government subsidies or vouchers. Congregations in aging buildings in the inner city may not have the resources to meet licensure requirements for providing quality child care. Partnerships need to be explored between congregations that are near children and families who most need child care and those that have the resources of funding, mission, and volunteers.

Religious education for young children was an important motivator for these host congregations, and that education appears to be predominantly taking place in intrinsic ways, in how children and families feel loved and cared for (a focus of 70% of programs) more than in religious content in the program (57%), regular worship (49%), or prayer (47%). The fact that only 12% of programs require their program staff to be members of the congregation suggests that religious education may not, in fact, be a primary motivation in most programs. This becomes clear by reflecting on how many of these same congregations would be willing to have persons who are not members of their congregation teaching their children's Sunday School.

The disconnection between staff and congregation has implications for support for the child care program. Although in interviews some directors expressed satisfaction and even relief that they and the program teachers are not required to be congregation members, and that they do not have to participate in congre-

The focus may be on providing quality early childhood education, but it is not for the most vulnerable children in our society.

gational staff meetings, those who are members and who do participate indicate that this is a critical connection for making the program visible and central to the life of the congregation.

It appears from this survey and the interviews that there is a crisis of leadership of CBCC programs. Child care administrators may be outstanding professionals and knowledgeable about the education of young children, but they have not been prepared to serve as leaders for the congregations that seek to minister to their communities through CBCC. Many are not members of the congregational community, so that leading the congregation to envision its calling to support and care for young children and families is almost impossible.

At the same time, pastors may have a heart for children and families, but they have not been prepared to serve as chairpersons of CBCC program boards, or to negotiate the licensure and accreditation processes that ensure that they are providing quality care. Although there are resources available to help congregations negotiate these processes, they are very limited and not always easily accessible to congregations (California Council of Churches, undated; Freeman, 1987; Lawrence, 2006).

SUMMARY

If CBCC is to become the heart of effective support for vulnerable young families, with the needed financial support and involvement of the congregation, it needs to be grounded in the theology and calling of the congregation. That grounding would take place more readily if the center director and staff are members of the congregation and if volunteers and staff from the congregation were engaged in the center. Congregational and early childhood program leaders need educational opportunities and resources that will help them partner in leading a congregation's care for young children and families. At the same time, policies and procedures for accessing government funding need to be developed that will encourage congregations to seek and accept government funding to help subsidize the cost of quality child care. Finally, congregations in inner cities where there is need for child care can consider partnerships with suburban congregations, giving them opportu-

nity to invest in the lives of vulnerable young children and families that they otherwise cannot reach with care.

Congregations are ideal settings for wrapping family resource programs around early childhood education – parent education, parent support groups, family recreation, and community-building activities that further strengthen the ability of families to raise healthy, successful children with the support of a faith community (Garland, 1994). Involvement in the lives of children and families through child care services can be a revitalizing force in the lives of congregations. CBCC can also be marginalized, however, unless both congregation and child care providers continuously identify the children who live in the congregation's space from 30 to 45 hours a week as "our" children – and our responsibility as a congregation – just as much as those children who spend two or three hours on Sunday with us.

REFERENCES

- Adams, G., Rohacek, M., & Snyder, K. (2005). *Child care centers, child care subsidies, and faith-based organizations: Preliminary findings on five counties in 2003*. Retrieved 8/26/05, from www.urban.org.
- Administration for Children and Families. (1999, November 16-17). *Welfare reform & the faith community building new partnerships*. Paper presented at the Welfare Reform and Faith Community National Conference, New Orleans.
- Bogle, M. (2001). Sacred places, civic purposes: The role of faith-based organizations in child care. Panel presentation. Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institute, from www.brookings.edu
- Bone, J. (2005). Breaking bread: Spirituality, food and early childhood education. *International Journal of Children's Spirituality*, 10(3), 307-317.
- California Council of Churches. (undated). *Congregations caring for children*. Retrieved December 15, 2005, 2005, from www.usc.edu/crc.
- Chaves, M. (2004). *Congregations in America*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Chaves, M., Konieczny, M. E., Beyerlein, K., &

- Barman, E. (1999). The National Congregations Study: Background, methods, and selected results. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 38(4), 458-476.
- Cnaan, R. A. (1997). Social and community involvement of religious congregations housed in historic religious properties: Findings from a six-city study (Final Report to Partners for Sacred Places). Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania.
- Cnaan, R. A., Boddie, S. C., Handy, F., Yancey, G., & Schneider, R. (2002). *The invisible caring hand: American congregations and the provision of welfare*. New York: New York University Press.
- Collins, K. (1990). *Preparation and professional development programs for early childhood educators: Emerging needs for the next decade*. New York: Rockefeller Bros. Fund.
- Freeman, M. (1987). *Helping churches mind the children: A guide for church-housed child care programs*. New York: National Council of the Church of Christ in the United States of America.
- Garland, D. R. (Ed.). (1992). *Church social work*. Philadelphia: The North American Association of Christians in Social Work.
- Garland, D. R. (1994). *Church agencies: Caring for children and families in crisis*. Washington, D.C.: Child Welfare League of America.
- Garland, D. R. (1999). *Family ministry: A comprehensive guide*. Grand Rapids: Intersarsity Press.
- Garland, D. R., Sherr, M., Dennison, A., & Singletary, J. (2008). Who cares for the children? *Family and Community Ministries: Empowering Through Faith*, 22(1), 6-16.
- Hodgkinson, V. A., & Weitzman, M. S. (1994). *Giving & volunteering in the United States* (1994 ed.). Washington, D.C.: Independent Sector.
- Lawrence, D. (2006). *Start-up manual for faith-based child care programs*. Colorado Springs: Child Care Connections.
- Lindner, E. W., Mattis, M. C., & Rogers, J. R. (1982). *When churches mind the children: A study of day care in local parishes*. Ypsilanti MI: The High/Scope Press.
- Neugebauer, R. (1998). Congregations that care: Child care in religious institutions. *Child Care Information Exchange*, 3, 22-25.
- Neugebauer, R. (2000). Religious organizations taking proactive role in child care. *Child Care Information Exchange*, 133, 18-20.
- Neugebauer, R. (2004). Wages for early childhood professionals in North America. *Child Care Information Exchange*, 158(16), 18-20.
- Neugebauer, R. (2005). Trends in religiously-affiliated child care. *Child Care Information Exchange*, 165, 79-80.
- Orr, J., & Filback, R. (2004). *The changing face of faith-based child care in Los Angeles County*. Retrieved December 10, 2005, from www.usc.edu/crcc
- Scott, D. G. (2003). Spirituality in child and youth care: Considering spiritual development and "relational consciousness." *Child & Youth Care Forum*, 32(2), 117-131.

ENDNOTES

1. We are grateful to the A.L. Mailman Foundation and the Louisville Institute for generous funding for this project. We are also grateful to Daphne Paul, Sue Ann Martinez, and Kelly Cline for their assistance with data collection and data entry.
2. This article uses the term "child care" to refer to weekday child care in group settings, to be distinguished from literature that uses the term "child care" to refer to residential group care in foster homes, residential facilities, and mental health treatment programs.
3. We have identified as mainline congregations those with the following denominational affiliations: United Methodist Church, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Presbyterian Church (USA), Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), United Church of Christ, American Baptist Churches, Reformed Church in America, and Episcopal Church.

I Care and Am Willing To Serve ©

By Marian Wright Edelman

Lord I cannot preach like Martin Luther King, Jr.
or turn a poetic phrase like Maya Angelou
but I care and am willing to serve.

I do not have Fred Shuttlesworth's and Harriet
Tubman's courage or Franklin Roosevelt's political skills
but I care and am willing to serve.

I cannot sing like Fannie Lou Hamer
or organize like Ella Baker and Bayard Rustin
but I care and am willing to serve.

I am not holy like Archbishop Tutu,
forgiving like Mandela, or disciplined
like Gandhi
but I care and am willing to serve.

I am not brilliant like Dr. Du Bois or
Elizabeth Cady Stanton, or as elo-
quent as Sojourner Truth and Booker
T. Washington
but I care and am willing to serve.

I have not Mother Teresa's saintliness,
Dorothy Day's love or Cesar Chavez's
gentle tough spirit
but I care and am willing to serve.

God it is not as easy as the 60s
to frame an issue and forge a solution
but I care and am willing to serve.

My mind and body are not so swift as in youth
and my energy comes in spurts
but I care and am willing to serve.

I'm so young
nobody will listen
I'm not sure what to say or do
but I care and am willing to serve.

I can't see or hear well
speak good English, stutter sometimes
and get real scared, standing up before others
but I care and am willing to serve.

Lord, use me as Thou will to save Thy children today and tomorrow
and to build a nation and world where no child is left behind and
everyone feels welcome.

Excerpt from

Hold My Hand: Prayers for Building a Movement to Leave No Child Behind®



Sterling Seaverns photo



Sterling Seaverns photo

What does the Bible say about hope for children in poverty?

An astounding 210 verses in the New International Version of the Bible use the words “poor” or “oppressed.” If our churches featured this theme with the same prevalence and passion as Scripture, how might God use the church to bring new hope to children in poverty?

GOD’S SPECIAL CONCERN FOR THE POOR

God loves all people equally. Yet the special place in God’s heart for the poor and vulnerable is evident throughout the Bible (for example: Exodus 22:21-27, Psalm 12:5, 140:12, 146:7-9, Proverbs 19:17, 21:13, Isaiah 3:14-15, 25:4, Luke 1:52-53, James 2:5). God’s compassion is most evident in tender attentiveness toward poor women and children: “You shall not abuse any widow or orphan. If you do abuse them, when they cry out to me, I will surely heed their cry” (Exodus 22:22-23). This comes to pass as God hears the cry of Ishmael, son of Hagar, Abraham’s abandoned and abused second wife, when they are near death in the wilderness (Genesis 21:17). Ishmael’s plea for help echoes in the experience of many poor children today.

God intervenes to uphold the cause of those who are impoverished and mistreated, as promised in 1 Samuel 2:8: “He raises up the poor from the dust; he lifts the needy from the ash heap.” The Bible also teaches that God sometimes judges and tears down the rich. Mary’s Magnificat highlights the social reversal associated with Jesus’ incarnation: God “has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty” (Luke 1:53). Later, Jesus



Heidi Rolland Unruh
Director, Congregations,
Community and
Development Proect



Ronald J. Sider
Founder, Evangelicals
for Social Action

Reprinted from Hope for Children in Poverty: Profiles and Possibilities edited by Ronald J. Sider and Heidi Unruh, copyright © 2007 by Judson Press. Used by permission of Judson Press, 800-4JUDSON, www.judsonpress.com.

preached, “Woe to you who are rich!” (Luke 6:24).

Yet it is not riches alone that provokes God’s wrath, but two dangers associated with wealth. First, Scripture harshly warns those who acquire wealth by exploiting the poor. “You who make iniquitous decrees . . . that widows may be your spoil, and that you may make the orphans your prey! What will you do on the day of punishment?” (Isaiah 10:1-4; see also Isaiah 3:14-15, Amos 2:7, Micah 2:1-5). Secondly, God’s anger is also aroused by people who have plenty, yet neglect the needy. In Ezekiel 16:46, God remarks on the destruction of the city of Sodom: “This was the guilt of your sister Sodom: she and her daughters had pride, excess of food, and prosperous ease, but did not aid the poor and needy” (see also Luke 16:19-31). In God’s eyes, ignoring the needs of the poorest is as grievous as idolatry and sexual abominations.

The biblical record demonstrates that ultimately, God judges societies by how they treat the people who are most vulnerable. That is how much God cares for the poor.

SHARING GOD’S HEART FOR THE ‘LEAST OF THESE’

In response to poverty, and in contrast with the ways of the world, the Scriptures repeatedly instruct God’s people to embrace compassion and justice (Exodus 23:6, Leviticus 19:10, Proverbs 14:21, Psalms 41:1, 112:9, Amos 5:11-14, Micah 6:8, Romans 12:13, 2 Corinthians 8:10-15, Galatians 2:10, Ephesians 4:28, James 2:14-16). After the Exodus, the Lord commands Israel not to treat widows, orphans and foreigners the way they had been treated by the Egyptians. Instead, God’s people are to love those on the margins, just as God has rescued them (Deuteronomy 15:15). God’s people are to seek the welfare of their community (Jeremiah 29:7), and to become a source of blessing to all people (Genesis 12:3).

God identifies with the poor so strongly that caring for them is akin to serving God. “Whoever is kind to the poor lends to

the Lord” (Proverbs 19:17). On the other hand, “Those who oppress the poor insult their Maker” (Proverbs 14:31). This theme reappears in Jesus’ parable of the sheep and goats (Matthew 25:31-46). Jesus surprises the righteous with his insistence that they had fed and clothed him: “Just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.” Since Jesus names the poor as part of his family, followers of Jesus are to show care to the poor and neglected as if they were serving the Savior himself.

Because compassion is a fundamental aspect of God’s character, there is a connection between knowing and loving God, and showing mercy to those in need. (See Deuteronomy 10:17-20, Proverbs 29:7, Isaiah 58:6-8, Ezekiel 16:49-50, 18:5-9, Matthew 22:37-39, 2 Corinthians 8:1-9, James 1:27, 1 John 3:17). In Jeremiah 22:16, God commends the upright king Josiah: “He defended the cause of the poor and needy, and so all went well. Is that not what it means to know me?” Bryant Myers summarizes this connection: “Loving God and loving our neighbor are two sides of the same gospel coin. They are inseparable, seamlessly related. ...At the end of the day, how we treat the poor is a measure of whom we truly worship.”¹

CONCERN FOR THE POOR IN JESUS’ TEACHING AND EXAMPLE

Jesus demonstrated his Father’s compassion for the poor and vulnerable in his teachings (Matthew 25:31-46, Mark 10:21, Luke 6:20-21, 10:25-37, 12:33-34, 14:12-14), and by his example (Matthew 9:35-36, 20:30-34, Mark 8:1-8, Luke 7:22, John 13:29).

In Luke 4:16-21, Jesus announced his mission by quoting from Isaiah 61:1: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.” Jesus lived out this mission by teaching, healing,

and breaking the oppression of evil (Matthew 9:35). He showed special attention to those on the social margins: women, children, the disabled, and the outcasts. Jesus' teachings underscored the dangers of captivity to wealth, and the blessedness of a life open to the needs of others.

After his resurrection, Jesus empowered his disciples to carry on this mission (John 20:21). We too are empowered by the Spirit of Christ to bring good news to the poor.

WHAT CAN GOD'S PEOPLE DO?

Matthew 26:6-13 tells the story of a woman who anointed Jesus with costly perfume. When the disciples protested that the perfume should rather have been sold and given to the poor, Jesus defended the woman's actions, saying, "You always have the poor with you."

Some have taken this statement to mean that social ministry is ultimately futile, and that Christians should concentrate on saving souls. But it is important to understand Jesus' words in the context of the Deuteronomy passage to which he was referring: "There will always be poor people in the land. Therefore I command you to be openhanded toward those of your people who are poor and needy in your land" (15:11, TNIV). Jesus' words do not justify sidelining poverty and focusing on the world to come. Rather, the overwhelming reality of poverty in this world is an urgent call for people of faith to open their hand freely to those in need.

The Bible indicates seven broad pathways of action in response to poverty. However we respond, we should immerse our actions in prayer, serving in "the strength that God supplies, so that God may be glorified in all things through Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 4:11). And we must work persistently,

trusting that "in the Lord [our] labor is not in vain" (1 Corinthians 15:58).

1. *Practice hospitality, live in solidarity.* The starting point is to make our homes places of refuge and care for neighbors in need (Proverbs 31:20, Romans 12:13, 1 Timothy 5:10), and to make all people feel welcome in our congregations, regardless of economic status (James 2:2-4). But who are our neighbors? Do our lives bring us alongside those who are suffering, or do they remain "other"? The incarnational ministry of relocation follows Jesus' example: "The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us" (John 1:14). We can show solidarity with poor children by choosing to dwell, work, shop, and make friends in their communities. Saying to the poor, "Your people shall be my people" (Ruth 1:16) gives us a personal stake in their well-being.

2. *Share resources.* In view of God's mercy (Deuteronomy 15:15), God's people are commanded to make their resources generously available to the poor (Deuteronomy 15:7-8): "Do not be hard-hearted or tight-fisted toward your needy neighbor. You should rather open your hand, willingly lending enough to meet the need." While this passage calls for voluntary charity, other passages point to more institutionalized mechanisms for caring for those unable to provide for themselves. For example, every third year, the people's tithe was to go to support poor widows, orphans, and foreigners as well as the Levites (Deuteronomy 14:28-29, 26:12). Both individuals and a society as a whole are responsible for the welfare of its most vulnerable members.

The early church practiced Jesus' teaching to give to the poor (Luke 6:30) by sharing with all who had need (Acts 2:44-45), and by taking a collection for famine relief (Romans 15:26, 2 Corinthians 8:1-9:15). As Paul reminded the early church,

The overwhelming reality of poverty in this world is an urgent call for people of faith to open their hand freely to those in need.

our compassion toward others is a reflection of God's compassion for us. Whatever we give to others, we can never match God's generosity in sending Christ while we were yet sinners (Romans 5:8, 2 Corinthians 8:7-9).

3. *Empower self-sufficiency.* One key way in which the law of Moses directed resource owners – which in ancient Israel meant landowners – to aid those in need was through the practice of gleaning. “When you reap your harvest in your field and forget a sheaf in the field, you shall not go back to get it; it shall be left for the alien, the orphan, and the widow, so that the LORD your God may bless you in all your undertakings” (Deuteronomy 24:19-20; see also Exodus 23:10-11). The story of Ruth shows the model of gleaning in action (2:8-17). By putting people's needs ahead of profit, Boaz kept a young widow's family from starvation.

As Amy Sherman points out, a core principle of gleaning is that it “gives the able-bodied poor an opportunity to meet their own needs through their own application of labor.”² Benevolence should affirm the connection between work and self-sufficiency. Whenever possible, Christian charity should affirm the dignity of those who are poor by creating opportunities for them to provide for themselves and their families, rather than perpetuating crippling dependency.

4. *Invest in development.* Internal or external barriers may hinder people from meeting this biblical goal of self-sufficiency. Development means generating change within people or their environment that brings life in the community closer to God's ideal. Isaiah 61:3-4 identifies the goals of development:

To provide for those who mourn in Zion – to give them a garland instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the mantle of praise instead of a faint spirit. They will be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, to display

his glory. They shall build up the ancient ruins, they shall raise up the former devastations; they shall repair the ruined cities, the devastations of many generations.

The first goal is personal transformation, helping people develop the character, identity, attitude and skills necessary to overcome life's obstacles. The call in Romans 12:2 to “be transformed by the renewing of your minds” produces change from the inside out, which leads to restored relationships.

The second goal is community development that renews the institutions, infrastructure and economy of a healthy



Sterling Seaverns photo

community. As Isaiah 58:12 promises, “You shall be called the repairer of the breach, the restorer of streets to live in.” Community development looks beyond individual well-being to lay a foundation of wholeness that can endure for “many generations.”

5. *Promote justice.* Because “the Lord loves justice” (Psalm 37:28), people of God are likewise called to “do justice” (Micah 6:8), particularly on behalf of the powerless (Deuteronomy 10:17-19). “Speak out for those who cannot speak, for the rights of all the destitute. . . . Defend the rights of the poor and needy” (Proverbs 31:8-9).

Many biblical texts call on political rulers to use their power to deliver the needy and oppressed (see Psalm 82:3-4, Proverbs 29:4, Jeremiah 22:2-3, 23:5, Daniel 4:27). Psalm 72 describes the role of the king in advancing economic justice: “May he judge your people with righteousness, and your poor with justice. . . . For he delivers the needy when they call, the poor and those who have no helper” (Psalm 72:2, 12). When selfish, powerful people deprive others of their rightful access to productive resources, the state must use its power to intervene. When individuals and institutions in the community do not or cannot provide basic necessities for “those who have no helper,” government has a God-given responsibility to save lives.

ACCOUNTABILITY

If government and other sectors of society fail to uphold justice, God’s people are to hold them accountable. The prophets confronted political leaders who oppressed the poor and failed to protect the vulnerable. Isaiah 10:1-2, for example, warns against rulers who use crooked laws to “make the orphans your prey” (see also Jeremiah 5:26-28, 22:13-17, Ezekiel 22:23-30, Micah 7:3). The prophets also confronted business leaders engaged in immoral and exploitative practices that hurt poor families (see Nehemiah 5:1-13, Jeremiah 22:13, Hosea 12:7-8, Amos 8:4-6, and Micah 2:1-2, 6:10-12). Jesus likewise spoke out against respected religious leaders who kept the letter of the law but neglected justice and mercy, and who out of greed would “devour widow’s houses” (Matthew 23:23, Luke 20:46-47). Promoting justice means protecting the vulnerable from those who abuse political, economic or religious power, as well as bringing victims of injustice to the attention of those with the power to defend their cause.

6. *Break the cycle of poverty.* The most radical concept in the Hebraic economic system was the Year of Jubilee. Every seven years, all debts were to be canceled (Deuteronomy 15:1-2). The 50th year was a

special Jubilee, in which all land was to be returned to its original owners: “You shall proclaim liberty throughout the land to all its inhabitants. It shall be a jubilee for you: you shall return, every one of you, to your property and . . . to your family” (Leviticus 25:10).

This passage recognizes the self-perpetuating nature of wealth and poverty. Originally, the land was divided equitably among extended Israelite families. Over time, families that experienced a loss of resources became vulnerable to moneylenders, large land owners and powerful civic leaders who could take advantage of their struggle for survival. Families who fell into debt or lost their land passed these liabilities on to their children. The Year of Jubilee represented liberation from this downward spiral, bringing fresh opportunities and hope to each generation.³ Children would not be hostage to the sins of their parents (see also Ezekiel 18:2-4 on this principle).

The policy of Jubilee reflects the biblical ideal that in a healthy society, each family has the freedom and capacity to earn its own living and to participate with dignity in the life of the community. Because of human sinfulness and the fallen state of the world, however, people fall into the bondage of poverty and dependency. God’s plan is that society be structured in a way that gives each generation the chance to break free from the bondage of the past.

7. *Share good news with the poor.* Jesus’ first sermon announced that “the year of the Lord’s favor,” or Jubilee, had arrived (Luke 4:21). Like the year of Jubilee, the coming of Christ means good news to the poor and liberty to those in bondage – whether trapped by oppressive systems, disease and disability, unjust treatment at the hands of others, or their own sinful choices. In Jesus’ ministry, spiritual, physical, social and economic liberation go hand in hand.

Followers of Christ can proclaim the good news that those who are financially poor may be wealthy in spirit (Luke 6:20; see also Proverbs 15:16, 16:8, 19, 28:6; Luke

21:1-4; 2 Corinthians 6:10, 8:2,9). As James 2:5 points out, “Has not God chosen the poor in the world to be rich in faith?” Similarly, the gospel is good news to those who are poor in terms of power and prestige. In contrast to the low standing of children in society, Jesus declares that they occupy a special place in God’s kingdom (Luke 18:16).

We also share good news with the poor and vulnerable when we affirm that they are created in God’s image (Genesis 1:26), treat them with dignity and respect (Luke 18:35-42), and value their contributions (Luke 21:1-4). As the story of Peter and John’s encounter with the beggar at the Temple illustrates, we can extend people spiritual care and fellowship even when giving financial resources is not possible or appropriate (Acts 3:3-11).

CONCLUSION

People who love God can disagree on many points of public policy and social welfare. There can be no room for debate, however, on the Bible’s claim on Christians to care for the poor as a central expression of our faith.⁴ If we do not share God’s passion to uplift the poor, we cannot claim to know God in a biblical way. “How does God’s love abide in anyone who has the world’s goods and sees a brother or sister in need and yet refuses help?” (1 John 3:17)

It is important not to be misunderstood. We dare not reduce knowing God to a concern for social justice. Nor can we earn our way into heaven by caring for the poor. The only assurance of salvation is to cling to the cross, trusting God to forgive us for Jesus’ sake. While God shows special concern for the vulnerable, God does not care more about the salvation of the poor than the rich. Jesus confronted the poor along with the wealthy for their sins. In fact, Scripture specifically forbids us to be partial to the poor (Leviticus 19:5).

When it came to children, however, Jesus’ arms were open wide. His instructions were clear: “Whoever welcomes one such

child in my name welcomes me” (Matthew 18:3). Our love of Jesus is to find tangible expression in the way we treat children. Jesus’ condemnation of those who abuse children was equally clear: “It would be better for you if a great millstone were fastened around your neck and you were drowned in the depth of the sea” (Matthew 18:6). Other passages suggest that neglecting the needs of poor children is a form of giving them offense.

If we love Jesus and seek to conform our lives to Scripture, we will care for children wounded by poverty – physically, emotionally, and spiritually – and promote a society which shares resources to meet their needs. We will prayerfully intervene to break the yoke of generational poverty and create fresh opportunities for families to develop self-sufficiency. We will protect children and their families from exploitation and advocate their cause to those in power. And we will offer them the hope of our faith in Christ, who shared in their poverty during his sojourn on earth so that through him all might live in abundance (2 Corinthians 8:9).

ENDNOTES

1. Bryant Myers, “Isaiah, Which Is It?” (retrieved from www.network935.org).
2. Amy Sherman, *ABCs of Community Ministry* (Hudson Institute, 2001), 13.
3. Ronald J. Sider, *Just Generosity* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999), 65-67.
4. For a more developed presentation of this claim, see Ronald J. Sider, *Good News and Good Works: A Theology for the Whole Gospel* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999).

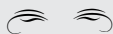
Forever Family?



With these poems, a mother and daughter communicate their experiences as a new family. In "Love Decides," Laine remembers the first day she and her husband met April, the 11-year-old girl they would eventually adopt. It expresses the power of immediate mother-love. In "Forever Family?" April writes about the uncertainty she felt as she reflected on her past and tentatively moved toward her new family. Each using a phrase they learned in adoption training, "forever family," the permanence of their commitments and the daily decision to love, are expressed in different ways through their poems.

Love Decides By T. Laine Scales

You drink me in, unaware that you stare.
Love decides in this moment to
love forever
My heart aches as it opens deep
and wide
To receive the girl who receives me too.
Little ear on my shoulder in church
Arm opens to surround you and
will never close
Forever family is born.



Forever Family? By April Scales

Some say new beginnings are
always good,
But I know better.
Endings follow beginnings,
Though I'm not sure that they should.

An empty stomach,
A broken heart,
The crack of a belt,
And then forever part.

A glimpse in the future
A glimpse in the past,
Will this future family
Actually last?

Eager eyes,
A yearning heart,
Seeking that last living spark
Glimmering inside the heart.

Unsure of what to say, what to do,
Hesitating to make this move,
One word could change it all;
Would she fall?

A glimpse in the future
A glimpse in the past,
Will this future family
Actually last?

Going through the teenage years,
Going through lots of tears.
Arguments come at times,
But the word "family" thrives.

Glad to be able to survive,
Was close to death
but now alive
Weaving this story of family and life.

A glimpse in the future
A glimpse in the past,
I'm sure this future family
Has a chance to last.

Visiting Orphans and Widows

By Amy L. Sherman

Religion that God our Father considers pure and faultless is this: that you visit orphans and widows in their distress and keep yourself unstained by the world (James 1:27)

This familiar verse shows up often on the letterhead of Christian mercy ministries or as the theme verse of conferences on social ministry. In its familiarity, it can lose its punch. But the injunction to “visit” the needy is rich and challenging, considering other uses of the word “visit” in Scripture.

For example, “visit” connotes the idea of imparting life. In I Samuel 2:21, God “visits” barren Hannah -- and the result is that she is enabled to have five children. You’ll recall that God had graciously given Hannah the gift of a son, Samuel, whom she dedicated back to the Lord. God has more that he wants to do for barren Hannah, and so He “visits” her and she conceives new life. The visitation of God imparts life! In Luke 7:16, Jesus and the disciples have entered the town of Nain. A funeral procession is coming out of Nain – a young man has died, and is mourned by his widowed mother. Jesus looks upon this, and, moved with compassion, tells the woman not to cry. Then He put His hands on the coffin, and commands, “Young man, I say to you, get up!” And sure enough – the coffin opens, the dead boy sits up, and the crowds “are filled with awe.” Then, Luke tells us, the crowd began shouting and praising God. And what did they say? “Surely God has visited us! Surely God has visited us!” They knew God had visited them because life was imparted to the dead.

This suggests that our “visiting” of orphans and widows in their distress involves a ministry among them that imparts life. It mustn’t be limited to providing them merely with commodities. We are to share our own lives, and invite them to taste of Christ’s life. We are to pray for fullness in the places where they are empty. Where they experience deadness, our ministry aims to quicken. Where they experience barrenness, our ministry helps them connect to Jesus and experience fruitfulness. He is the life-giver to all who are destitute, empty, dead, and barren.



iStock Photo

FOR FURTHER THOUGHT:

- 1) When was the last time you visited a widow or an orphan?
- 2) Pray today for Christ, the “life-imparting,” to quicken the parts of your heart that feel dull and deadened.
- 3) Often poor people are “barren of hope” because of the overwhelming challenges and financial stress they experience. Do you know of at least one Christian ministry that you can pray for that is imparting life to the poor by giving them new hope? Pray for this organization, that it would remain faithful in sharing Christ who is the author of life and hope.

Reprinted with the author’s permission from *Sharing God’s Heart for the Poor: Meditations for Worship, Prayer, and Service* by Amy L. Sherman (Co-published, Trinity Presbyterian Church Urban Ministries and the Welfare Policy Center of the Hudson Institute, 2000). For copies, call 434-293-5656.



Baylor Photography

Poor children: the walking wounded

“[Jesus] said to them, ‘Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these.’”

– Mark 10:14 (NIV)

Toby and Tina grew up poor. As young children in Virginia, they moved frequently between rented cheap apartments and homeless shelters. Sometimes their mother, Mary, would keep a job for several months and they would stay in one place for awhile. Then she’d lose the job, stop paying the bills, and the electricity or heat would be turned off. Toby would try to do his homework by the light of the street lamp outside their windows. Tina never did much homework. With a severe reading disability, school was frustrating for her.

Meals were scarce in their house. Especially when the utilities were off, a cold can of Spaghetti-Os was a typical dinner. Kids at school teased them, calling them “trash diggers” because their mom found some of their clothes in the dumpster behind their apartment building. It was hard to keep the few friends they had, because each move meant starting over at a new school.

Their mother Mary had a ninth-grade education and severe mental and physical disabilities. The children didn’t have much relationship with their father, who lived in a different state.

When Toby and Tina were in their early teens, the family moved into a long-term housing program for homeless families. There they received the kind of comprehensive care their family needed – counseling for the entire family, tutoring for Tina, life-



Jennifer Coulter Stapleton
Communications Department,
Bread for the World

Reprinted from *Hope for Children in Poverty: Profiles and Possibilities* edited by Jennifer Coulter Stapleton, copyright © 2007 by Judson Press. Used by permission of Judson Press, 800-4-JUDSON, www.judsonpress.com.

skills classes, volunteer assistance to help the teens learn how to prepare family dinners. Toby got a part-time job after school and opened his own savings account. For three or four years, the family was stable.

But Mary's health continued to decline, and recently, she died. Now 18, Toby has dropped out of school and is living with his friend's family. He is still working part-time and studying for his GED. Tina, 16, is living in a residential foster care program for adolescents with emotional problems.

Tina and Toby's story illustrates a stark reality, but not a rare one. In this country, 13 million children live below the federal poverty line – nearly 18% of all children.¹ A larger percentage of children are poor in the United States than in any other developed country.² Children under 18 are much more likely to be poor than adults.³

poverty line,⁶ which was \$16,090 annually for a family of three in 2005.

INTRICATE WEB OF CONDITIONS

But poverty is more than simply living below a certain income threshold. Children who are poor almost always live in families with a host of other exacerbating issues: parents with low education levels; families led by young, single women; violence both within the family and the surrounding community; medical problems and disabilities; parental substance abuse; and emotional problems such as depression. So it is hard to isolate the effects of income poverty, but there is no doubt that lack of income makes all of the other problems in poor children's lives more difficult to handle. Lack of money compounds an intricate web of other social conditions.

But whether the problems are caused by poverty itself, or by the family and community factors that typically accompany it, most low-income children have more negative outcomes than their middle- and upper-income peers in four areas: physical, emotional, social and educational.

PHYSICAL EFFECTS OF CHILDHOOD POVERTY

According to a multi-site study of more than 20,000 low-income children under 3 years of age, one in five children

does not consistently have enough food for an active and healthy lifestyle.⁷ A wealth of health data collected since the 1960s has demonstrated that some of the most striking physical effects of poverty result from hunger and malnutrition.

The following story, reported by a doctor, illustrates childhood hunger in America:



Baylor Photography

African American children are most likely to be poor, with 36% living below the poverty line. American Indian/Alaskan Native and Latino children follow closely at 31% and 29% respectively.⁴ High poverty rates and persistent poverty are disproportionately found in rural areas.⁵ Among poor children, 37% are extremely poor, meaning their family's income is less than 50% of the

In Boston, a face like Maura’s is called “map of Ireland” – pale skin, straight red hair and a scattering of freckles across the nose and cheeks. If she weren’t so terribly thin, she could be in a travel poster, but at 4 years old, Maura weighs only 27 lbs., the weight of a normal little girl not much past her second birthday. ...Her face still retains some roundness, but her ribs protrude through her skin.

Maura’s mother gets up every morning at 3 a.m. and dresses her sleepy 4-year-old. Together, they walk through the dark streets to a nearby fast food outlet where mother works the breakfast shift. Maura goes back to sleep under the table in the staff room. On mother’s 8 a.m. “lunch break,” they get on a bus to take Maura to family daycare, eating forbidden crumbs from the fast food restaurant during the ride. At 12:30 p.m., when mother’s shift is over, she retrieves Maura and rushes down to the local woman and children’s shelter for free lunch.

Depending on when mother’s paycheck comes, she buys food at the local convenience store and cooks it over the electric hot plate in their one-room apartment for supper. Sometimes instead, she and Maura share a “super-sized” cup of French fries and a large soda from the fast food restaurant.⁸

Like Tina and Toby, Maura’s story of hunger and poverty is not unique. In fact, it is typical. Households with children are extremely vulnerable to food insecurity and hunger, which means sometimes not knowing where they will get their next meal. While nearly 12% of all U.S. households experience food insecurity or hunger, the

rates are much higher for households with young children (18.5%) and for female-headed households, which report the highest rates of food insecurity in the nation (33%).⁹ For single mothers, ensuring that there is consistently enough food on the table to feed themselves and their children is no easy task.

When children do not get enough healthy food on a regular basis, they suffer much more than hunger pangs. A lack of proper nutrition during the critical period between birth and 3 years can leave lasting physical and mental impairments. Too few or the wrong types of calories during the early stages of life set the course for the rest of the child’s life. Growth stunting due to inadequate nutrition is twice as likely to occur in poor children¹⁰ and can lead to decreased mental capacities. Malnutrition can cause learning disabilities that increase the risk of having to repeat a grade. The physical and cognitive damage caused by infant and toddler malnutrition is only partly reversible.¹¹

Mothers with inadequate nutritional intake during pregnancy are more likely to give birth to a child with a low birth weight. Poor mothers are 80% more likely to have a low birth weight baby than middle- and upper-income mothers.¹² Every year, 250,000 low-birth-weight children are born in the United States.¹³ Low birth weights increase the likelihood of serious physical disabilities such as blindness, deafness or cerebral palsy, and can even cause infant mortality. Severe malnutrition in pregnant women has also been linked to an increased risk of schizophrenia when the children reach adulthood.¹⁴

The problem of hunger in the United States, even among children, is not a new phenomenon. In the 1930s, pictures of bread lines snaking around city blocks helped to catalyze the federal response to

The physical and cognitive damage caused by infant and toddler malnutrition is only partly reversible.

hunger. In the 1960s, a civil rights worker named Marian Wright, who later founded the Children’s Defense Fund, led a group of U.S. senators into the Mississippi Delta to show them some of the harshest realities of hunger in America. The 1968 documentary *Hunger in America* shocked viewers with graphic images of starving children – images viewers were more inclined to associate with African and Asian nations than their own country.

More recently, obesity has emerged as a problem of malnutrition far different but just as damaging as a lack of food. Obesity has reached epidemic proportions in the United States. Although the rate of obesity is only slightly worse among low-income children than other children, the problem affects poor adolescent girls and women disproportionately. One study found that 57% of women below the poverty level were overweight, compared to only 38% of women earning the highest incomes.¹⁵

The causes seem to be twofold. First, in the United States, foods that are high in starch, fats and sodium are less expensive than healthy foods such as whole grains, fish, and fresh fruits and vegetables. Second, because many low-income families juggle numerous responsibilities and have a “poverty of time” in addition to a poverty of income, it is faster and easier to eat at a fast-food restaurant or heat up a ready-to-eat frozen dinner than to cook a healthy meal.

Potential problems also arise from how food is consumed among low-income populations, especially by women. When a woman receives her paycheck or food stamps, she over-consumes food because she has been experiencing hunger. But as the month wears on and food begins to become scarce in the household, women are typically the first to go without eating. A mother will feed men and children and skip meals herself, sometimes going days without signifi-

cant caloric intake. This cycle unbalances her metabolism, causing her body to store large amounts of fat during times of plenty as a way to safeguard against starvation later. Thus, the “feast/famine” cycle common among low-income families can cause biological changes that make the maintenance of a healthy weight more difficult.

The result is that poor women more often suffer serious health problems associated with obesity, including Type 2 diabetes, hypertension, cardiovascular disease and several forms of cancer.¹⁶ When Mom is unable to work due to health problems, and some of the household’s limited financial resources must be spent on her health care, clearly the children suffer, as we saw in the case of Tina and Toby.

Lack of safe, affordable housing also has negative health consequences for children. One of the leading causes of death among poor children is house fires. When families cannot afford to pay for utilities, they are forced to turn to unsafe alternatives such as hot plates, space heaters and candles. The dangers posed by faulty wiring and cheap building materials are often compounded by a lack of functioning fire alarms. Children in low-income housing are also at greater risk of disease due to vermin, mildew, overcrowding, and inadequate heat. The experience of homelessness tends to leave children and their families even more vulnerable to stress-related health problems and physical violence.

Poor families also have limited options when their homes are found to have lead paint. Inhaling the dust from lead paint is particularly damaging to low-income children, because often they are also iron deficient and anemic due to food insecurity, conditions that make a child more susceptible to the effects of poisoning. One study found that 16.3% of poor children have elevated levels of lead in their blood, which causes growth stunting, hearing loss,

A woman will feed men and children and skip meals herself, sometimes going days without significant caloric intake.

Vitamin D metabolism damage, impaired blood production, kidney damage and lower intellectual capacity.¹⁷

POVERTY AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Poor children are vulnerable to two types of emotional problems: external behaviors such as aggression, fighting and acting out, and internal difficulties such as anxiety, social withdrawal and depression.¹⁸

Sonya Lorelle is the children's therapist at ForKids, the program for homeless families in Norfolk, VA, where Toby and Tina experienced a measure of stability. She counsels the formerly homeless children in ForKids' residential and after-care programs, using play and music therapy techniques in addition to traditional methods.

Lorelle describes the biggest barrier facing many of the children she encounters as attachment disorder. She explains that all children are born with the need to bond with other human beings through eye contact, smiles, touch and being "cooed at" and talked to. Not receiving this kind of attention can permanently affect a child's emotional development.

The formerly homeless mothers at ForKids have been in a state of crisis. They are usually overwhelmed by survival issues and have sometimes been abused. So, while they love their children deeply, they often do not have the time, energy or skills to start babies off with a stable foundation for emotional well-being.

Lorelle describes a cyclical effect: often the moms did not get the necessary attention when they were young children and so never learned how to provide it for their own kids. She says, "There is a pool inside them that was supposed to be filled up, but it is empty."

As a result, poor children may feel hopeless and have a negative worldview. Children with secure attachments have high self-esteem, can cope with stress and generally believe that even when things are bad, they will get better. Children with poor attachment are more likely to be clingy,

less empathetic, less resilient or anti-social. They often act out aggressively because they would rather have negative attention than no attention. If they are punished for their behavior, it only reinforces their belief that the world is bad and they are bad.

The hope for overcoming this cycle is that attachment is a skill that can be learned. At ForKids, parenting classes that address children's development and needs are mandatory. Lorelle comments, "If we could fix what is going on between the mom and the child, their lives would be better whether they are poor or not."

THE SOCIAL EFFECTS OF POVERTY: TWO CASE STUDIES

Enjoying healthy emotional and intellectual development is difficult when much of an individual's or family's time is spent simply coping with crises and trying to survive. These problems are exacerbated when people in poverty are isolated in resource-deprived places such as urban slums and remote rural areas. Poor neighborhoods often lack political power and public services. A community is also weakened if many of its people face serious problems such as substance abuse, domestic violence and mental illnesses.

Griffin Centers offers after-school programs in several locations for children living in public housing in East St. Louis, IL, a city with exceptionally high poverty and crime rates. One of the aims of this program, directed since 1986 by Sister Julia Huiskamp, is to teach social skills through recreation programs that focus on cooperation.

Sr. Julia describes the mentality that so many children bring to her program: "The mores of the street tend to stress retribution, tough language, getting even, and a general lack of politeness." Sr. Julia says that many low-income people in her community have low self-esteem, so when they feel even slightly disrespected by their neighbors and relatives, they may retaliate with violence, sometimes seriously wounding or even killing people. When teens and young adults lack the social skills and flexibility necessary

to succeed in the business world, they sometimes resort to selling drugs, prostitution or panhandling.

As children participate over time, they learn coping skills and their manners improve. “We give it our best,” Sr. Julia observes. “But the street is such a pull, so powerful.”

Francis Ford is the health care coordinator of Sowing Seeds of Hope, sponsored by the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship in Perry County, AL. Perry County is located in an area of the South called the Black Belt – originally because of its rich, black soil and later because a majority of the population is African-American. Ford paints a picture of a community without many social opportunities for children, especially the 50% who

persistently poor counties in rural America leave the majority of children who live there without opportunities for healthy social interaction and development. This means fewer positive role models, less hope for the future and diminished motivation to strive for a better life.

POOR CHILDREN AND EDUCATION

Poor children are twice as likely to drop out of school, be held back a grade or be suspended or expelled as non-poor children.¹⁹ Poverty in early childhood has the greatest effects on a child’s educational attainment. An increase of \$10,000 in mean family income during a child’s first five years is associated with almost one full additional year of schooling.²⁰ Children living in poverty are

more likely to have lower math and reading achievement scores.²¹ Research shows that the educational level of a child’s parents and parental support for education have a strong impact on how far the child goes in school, providing another example of how poverty cycles from parent to child.

At ForKids, where Sonya Lorelle works, most children are a grade level or two behind because frequent

moves have caused them to change schools and miss important instruction. Excessive absences are particularly a problem for homeless children.

Sr. Julia Huiskamp reports that in one high school in her district, only 11% of the seniors “made standards” on their achievement tests last year. Many children drop out before graduation, some as early as the fifth grade, often because education is not a priority for their families. Even those who graduate from high school have often received a substandard education, in part because a low tax base does not pay for highly trained teachers, computers or up-to-date materi-



Baylor Photography

live below the poverty level.

Ford says that 30 years ago, the county had several grocery stores, pharmacies, restaurants and a Greyhound bus station. But now the two major factories have shut down and most businesses have left. A few years ago, the only hospital in the county closed. Except for two fast food restaurants, there are not many places to socialize in the evenings. The environment does not expose children to people or ideas that could broaden their horizons and stimulate their minds.

The lack of after-school activities, gathering places and cultural venues in many

als. Many graduates have to take a year or two of remedial classes before they are ready to start the regular curriculum at the local junior college.

**THE FAITH-BASED RESPONSE:
GETTING OUR PRAYERS STRAIGHT**

How are Christians in the United States called to respond to children in poverty and the host of challenges they face? Perhaps the most illuminating answer can be found in a story told by Bread for the World founder the Rev. Art Simon about an encounter with current Bread for the World president the Rev. David Beckmann. About 20 years ago, Art approached David, then an economist described as a “rising young star” at the World Bank, for his ideas about how to end poverty. What “magic bullet” would make a significant difference in the lives of poor people? Despite all his education and experience as an economist, David answered: “We need to get our prayers straight. If we can do that, everything else will fall in line.” To end poverty, we have to pray for hungry and poor people and for the wisdom and strength to work for justice.

So prayer must be the bedrock of our work. And even as we petition God to intervene in the world, the effect on those of us who are praying may be equally necessary. Our worldview and our priorities will be transformed if we pray for hungry and poor people every day.

We must also take action by using our influence as American citizens. We can urge our elected representatives to champion policies that help address the root causes of poverty. For example, the federal nutrition programs – including WIC, food stamps and the school breakfast and lunch programs – are the most direct way to combat food insecurity. They are also proven to increase school attendance, improve academic performance and decrease behavior problems in the classroom. Although these programs do not meet all the nutritional needs of poor children, millions more would suffer from physical and educational problems without them. In 2005, Christians were the lead-

ing voices in stopping proposed cuts to the Food Stamp Program by writing letters, making phone calls and visiting their members of Congress.

Direct service is another important way of helping poor children. Tutoring in a low-income school, mentoring a child, working in a local food bank or a free health clinic are just a few examples of the many opportunities to make a difference. Most churches and denominations offer opportunities for Christians to respond to those in need by giving volunteer time and funds to support effective initiatives.

Pray, advocate, serve – these three actions done in conjunction will have a powerful impact. Thirteen million children are waiting.

ENDNOTES

1. 2004 U.S. Census Bureau.
2. David Wood, “Effect of Child and Family Poverty on Child Health in the United States,” *Pediatrics*, Vol. 112 No. 3 (September 2003), p.707.
3. 2004 U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Reports, Series P60-222, Detailed Poverty Tables, Table 3.
4. 2006 Kids Count Data Book: State Profiles of Child Well-Being (The Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2006), p. 28.
5. Bruce Weber, Leif Jensen, Kathleen Miller, Jane Mosley and Monica Fisher, “A Critical Review of Rural Poverty Literature: Is There Truly a Rural Effect?” Institute for Research on Poverty, Discussion Paper 1309-05 (October 2005).
6. “Child Poverty in 21st Century America, Who are America’s Poor Children?: Fact Sheet No. 2, September 2005” National Center for Children in Poverty, Columbia University, Mailman School of Public Health
7. Deborah Frank, “Child Hunger in the United States: A Doctor’s View,” *Frontline Issues in Nutrition Assistance: Hunger Report 2006* (Bread for the World Institute, 2006), p. 67.
8. *Ibid*, p. 66-67.

9. M. Nord, M. Andrews, and S. Carlson, Household Security in the United States, 2004 (Washington, D.C.: USDA, 2005), p. 9.
10. Jeanne Brooks-Gunn and Greg J. Duncan, "The Effects of Poverty on Children," *The Future of Children, Children and Poverty*, Vol. 7 No. 2 (Summer/Fall 1997), p. 58.
11. Ibid, p. 80.
12. Ibid, p. 60.
13. Ibid, p. 78.
14. Deborah A. Frank, Statement Before the Subcommittee on Education Reform Committee on Education and the Workforce, U.S. House of Representatives, 16 July 2003.
15. Patricia M. Crawford, Marilyn S. Townsend, Diane L. Metz, Dorothy Smith, Gloria Espinosa-Hall, Susan S. Donohue, Anna Olivares and Lucia L. Kaiser, "How Can Californians be Overweight and Hungry?" *California Agriculture*, Vol. 58 No. 1 (January-March 2004), p. 13.
16. Frontline Issues in Nutrition Assistance, p. 70.
17. Ibid.
18. Brooks-Gunn and Duncan, "The Effects of Poverty on Children," p. 62.
19. Ibid, p. 58.
20. David Wood, "Effect of Child and Family Poverty on Child Health," p.709.
21. www.irp.wisc.edu/publications/dps/pdfs/dp130505.pdf.

I Will Not Die an Unlived Life

Dawna Markova

I will not die an unlived life.
 I will not live in fear
 of falling or catching fire.
 I choose to inhabit my days,
 to allow my living to open me,
 to make me less afraid,
 more accessible,
 to loosen my heart
 until it becomes a wing,
 a torch, a promise.
 I choose to risk my significance,
 to live so that which came to me as seed
 goes to the next as blossom,
 and that which came to me as blossom,
 goes on as fruit.

Source: I Will Not Die an Unlived Life

I'm listening, God.





Bob Smith Photo

'We're losing them in the nursery'

We were four women who were more perplexed than demoralized. After 12 years of ministry in one deep pocket of multi-generational urban poverty, we'd attended more teenagers' funerals than high school graduations. It was running three to one – gravesides to grads. Six years earlier, our small ecumenical church had formed a youth group in the Kate Ross government-housing neighborhood of South Waco. The teenagers named themselves The Peacemakers but despite their chosen name, the teens in it regularly broke out in the violence they'd learned on the streets.

We simply knew that the Lord had not brought us here to watch these children become drug dealers or mothers by the age of 14, go to prison, and die young. A call was forming as God dreamed into us what could be.

Two seminal moments stand out in my memory. We asked a trusted Communities in Schools adviser what was the No. 1 problem of entering students at our local elementary school. Language skills? Deficits in relating to numbers and letters? What? As she shook her head no, no, a troubling look swept her face and concretized in her words, "The No. 1 problem is their mental health." We were stunned. In this pocket of poverty, a kindergartner's chief difficulty entering public education is mental health – a lack of it.

As we plowed forward with our research, a meeting with one of our city's gifted play therapists ended with a plea, "Open a therapeutic nursery!" We'd never even heard of such a thing. We did more research and read *Ghosts from the Nursery: Tracing the Roots of Violence* by Robin Karr-Morse and Meredith S. Wiley, a powerful and persuasive book that led us through the most recent brain development research and told the

Susan Cowley
Talitha Koum Covenant Partner



terrifying story of one child's descent from birth to death row.

Yes, we said, we are losing them in the nursery. Their brains are literally being organized around chaos and their adrenal systems are over-preparing for fight or flight on such a regular basis that stress hormones are disrupting the synaptic connections between brain cells. The biggest effects, claims the research, is an impairment of language and memory, i.e., the ability to encounter a pattern and remember it. And if it can't be remembered, how can good patterns be emulated and repeated?

It became all too clear why our children were mentally quitting school at 8, why they couldn't stand in line, what caused them to not comprehend that seven would always follow six. Added to the chaotic brain development was the chaos of an impoverished environment. Mothers of five children who were only 21 themselves lived in cramped government housing with not a single chest of drawers. Generations of neglect meant that there were no bedtimes. Children fell asleep wherever they were whenever they could no longer hold their eyes open. And night to night it could be in a different home, not just a different bed. Their parents were understandably depressed, some addicted, some with manifested mental diseases and deficiencies.

A thought crossed my mind in my time of silence one morning, "I had no choice into which home I would be born. What if I had been born into this kind of poverty, chaos and hopelessness?" The very thought of it was terrifying. How could we leave these littlest ones unaided in such circumstances? What was to be done? Could we do it? Did we have the fortitude and patience – the will – to see through this dream of God?

Fast-forward two years. After painstaking development and fundraising, we opened our therapeutic nursery January 2003 in a former Boys and Girls Club, just blocks away from our other ministries, those of CrossTies Ecumenical

Church. This church of six members is helped by hundreds of volunteers, members of other churches who come alongside.

Talitha Koum Nurture Center is a mental health therapeutic nursery for newborns through the age of 6. "Talitha koum," Jesus spoke over Jairus' daughter who was presumed dead. The Aramaic words meant, "My child, get up!" And she did. Then Jesus ordered a lovely thing: "Get her something to eat." How practical. He brought her back to life to be among the living in a most normal way. It was our mission, too, to keep children from descending to the brink of death – and worse – to help them, instead, to rise up.

Having been in this neighborhood for 15 years, we thought we knew. But we knew so little about the depth of pain a 3-year-old could hold or the rage that could develop in one so precious. The torment that assailed our toddlers in their sleep was shattering to us. A very low teacher-to-child ratio is required, and some say we are shooting into hell with a water pistol, considering there are only 24 children in our care. My response is that I'd rather shoot into hell than to see one more child go to hell! Consider Bitsy.

Bitsy (*not her real name*) had been abducted by a mother she'd never known who bore her in prison and, on release, snatched her in the night from a beloved grandmother. Dumped back on her grandmother's doorstep months later and deemed too much trouble, Bitsy then saw her mother stab her father. The following day, Bitsy was brought to Talitha Koum in terror-stricken shambles. Here was a true test of our call! Would Talitha Koum be a mental health therapeutic nursery . . . for those who desperately need it?

On her arrival, we'd been open just two months. She wailed incessantly for three weeks, taking time only to gasp breaths between sobs. We survived those three weeks and so did Bitsy who is now a successful first-grader after four years at Talitha Koum in weekly play therapy and in the haven of rest she found in our Nurture

We knew so little
about the depth of
pain a 3-year-old
could hold or the rage
that could develop in
one so precious.

Center's loving and patient care.

In between those times, Bitsy lost to death her care-giving grandmother, then her grandfather, was foisted between family homes, and was sexually molested. How did Bitsy survive it all? The love of God compelled us to be there for her and all the others whose stories are so similar. And we are still with Bitsy, sending her to school with a trusted Talitha Koum mentor and continuing to see her at weekly parenting meetings where her mentor participates and brings her to see us.

The details of what we do five days a week with these children is interesting but hardly the point. If you've pictured me there, day and night, don't. I own a marketing firm. Talitha Koum's very existence is a testament to what God can do when a few are willing to get off the boat and come to follow Jesus



Jennifer Berry, an infant room teacher at Talitha Koum, has a psychology degree and typifies the quality of teacher the center employs.

wherever he leads – and to be faithful in that following, even when the way is hard and the path is lit only by a candle of hope.

Children of Promise

Words by Peggy A. Haymes © (SLANE)

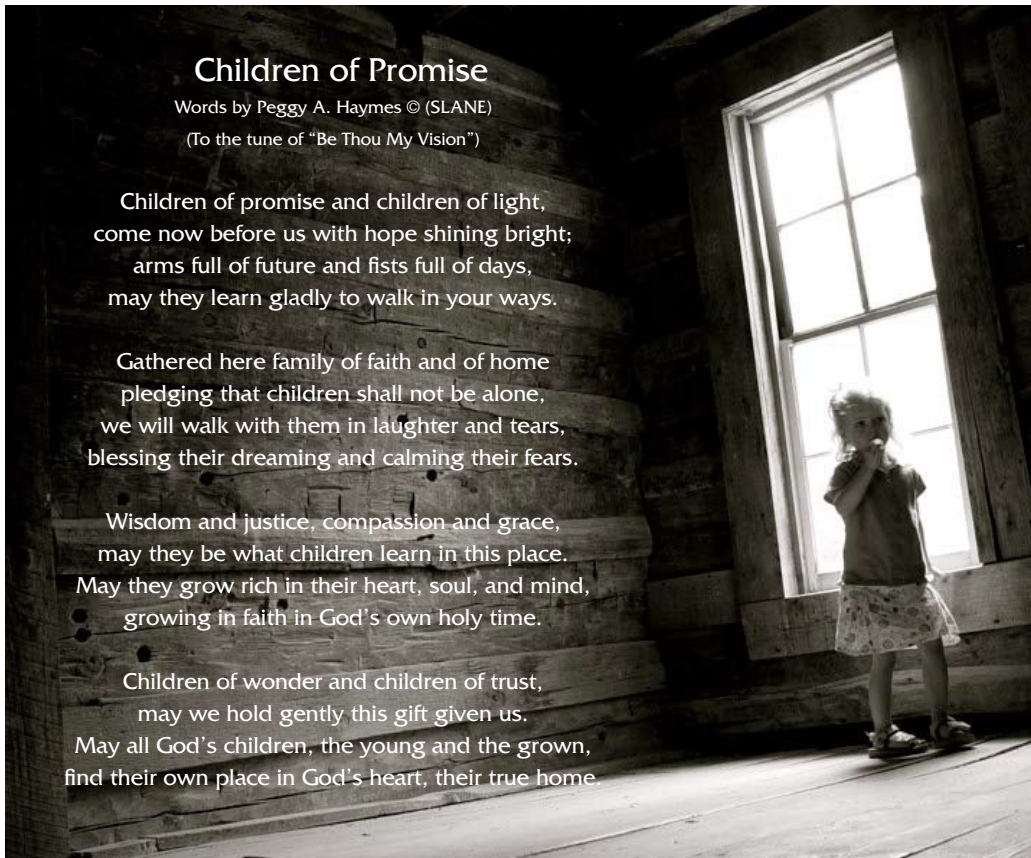
(To the tune of "Be Thou My Vision")

Children of promise and children of light,
come now before us with hope shining bright;
arms full of future and fists full of days,
may they learn gladly to walk in your ways.

Gathered here family of faith and of home
pledging that children shall not be alone,
we will walk with them in laughter and tears,
blessing their dreaming and calming their fears.

Wisdom and justice, compassion and grace,
may they be what children learn in this place.
May they grow rich in their heart, soul, and mind,
growing in faith in God's own holy time.

Children of wonder and children of trust,
may we hold gently this gift given us.
May all God's children, the young and the grown,
find their own place in God's heart, their true home



Sterling Severns Photo

Helping communities in pain

“We are in a community that is hurting.” – Rebecca Dow

For this special issue, our journal is turning to a focus on ministering to children and their needs. Too many of our children doubt that God is there at all, let alone the healing power of an adult figure, to the point that they challenge people like the Rev. Dale Kelley to answer, “Why do you care about me?” In these two heartening pieces, these ministers are directly confronting the fear and alienation that keep communities from becoming safe and loving places for children.

What’s so encouraging about Ms. Dow’s work and the work of the three pastors profiled in our Pastor’s Roundtable are how, well, doable it seems. As Dow says, we forget how basic and Christian this work is: It involves sharing the Gospel through all the things that we remember about Jesus’ love for us, with careful attention to how to apply that love in a multicultural, ecumenical society.

It’s easy to get overwhelmed and even, despite our call to serve as Christians, hopeless at the obstacles we see in our children’s paths. That’s why as ministers and laypeople serving children, it’s helpful to be able to look at the big picture and also celebrate how the past 14 years have not been all bad news for children and their families. The Foundation for Child Development Report on their Child and Youth Well-Being Project (2006) helps us see that on a host of hard data indicators, childhood safety (homicide and injury) has improved, educational attainment overall has improved, and for some key health indicators (like mothers smoking while pregnant and children getting vaccinated), children’s health has improved. But not all is well: Obesity rates are growing at exponential rates, and violence is a persistent problem, despite the relative decrease in rates of death for children. For a full copy of the report, go to www.fcd-us.org/resources/resources_show.htm?doc_id=679234.

And as the report makes clear, violence does still disproportionately affect certain groups, particularly children living in urban areas. In Chicago where I live, more than 20 children have been killed by gun violence on the streets this year. As one pastor said ruefully, “that’s almost a full classroom.”

Those you will read about in Faith in Action have chosen to use their anger about such violence to fuel their activism and their love for the communities they serve to build lasting relationships and institutions to make a difference for children. They have the hope and the faith to help their children in their communities through the many intense challenges ahead.



Michael Kelly
Assistant Professor, Loyola University,
Chicago School of Social Work

SHARE YOUR MINISTRY

Are you doing something powerful in your church ministry? Do you want to share your ideas? Submit an article to Faith in Action (1,500-2,000 words) to mkell17@luc.edu



'Why do you care?'

iStock Photo

Three ministerial leaders in Chicago's West Side met with Michael Kelly to discuss how they can come together to create caring church communities that can begin to heal the youth and families they serve.

Last winter I sat down with three of the most energizing and dynamic ministerial leaders I've ever met. The conversation took place on Chicago's West Side, a large African-American region of Chicago that has been battered by many years of neglect, poverty and family breakdown. This conversation came about because the group was interested in sharing their ideas for creating caring church communities for young people, and their efforts were still in the "brainstorming" phase. In this Faith in Action roundtable, I wanted to show how three ministers from a variety of Christian faith traditions could come together to begin healing the youth and families of their communities.

Minister Vivian Gaulding is on the faculty of the San Miguel Schools Comer Campus and grew up on Chicago's West Side.

The Rev. Dale Kelley is the pastor of Clair Christian United Methodist Church on Chicago's West Side. Clair Christian is an historical church, having been the site of several meetings by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s efforts to bring fair housing and civil rights to African-Americans in Chicago. Rev. Kelley has been active in ministry, positive youth development and philanthropy on the West Side for many years. Prior to being ordained in 2001, Rev. Kelley was a senior professional for 30 years in banking, investment and asset management, starting car leasing and rental businesses and also serving as Group Vice-President of the YMCA of Metropolitan Chicago.

Carol Turner is the pastor of Kingdom Restoration Christian Center in Chicago's Lawndale community on the West Side. She grew up in the Lawndale area and in addition to her church, is active in prison ministry in the Chicago area.

Sterling Seaverns Photo

Michael Kelly: *What were some of your first impressions of “the village” of the West Side that you were going to be ministering to?*

Rev. Dale Kelley: I spent the last five years on the West Side as the education director of the YMCA, so I didn’t come in trying to find out what was going on, I already knew what was going on.

What did you know?

Rev. Kelley: You’re always dealing with the education system and the lack of education. So because of that, I decided I didn’t want to remove myself too far from our kids. I decided I would do some teaching...I wanted to see firsthand what it was like being a teacher of students in the inner city, and I was totally shocked. Our kids lack the basic academic fundamentals and the discipline to be good students. Teachers, as far as I’m concerned aren’t paid enough. Kids bring so many difficult things to the classroom. That’s why we’ve got to feed kids in school. For some of the kids, the meal that they get at school might be the last meal they get for the day. Without those basics, how do you get kids to study? If they didn’t get a good night’s sleep, or if they can’t stop thinking about where they’re going to get their next meal, how can you expect them to focus in the classroom?

I thought I knew a lot of things before I sat down in the classroom – I didn’t know anything. This experience has been mind-boggling, what the kids are going through, what they don’t know, what’s happening to them in general.

Then you take that and you take religion out of the picture. There’s no praying in school, no talking about God. But there’s an interesting thing I’m finding out. I’m coaching basketball at my school and right before the first game, the kids said to me, “Aren’t you gonna pray with us?” I was stunned. Here I am a preacher, I pray myself before I do anything, I’m in a gym with kids running around going crazy and they wanted to pray. The kids wanted it. I’m amazed at what these

kids know about Jesus. A lot of them don’t go to church, but they’ve got grandmas and others who bring them Jesus.

Pastor Carol Turner: I am in agreement with Pastor Kelley. When I came I expected to make a difference. I see the problem with the children and young people and their goals. There’s a scripture, Proverbs 29:18, that says that a people without vision will perish or run wild like horses; when there is no vision to drive them to the place of destiny that God has ordained for their life. And one thing that I’ve seen throughout the years with our young people, with their involvement in gangs, and teenage pregnancy, and now seeing

9, 10 and 11 year olds having babies and leaving them with grandma, or leaving the child in an abandoned building or garbage can.

When we see things of this nature, there is no vision. There are a lot of our young people that have the vision to get out and hit the streets like the older kids are doing. To have the latest slick car with all the gadgets attached, large speakers, telephones, DVD, the latest fashions in gym shoes, jerseys and what not. The type of purchases that do not involve a school education, just the ability

to be trusted to stand on a designated corner, deliver the goods, run the goods, join the right gang family, protect your brother by pulling the trigger on the one that pulled the trigger on your brother.

The church was planted here in this Lawn-dale neighborhood to change the vision that our young people have. Where are their role models?

Your role model helps determine the vision you eventually live out. Lord help us to be the examples that our children and young people see, help us to reach the parents, to build another image of themselves by loving through teaching, mentoring, interacting, beautifying the community, starting block clubs, communicating with our young people.

Right outside our church a few weeks ago young women were turning tricks on the block, drug deals happening in broad daylight, girls as

It’s risk taking –
it’s not passive.
You’re saying to
young people,
“I’m going to seek
you out.”



Rev. Dale Kelley
Clair Christian United
Methodist Church



Pastor Carol Turner
Kingdom Restoration
Christian Center



Minister Vivian Gauding
San Miguel Schools
Comer Campus

young as 14 at 8 a.m. on a Sunday, getting out of cars, looking like they were coming in from a night of partying, and reveling. . . Youth hide out and sleep during the day and at night the streets are crowded with our youth and the night life. I realized looking at this that it was going to take a lot of time, energy, and most of all some love to do what God has summoned us to do.

And that's my heart – to see our young people develop the vision that God wants them to have. The answer is love. The God kind of love. The love that prompts you to start a youth basketball team, mentor a child, start teaching that class, start a block club, give of your time, talents, finances, and go a little bit further than you intended to.

Let love be your driving force. I have been told by some of my friends and pastor colleagues that my love is going to get me in trouble when I knock on doors in my neighborhood and reach out. They say, "What are you thinking? You shouldn't do that! You don't know who's behind that door."

It's a risk taking – it's not passive. You're saying to the young people, "I'm going to seek you out."

I also think the issue of depression is huge in our community in and out of the church building, as is the issue of trauma for kids in low-income areas, particularly as related to violence: the experience of it, the witnessing of it in their neighborhood and families, and the fear of it. Hurt is manifested in a lot of ways in our communities. Again, we are the planting of the Lord, God has planted his church in whatever commu-

nity to let our light so shine before men that they might see our good works and glorify our Father which is in heaven. That's why we're here.

Rev. Kelley: Bill Cosby said it best: "Hurt people hurt people."

If you had to take what Cosby said, where would you say the major "hurts" are in this village?

Minister Vivian Gauding: I think it's in our children. Because honestly, where I come from, where I was raised, my greatest gift was my parents. I had so many great experiences with them, their smiling at me, taking me off to school, being able to have a parent at home that would say after school, "What did you do today?" That was not just for me; I had eight siblings. My mother was an only child and said, "That's not going to happen."

She made sure of that!

Minister Gauding: There was nine of us, and we felt unlimited love. And my parents had so much love that they shared it with others in the community. We never understood what limited love would feel like. We never understood materialism, that we were poor, because we felt so loved. I had to get to my 20s to find out that I was poor. Somebody asked me, "Where'd you grow up?" I said, "Lawndale, in the heart of K-Town."

A group of Jesuit volunteers once asked me to speak to them about what it was like for me, growing up here, being poor. I told them I didn't

think I could answer them.

Are you poor because you don't have money? I didn't have money. Are you poor because you don't have love? I had unlimited love. Or are you poor because you don't have a purpose? My father gave me my purpose. He said you are good at math, you will use it to become an engineer or a teacher, and I never forgot that. I could say to the bigger world, that's not me. Don't label me!

But given the changes in our society in general and in the black community of the West Side specifically there are fewer two-parent families, so how do you minister to kids who don't have those home relationships?

Rev. Kelley: The first thing you've got to do, whether you're an individual or a church, is develop trust. Kids have been through too much just to automatically trust you; you have to give it time and show them that it's from the bottom of your heart. And then you've got to follow through, because they know how to be abandoned. I'm teaching this math class and this young man in my class finally came up to me and said, "Why do you always ask me how I'm doing? Why do you care?"

He really said that? Why was he asking you that?

Rev. Kelley: He said, "Nobody cares about me." He thought I might want something from him, or have some other agenda. That's where trust is with our kids today. It's the biggest issue with them. But really it's the same overall issue with the adults in our congregations and ministries, too. We're all new in our positions, and when I'm in my pulpit, they are testing me and evaluating whether my word is gold and whether I'll be there.

I think that our kids today don't have someone they can consistently come to when they're in a difficult situation. I had this young man in our congregation, straight-A student, helped him get a job in the stock room of a store. I told him, "You're representing me there, not

just you." He did so well they promoted him to cashier, but soon after, he stole money out of the register and got fired.

I asked him why he took the money and he told me it was for clothes for him to take his girlfriend to prom. He didn't think he had anybody to go to for help. I told him, "I'm disappointed in you, but I understand. Next time, you need to know that I'll help."

I've got 15 men in the community and the church that I can call on and they'll do anything for any kid I have that needs help. The kids know all these men, and know that I can call them and that these men will help. Now he knows that. He went back and apologized, worked it out, got his job back. But those are the dynamics we're working with.

The kids say, "Why do you care about me? Nobody does." That's where the spiritual part comes in, because if you can get these kids into church, where they can see other kids, and the pastor and other adults that love them, it starts to sink in and then they want more.

And all of this takes time. And the problem is, we don't have much time. We're getting ready to lose another generation of kids. So I tell Minister Vivian when she calls me to send me some people who want to get things done. Don't have me sitting in 15 meetings and nothing gets done. I don't have time for that. We can raise money. We can do it. The problem is too deep and too serious. We've got a big vision.

I see not just these 15 men, but 10,000. And not just men and women. Young people, taking care of each other. And we're getting started on doing this.

I was invited to a youth summit by 20 young people I knew. I asked them why they had organized this summit to talk about how young people need to solve their own problems. You know what they told me? "We're tired of waiting for someone to help us."

They had a prophetic voice.

Since we've been
there, we have
seen the community
watching us and
waiting to see if we
are your status quo
church, or a church
that will reach out and
make a difference.

Rev. Kelley: Isn't it? What they are saying is they know that we adults are all busy, so you got to go beyond your boundaries. Jesus went beyond his boundaries. It can't be every so often, it's got to be 24/7. We can't *not* do it. I tell those 15 men I told you about – we're doing a mentoring program with them and kids at my church – I told those men, don't even think about saying yes to this, unless you're ready to go all the way for these kids. These kids will adopt you into their family for the rest of their lives. I know, I was adopted. That's how this will go. You can't afford to abandon these kids. They've got enough losses. Fortunately, these men were all ready, they all said yes.

Pastor Turner: I think one of the major hurts in our community is undiscovered purpose or identity, which brings about depression, despair and hopelessness. Minister Vivian and myself started a class that began January of this year "Where Do I Fit?" This class was open to all, where we are endeavoring to help people discover and develop the gift God gave them that will join them together with the part they are destined to be with. In the spring and summer months, I'm walking the community to get a feel for what's out there. We have to build trust in the community. We're starting a city block club in March 2008 inviting the people out.

Since we've been there (April 2007), we have seen the community watching us and waiting to see if we are your status quo church – or a

church that will reach out and make a difference. A church that will change the atmosphere for the sake of the kingdom. But, to date, the majority of our congregation is still from outside the community. My prayer is for that to change this year.

Rev. Kelley: But here's the thing we've all learned: You can't get parents in the inner city to come to a parent group if you call it that. I tried that at the Y. You've got to call it something about understanding their teenager or their child. We're finding that one thing parents need is information on how to be financially sound, to save, to write a will, to make sure they understand how to save for a house.

See, you've got three doers here. I've already adopted her school (Minister Vivian's Catalyst Elementary). We're going to do whatever that school needs. We can't take the church into the school, but we are going to bring the life of that school into our church. What I love about this is that the Lord is going to send us more people with that vision, who want to work, don't want to just talk.

Minister Vivian: No time for talk

Pastor Turner: Yes, yes.

Rev. Kelley: But want to work. Help a child. That's what we're going to do. It's a done deal, we're just putting the people together.

What are you doing for the youth in your community?

Whether they are inner city, rural or suburban, caring communities of faith often struggle with how to keep their teens engaged and excited about embracing and living out their faith.

Tell us how churches and agencies are working together in your community to address the economic, educational and social challenges of youth. Tell us what one person is doing, or one church, or a collaboration. As Rev. Dale Kelley says, how are you "putting the people together?"

E-mail Michael Kelly with your story at mkell17@luc.edu.

Let's learn from one another.

Photos provided by AppleTree



Living and teaching the fruits of the Spirit

One of the case studies in the research conducted by Garland, et al., for “Congregations Who Care for Children” was at the Full Gospel Tabernacle Church in Truth or Consequences, NM. Grant co-author M. LeAnn Gardner, profiles that ministry in the article below.

Truth or Consequences is a small town situated on the Rio Grande River in Sierra County, NM. Named after a popular TV game show from the 1970s, the town has 15,000 residents, 80% of which are considered to be living in poverty or “at risk” of living in poverty. Only 34% of the adults have a high school diploma or higher and \$24,000 is the average household income. Truth or Consequences’ (TorC) Full Gospel Tabernacle opened its doors to the community in 1979 providing a place of worship and community outreach.

In the mid-1990s, the church experienced the tragic death of a minister and a split in its membership. It was a crossroads and forced the church members to think about their purpose and mission. As part of that experience, they began to explore how to make effective use of church space.

In 1996, a young, enthusiastic Rebecca Dow arrived in TorC from Tulsa, OK, where she was working with a ministry that focused on quality improvement for church-based children’s ministry. She came to TorC to facilitate a training event for the church nursery staff at Full Gospel.

For Dow, this trip was a return to familiar soil; she had lived there as a child and had, she said, “fallen in love with the community.” Her passion for children’s ministry was planted in her as a child as she grew up with



M. LeAnn Gardner
Lecturer, School
of Social Work,
Baylor University

parents who were very involved in children's ministry.

When she saw the need of the community during that training weekend in 1996, she felt called to return to her childhood home to start a child care center. The church already had been approached by Head Start, but church members wanted to offer their services and ministry to all children, without restriction. That was Dow's vision, too, so, with the church's support, she formed a separate 501(c)(3) called AppleTree Child Development Center.

Full Gospel Church was eager to use its available space in this way and hoped that the child care center would be an outflow of its mission outreach to the community. The church gave Appletree a loan for \$36,000 to begin operations. This money, along with much prayer, energy and passion, was the launching pad for the beginning of an incredible ministry.

"Appletree is providing the community with something they desperately need," said Mike Skidmore, who pastors the church with his wife, Elaine. "The church has a real sense of pride that we're doing hands-on ministry.

"The church gives many in-kind offerings to help the ministry succeed. Of course, there are issues with scheduling and wear-and-tear on the buildings, but all of that is worth the ministry Appletree provides to the community," Mike Skidmore said.

Twenty percent of the center's families attend Full Gospel Church.

One of the hallmarks of AppleTree is its relationship to government funding. Soon after starting her job as director of the center, Dow, who had completed her Associate's in Arts degree in early childhood education, began applying for governmental funding. Dow applied for 80 grants before she was awarded one, but



Play therapy sessions are offered at AppleTree Child Development Center, which has been named the No. 1 child care center in New Mexico.

now she is successful with 90% of her grant proposals.

She has received Department of Housing and Urban Development Grants, Title V, Department of Health, and Department of Labor grants. This funding provides an on-site nurse and a licensed counselor/community outreach staff member who visits students' homes, teaches parenting seminars, and is available to the staff for counseling.

Because of the various grants the program receives, the budget of AppleTree is more than \$1.5 million. Many in the community did not realize that a faith-based organization could accept government funds, so Dow has had the opportunity to explain the federal guidelines regarding religion and how Appletree complies with them.

Some members of the church, though, were skeptical of the funding at first, until they visited the center and saw its work firsthand. "One of our most vocal critics was a member of the church until he saw what we do; now he is one of our biggest advocates," Dow said.

To continue educating the church and the community, Dow and Mike Skidmore attend community meetings and try to form relationships in the TorC community. Part of that education is helping people understand the guidelines of these partnerships with the government.

“In the guidelines, the program must reflect the community. We do this by incorporating faith because 78% of the community is Catholic. But we also have Jewish families and we respect their heritage as well. Cultural events, such as Cinco de Mayo, are also recognized and observed,” she said.

The center serves 100 families in Sierra County for infants through 24 months with a staff of 37 and 90 youth and adult volunteers. Nevertheless, AppleTree is serving less than 30% of the population in need, Dow said.

“I do not think proselytizing young children is developmentally appropriate,” said Dow, who worked four years without taking a salary. “We communicate our faith by living out and teaching the children the fruits of the spirit and the quality of care that we give to our students.”

As one example, the lead teachers are Christian and one of their significant ministries is to provide free meals for low-income children – 36,000 meals last year.

“We are in a community that is hurting,” she said, “and our center provides a safe and lov-



FIND OUT MORE ...

AppleTree Child Development Center

Phone: 505-894-5646

Web: www.appletreeeducation.org

ing environment for many children who live there.”

Dow’s dream is for AppleTree to be a training ground for young teachers. There is already a loan repayment program in place and more than half of AppleTree’s 36

teachers are enrolled in college. Presently, Dow is expanding her dream by talking with AmeriCorps and the Vista program about making Appletree a volunteer site.

The opportunities the center is giving to teachers is deeply appreciated, Mike Skidmore said. “The other day, I was taking with a teacher of the 4-year-olds. She is enrolled in college because of AppleTree’s continuing education program. Her eyes were filled with tears telling me how thankful she was for this place. Lives are changed here, and it’s not only the students, it’s the teachers,” he said.

The church’s and Dow’s commitment to the center have resulted in AppleTree being ranked in the top 1% of quality care in New Mexico and the No. 1 child care center in the state. AppleTree also received the Exemplary Program Award in 2006 from the Association of Christian Schools International.

“I really think that for the church to survive in the 21st century, we need to be educating about Christianity as it applies to a postmodern culture,” she said. “Part of that is learning how community and faith-based groups can partner together to serve children and to live out the Gospel message.”

Dow also hopes to develop an intern program that models for students how community and faith-based entities can work alongside one another, serving children and in the center’s case, living out the Great Commission.

“Your Christian vision does not have to be compromised in this model,” she said. “At AppleTree, you will see community members volunteering their time and giving resources. The quote I’m reminded of when I think of this community is ‘Share the Gospel at all times, sometimes use words.’”



An innovative loan replacement program at AppleTree enables half of its teachers to enroll in college.



iStock Photo

Lessons from a free dental clinic

Krista Petty
Coach and writer for the
Externally Focused Church



How did I come to be in a free dental clinic? For the Petty Party of Five (what I affectionately call our family) at least three months of normal family chaos was crammed into one week. On Monday the air conditioning went out in my husband's car. On Tuesday our youngest daughter visited the emergency room for a cut on her knee and received 10 stitches. On Wednesday the power steering went in my minivan. On Friday our son Ryan broke his arm riding a scooter too fast down a hill while I was a thousand miles away pulling off a huge surprise party for my father's 60th birthday. After a moment of panic about the week's events, all I could really think to do was phone my best friend and actually laugh about the absurdity.

Once the adrenalin rush of crisis management had left, the reality of facing mounting medical and car maintenance bills set in. While it was only slightly emotionally draining, it wasn't financially timely to experience all these things at once. Reading in my local paper that there was a free dental clinic coming soon was an unexpected blessing. Two Boy Scouts were arranging this clinic to receive their Eagle Scout award, and I had a chipped molar that really needed to be fixed and kids who needed check ups. It was beautiful timing, but at the same time it felt strange to actually consider going. I had not been a "receiver" like this in a very long time.

I am usually the person volunteering at these sorts of community activities. I even teach church leaders and develop resources for how people can get involved in transforming their communities.

It felt quite ironic and I'll admit – embarrassing. Usually talkative and outgoing as I volunteer, I sat quietly with a book as I waited to receive dental services. This experience took me back to another time and place that I would like to forget, but that God needed me to remember. He had some lessons to teach me about serving others that could only be seen through the eyes of a receiver once again.

I was too full of pride to graciously accept the help and the education these programs provided.

graciously accept the help and the education these programs provided.

This day in the dental clinic reminded me that as hard as it is to make time to volunteer, it can be so very hard for people to receive help with dignity and grace. The next time I serve, I will pray for the people who seem ungrateful and not let cynicism toward them build in my heart. Shame and embarrassment are self-inflicted wounds that are even harder to mend than a broken tooth.

SPEED AND EFFICIENCY ARE LUXURIES

My husband and I had our first child while we were very young and in our second year of college. Friends and professors helped us connect to all the social services and grants available to help us stay in school, raise our daughter and be able to eat at the same time! It had been about 15 years since I had waited in line for free well-child check ups or visited with the county nutritionist to receive what was known as “WIC” vouchers for groceries. All I ever wanted to do was get in and get out, but there were always long waits and crowded lobbies. I could never plan to really do anything else on that day because I never knew how long it was going to take, and I wasn't usually able to “make” an appointment, but rather “take” the only available time.

While I have many good memories of our early married life and raising our oldest daughter, the time spent in the “system” waiting wasn't one of them. Waiting two and a half hours in the free dental clinic for a procedure that took 20 minutes reminded me that having control of my own schedule and time are luxuries not afforded to people in need. The ability to control my daily routine is a blessing in and of itself, and I've taken that for granted.

RECEIVING HELP WITH DIGNITY

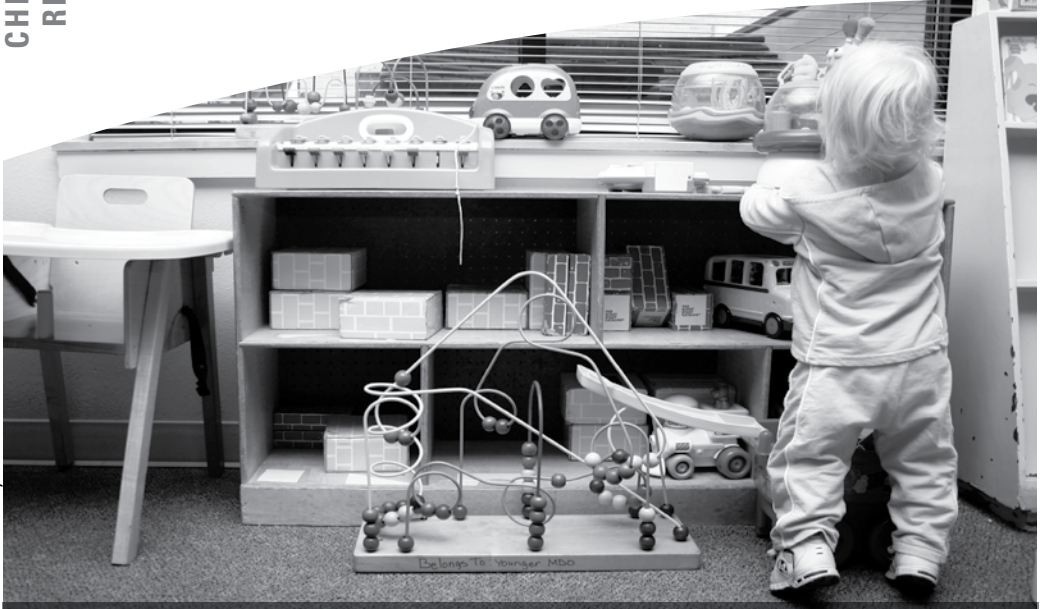
As a young mother, I was constantly embarrassed to receive help. I'm now ashamed at my lack of gratitude for all the free groceries and medical care our little family was given. I was too full of pride to

HAPPY TO GIVE, NOT RECEIVE

Probably the most touching experience that day in the free dental clinic was seeing the overwhelming gratitude one young pizza delivery man did have for the Eagle Scouts and their volunteer team of dentists, assistants and hygienists. This man waited even longer than I did, had several teeth pulled in front of a small audience of other patients and was obviously going to be in pain when the day was done. At the conclusion of his dental work, he had pizza delivered for everyone working in the clinic.

The volunteers at the clinic tried to talk him out of spending his own money this way, but the young man insisted. As much as his teeth needed work, his soul obviously needed an opportunity to give back. After seeing the smile on his toothless face when the pizza came, I'll never decline someone the opportunity to give back or express their gratitude. Every receiver should have the chance to experience giving.

That free dental clinic became a classroom, teaching me to treat those I serve with dignity because most of us are only one or two life situations away from needing help. And all of us, no matter what our financial situations may be, are only a cross away from being in need of God's grace.



Monday-to-Friday child care

To view the report on *Weekday Child Care Education in the Church*, visit our Web site at www.baylor.edu/cfm.

Vicki M. Kabat
associate director,
Center for Family
& Community Ministries



Learning to share toys and be kind to one another are some of the first lessons toddlers are taught when they enter child care. They are lessons their centers' directors and the staff of the churches that house the centers may need to revisit as many have entered an uncomfortable relationship characterized by some in the profession as "years of benign neglect," "indifference" and "animosity."

The problems can stem from shared bulletin boards to shared budgets, said participants at the May 12-13 "Who Cares for the Children? Child Care Research Summit" co-sponsored by Baylor University's Center for Family and Community Ministries and Buckner Children and Family Services Inc. The event was held to release the latest findings from a study on weekday church-based child care conducted by a team led by Diana Garland, dean of the School of Social Work. It is only the second national study conducted on this topic and the first in more than 25 years.

"We've had child care for 25 years and we're looking at starting over," said the Rev. Sterling Severns, pastor of Tabernacle Baptist Church in Richmond, Va. "We want to create an intentional community with our child care center where we develop families who will look on mission as a way of life.

"It doesn't matter if they are ever in our pews on Sunday," he said.

Many at the event told a similar story – their churches began their weekday programs 20 to 30 years ago as more and more women entered the workforce believing it would be an effective evangelism tool to grow the church and that it would create a much-needed revenue source. The first part of that assumption just didn't happen.

"I think we believed that if we opened the Monday-Friday centers, the families would show up in pews on Sunday," Severns said. "That

doesn't happen, and that's been where some of the animosity began."

Debbie Britt is the children's pastor at First Baptist Church in Decatur, Ga., and said the church is just transitioning from the mind-set that the center should make money. Started 50 years ago as strictly social ministry, it was only about seven years ago that the church embraced the center as part of its mission, she said.

"Part of my job is to educate the church that just because they're not in the pews on Sunday morning doesn't mean they're not part of our church," Britt said.

The Rev. Dorisanne Cooper, pastor of Lake Shore Baptist in Waco, Texas, said her church had just concluded an intensive self-study of its weekday child care program of 25 years. In that process, Cooper said the church was "reminded of the call to care for children," but nonetheless, the center is struggling financially.

"Is this a call? Yes, but it's also a business," she said.

The child care summit offered three workshops with discussions from the perspective of the child care program director and the pastor and a third reporting facts and findings from the research. Almost 50 attended the event, some from as far away as Virginia, Georgia and throughout Texas.

"Our desire was to generate the kind of conversation we're hearing in the workshops today," said Jon Singletary, director of the Center for Family and Community Ministries and assistant professor at the Baylor School of Social Work.

"It's a time of transition or re-envisioning for many churches as they look at their weekday programs. We want to encourage pastors and church leaders to imagine how they can extend their ministries to church families to the families of the children in their weekday programs," he said.

While many are struggling with this question, Kelly Moore, director of the child care program at Trinity Lutheran in Tyler, Texas, said the program at her church is strong and credits that to the pastor's vision for the program.

"You need a pastor lifting up your child care center before the congregation, keeping it out there. It helps create that sense of community and the church's pride in it," she said.

"I tell people we are like Sunday School on steroids," she said. Compared to one hour in Sunday School once a week, child care teachers have 8 to 10 hours a day, five times a week with the children to teach and model Jesus's life.

Some common areas of concern emerged among the pastors and child care program directors. These included shared space, incorporation, financial structure, governance and accountability and providing a living wage for teachers.

One of the more disturbing findings of the Baylor Social Work study is that the families who need quality, affordable child care the most are least likely to get it.

"... Church-based child care programs serve significantly more children in higher income families (\$80,000 per year) and significantly fewer in families with incomes of less than \$20,000 per year," the research report stated.

This is true for Severn's church in downtown Richmond. "Our center families are affluent, but in our church on Sundays we have several refugee families. The one thing they tell us they need is affordable child care, and yet they don't find it at our church. How do we bridge that gap?"

Diana Garland in her keynote address at the summit said that we "have to go after the families who need us the most – to the children on the margins. I don't see how we can provide anything but the very best for God in our midst."

"I think we're guilty, as a nation, of child neglect," Garland said. "Children are poorer than any other group in the country, and the fundamental experience of poverty is hopelessness.

"We need to operate from a theology that *all* children are *our* children."

"The one thing they tell us they need is affordable child care, and yet they don't find it at our church. How do we bridge that gap?"



Sterling Seaverns photo

Observing Children's Sabbath *by Shannon Daley-Harris*

The medical office receptionist's note to the doctor read "Please call [the] mom. [Her son] Jason is either deaf or ignoring her." The 6-year-old boy's failure to hear what the mother said was so noticeable, persistent and frustrating that the mother finally dragged him in for a medical examination. Turns out, the problem had nothing to do with the child's physiological ability to hear, and everything to do with his lack of desire, attention and commitment to hearing what she said to him.

Such selective hearing isn't unique to Jason. Most of us have a remarkable ability to tune out what we don't want to hear – requests to clean up a mess, a criticism that hits too close to home, soothing words when we're seething mad, discouraging or distressing stories on the evening news.

Too, selective hearing is nothing new. The eighth-century BCE prophets, like those before and after them, struggled mightily to get the people's attention to hear God's word they came to proclaim. Not too surprisingly, no one was lining up, all ears, to hear that they were perverting God's justice and failing the divine charge

to protect the orphan, welcome the stranger and provide for the poor.

In the last years of his life, modern-day prophet Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., preached an unpopular message that few – even those who previously marched with and sang with and supported him – wanted to hear. His Poor People's Campaign challenged our nation to end the poverty afflicting millions of Americans of all races and to confront the entrenched triple evils of racism, materialism and militarism threatening our nation and world. Many of those who had listened with rapt attention to his dream proclaimed from the steps of the Lincoln Memorial now seemed to have fingers stuffed in their ears when Dr. King talked about war, poverty and continuing racism.

But that reluctance to hear didn't stop Dr. King from proclaiming the message. In *Where Do We Go From Here: Chaos or Community?* Dr. King wrote:

The stability of the large world house which is ours will involve a revolution of values to accompany the scientific and freedom revolutions engulfing the earth. We must rapidly begin the

shift from a “thing”-oriented society to a “person”-oriented society. When machines and computers, profit motives and property rights are considered more important than people, the giant triplets of racism, materialism, and militarism are incapable of being conquered. A civilization can flounder as readily in the face of moral and spiritual bankruptcy as it can through financial bankruptcy.

Forty years after Dr. King’s assassination, his prophetic warnings of the triple threats of racism, materialism and militarism have still not been heeded and we as congregations and as a nation have not yet answered his challenging call to turn from chaos to community marked by love, justice, and peace. We see the triple threats still affecting the lives of children all across our nation:

- In our wealthy nation today, one in six children lives in poverty while the rich get richer and millionaires reap tax breaks they don’t need.
- In our powerful nation, we still resort to guns and violence rather than the power of nonviolence to solve problems in neighborhoods and among nations.
- In our nation founded on the truth that all people have the right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, rampant racial and economic disparities in access to quality health care and education combined with zero tolerance laws that criminalize children at younger and younger ages put Black boys born in 2001 at a one in three lifetime risk of being incarcerated, and Latino boys born the same year at a one in six lifetime risk of the same fate.

Children’s Defense Fund (CDF) founder and president Marian Wright Edelman warns that: “America’s Cradle to Prison Pipeline® crisis, about which CDF

recently issued a deeply disturbing report, threatens to turn back the clock of racial and social progress unless the nation opens its eyes and ears and hearts and sees and hears and responds to the cries of our children trapped at the dangerous intersection of poverty and race. We must act together with urgency to reset our nation’s moral compass.”

ACTING TOGETHER, HEEDING THE CALL

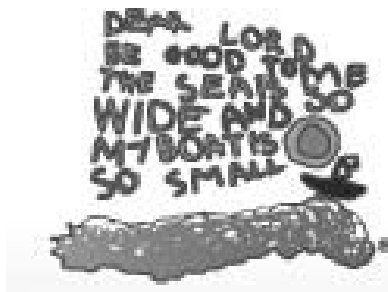
The 2008 National Observance of Children’s Sabbath weekend will be devoted to answering the question “When will we hear?” and exploring ways that we as congregations and a nation can heed the warnings and answer Dr. King’s call to embody God’s beloved community of love, justice and peace. By joining our voices together – across lines of denomination and faith tradition, across all lines of race

and place, of ethnicity and income and political party – we can make King’s call heard by others and announce our own commitment to living it out.

The Children’s Sabbath was created by CDF 16 years ago to unite the thousands of congregations of all faiths who seek to put their faith into

action to nurture, protect and seek justice for our nation’s children. It is guided by an interfaith advisory committee and endorsed by hundreds of denominations and religious organizations. Congregations participate out of shared concern for children and common commitment to improving their lives and working for justice on their behalf.

Most Children’s Sabbaths take place in individual congregations during their customary worship, fellowship and educational times. In some communities, however, congregations of many faiths come together for interfaith Children’s Sabbaths. While the third weekend of October is the designated



Children's Sabbath weekend each year (Oct. 17-19 in 2008), congregations who cannot participate on that date are encouraged to find an alternate date.

Children's Sabbath celebrations typically have four elements: worship, education, immediate action and long-term efforts. At the heart of a Children's Sabbath is the service of worship, in which God's call to love, nurture and protect children and seek justice on their behalf is lifted up in prayers, scripture, music and the sermon. Children often play a larger than usual role in the service, but it is not a typical "Youth Sunday" in which adults are merely "audience." This Children's Sabbath weekend is about the responsibility all of us bear – young, old, and in-between – for speaking out and standing up for children.

The second element of a Children's Sabbath is education. Using the Children's Sabbath lesson plans for all ages or inviting speakers from the community, congregations learn more about the urgent needs of children and explore the teaching of their own faith tradition that call us to respond. This is education for action, where what is learned is aimed to equip participants to take action.

The third element of a Children's Sabbath is action that weekend. When people have reflected on faith's call in worship and learned about the urgent needs of children in educational programs, they are eager to get into action! On the Children's Sabbath weekend, congregations provide a range of opportunities for congregations to engage in compassionate action to help children and families directly or in passionate justice seeking advocacy.

The fourth and final element of a Children's Sabbath is the long-term efforts which it inspires. If every congregation in the country celebrated a Children's Sabbath on the weekend, yet none did anything different come Monday, it would be

a colossal failure. Fortunately, that's not the case! Congregations use the inspiration and information of the Children's Sabbath weekend to motivate new, long-term action for children throughout the year. In some places of worship, that means the individual members find new ways to take action – volunteering with a child-serving or child advocacy organization, donating goods or money to a program helping children and families or speaking out for children to members of Congress and other leaders. Other congregations use the Children's Sabbath to launch a new, collective effort to help children. This effort might be led by the congregation itself, launched in partnership with another place of worship or undertaken in partnership with a community organization or resource.

Congregations use the ... Children's Sabbath weekend to motivate new, long-term action for children throughout the year.

NATIONAL OBSERVANCE OF CHILDREN'S SABBATH RESOURCES

The Children's Defense Fund prepares resources each year to help congregations

plan worship services, educational sessions, congregational service and advocacy activities and long-term efforts to help children. In 2008 CDF is offering an exciting range of resources and opportunities:

- *Print resources for the Children's Sabbath:* CDF will once again prepare a printed interfaith resource manual with everything that Children's Sabbath organizers need to prepare an extraordinary weekend and effective follow-up initiatives. The resources provided include planning steps, promotion ideas, worship suggestions for various traditions, prayers, readings, sermon helps, bulletin inserts, a reproducible seven-day devotional guide, activity ideas, follow-up suggestions and more.

- *Web resources for the Children's Sabbath:* In addition, Children's Sabbath organizers can access a user-friendly set of resources on the Children's Defense Fund's Web site (www.childrensdefense.org). The

Web resources will include print materials, such as prayers and litanies that can be downloaded to paste into a worship bulletin and lesson plans for all ages that can be printed and distributed to Sunday school teachers. The Web resources will also include a PowerPoint presentation that can be shown to Children's Sabbath planning committees or others considering hosting a Children's Sabbath, links to speeches by Marian Wright Edelman and Martin Luther King, Jr., to offer valuable insights and perspectives on the theme and streaming video of noted religious leaders and others addressing poverty, racism and nonviolence.

- *Nationwide Conference Calls:* New this year, CDF will be hosting several nationwide telephone conference calls for Children's Sabbath organizers. These conference calls will link participants with each other and with dynamic speakers who will address the urgent children's concerns and theological perspectives the Children's Sabbath brings together.

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

Congregations will answer Dr. King's question, "Where Do We Go from Here: Chaos or Community?" by their participation in the 2008 Children's Sabbath. Join the nation-spanning community of congregations committed to love, justice and peace for our children. Join the courageous community of congregations who are determined to wrestle with the challenging and uncomfortable conversations around racism, poverty and excessive materialism and militarism.

It takes courage to declare opposition to the entrenched forces of poverty, racism and militarism, and to engage in that conversation and action in congregations and communities. Last year my daughter Sophie, then 5, asked me for a piece of paper. She drew a heart encircled by doves with the word "Peace" in the middle. Next to it she wrote, "The Lord we pray loves us for our wisdom and our courage no matter how small." My first thought when I read it was that she recognizes that God loves the

wisdom and courage of the small – children like her.

On reflection, however, I realized that the prayer may be for us big folks. God loves us even when our wisdom and courage are small and don't feel up for the task. We can tackle racism, militarism and poverty. We can. And God will love us through it all.

Join the bold and determined Children's Sabbath community of congregations encouraged and sustained by Dr. King's proclamation:

"Our only hope today lies in our ability to recapture the revolutionary spirit and go out into a sometimes hostile world declaring eternal opposition to poverty, racism, and militarism. With this powerful commitment we shall boldly challenge the status quo and unjust mores and thereby speed the day when 'every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight and the rough places plain.'"

*Shannon Daley-Harris, MDiv, has served the Children's Defense Fund in various capacities since 1990. While serving as CDF's Director of Religious Affairs, she created the National Observance of Children's Sabbaths and established the Samuel DeWitt Proctor Institute for Child Advocacy Ministry. Daley-Harris has written many publications including *Our Day to End Poverty: 24 Ways You Can Make a Difference* (Berrett Koehler, 2007) and the annual *interfaith Children's Sabbath manual.**



UNCLE WILLIE AND THE SOUP KITCHEN by DyAnne DiSalvo-Ryan

First Mulberry Edition, (New York, 1997).
ISBN0-688-15285-6, 30 pp.

This wonderful children's book presents a complex and often emotional subject in a compassionate, matter-of-fact manner, providing parents and teachers a basis for introducing the topic of poverty to children. Throughout the story, the illustrations convey a sense of joy.

The two main characters, Uncle Willie and the boy he takes care of, simply walk us through several days in their relationship. In the story, a school holiday allows Uncle

Willie to introduce his young ward to the soup kitchen where he works.

In no way presenting poverty as maudlin, Willie and his protégé walk down their city's streets on the way to the kitchen and casually greet Willie's soup kitchen friends. At the soup kitchen, the boy helps prepare food and meets the kitchen's customers.



There is genuine friendship between Willie and his soup kitchen buddies. The reader senses no condescension from Willie. In the end, the young boy develops healthy questions and opinions of what it means to “feed the poor.”

This Reading Rainbow book is perfect for use by any teacher (social workers, parents, public and private school teachers and pastors). The subject of interaction with people who are poor is presented in a straightforward manner. They are people, some with families, some alone, who need our help. The message of love and acceptance resounds on each page, and voices the message – “it doesn't matter where the customers of the Soup Kitchen live or what they do in their daily lives ... they are people who need help.”

Any teacher can connect this lesson to the many strong messages about humanity at its very best. The Bible certainly contains many references to responsibility for people who are poor, but there are strongly held beliefs about helping others in most cultures whether they are Christian or not. If using the Bible, the teacher can choose one of the many stories of helping others to aid the children in making a connection with Uncle Willie and the Soup Kitchen. Once the teacher has made the connection, it is time to get the children involved in their learning.

SUGGESTIONS FOR READING

THIS BOOK WITH CHILDREN:

Here are a few questions you might ask children before reading the book: (Each response can be written on a large piece of butcher paper hanging on the wall.)

1. What does it mean to be “poor?”
2. Have you ever helped someone who was hungry or needed warm clothing? How did you help?
3. Have you seen people in your community who live on the streets and not in a house? What do you know about them?
4. Have you visited a shelter or a soup kitchen where people provide help to others with a need? Tell us about your experience.

You will probably think of many other questions to draw each child's attention to poverty in your community.

One great tool is the KWL (Know, Want, Learn), used by many teachers. Before beginning, show the children the book and its pictures, but don't read it yet.

Make a chart using the following three headings on butcher paper and tape it to a wall. What do I KNOW? What do I WANT to know? What did I LEARN? The first two questions are asked prior to reading and children's answers are charted. You may include some responses to your first questions in the appropriate column. The last question is asked following reading. Then the children check to see if they answered all the questions they wanted to know. This approach engages the child in his/her learning rather than asking him/her to be a passive recipient of your knowledge. Children listen more carefully to books when given a purpose for their listening.

Next, it is important to ask children to apply what they learned. Ask each one to commit to an “action” related to what they have learned about poverty. Ask them to write their responses on a sticky note and post each one on another sheet of butcher paper on the wall. Tell them you want them to report on their “action” at some specific

time in the future. Continue this discussion into the future. The important truth Willie shows us is that real compassion happens every day. Compassion is not an isolated event.

Enjoy watching your children or students become compassionate, caring people who accept people who are poor as people who want to help others as you enjoy reading a wonderful book for children.

Reviewer Martha Ghee holds undergraduate and graduate degrees from Baylor University, in Waco, TX. Her master's and EdD are in the field of administration. Ghee's 30 year career in education includes experience as a teacher and administrator in both public and private schools. She is currently vice president for workforce services with Profiles International Inc.



THE LORAX by Dr. Seuss
New York, Random House (1971).
ISBN 978-0-394-92337-6



Bigger is better!
The gimmies are great! I want and I want, no time to be late! Doesn't this sound familiar? We find ourselves in a world that offers a never-ending list of consumables and playthings marketed to us and to our children as things we all need. After reading *The Lorax*, by Dr. Seuss, not only do rhyme and nonsensical words seem to stick in your head, the thoughts he conjures should make our faces red. (That's the last rhyme, I promise.) Dr. Seuss has always had an unusual effect on me. In this book, which in its time was quite controversial, our friend, the Lorax, finds himself in the midst of a "bigger is always better world" where wants supersede needs and greed drives the action.

Written in 1971, Theodore Geisel is poking industrialism with a critical stick. As one can imagine, the logging industry as well as big corporations didn't take this rhyming criticism too well. The jabbing, however, goes far beyond industrialization and a plea to save our earth, though it does

a fine job at both. The message delivered by the Lorax is compelling and should penetrate our hearts as we continue down the path of "biggering." The Once-ler, who serves as the perfect antagonist, is faceless, and has far-stretching green (color aptly chosen) arms, which reach out to grab the reader. The face is that of the reader, so beware! He, in his daring pursuit of success (sound familiar?), found something beautiful offered by nature, Truffula trees, and found a way to create something that everyone needs (calling them thneeds). Thneeds were sweaters made out of the beautiful fluff of these newly found trees. A taste of success fed the Once-ler to set his sights on getting bigger and bigger, attaining more and more.

*I biggered my factory. I biggered my roads.
I biggered my wagons. I biggered my loads.*

Through incessant biggering, the Once-ler and his success-driven followers completely destroyed the once beautiful Truffula forest, which of course left all the forest's inhabitants homeless. I wonder if Mr. Geisel knew how prophetic his message would be? Not only are our forests being destroyed, our wants and our buying into the "biggered" mentality is destroying our lives as well.

So how do we turn things around? Dr. Seuss knew. To the child, he says, "Now that you're here, the word of the Lorax seems perfectly clear. UNLESS someone like you cares a whole awful lot, nothing is going to get better, it's not."

It begins with us, the adults, deciding our course of action. Are we going to continue down the path of destruction, or are we going to set our sights on lessering? Can we lesser our factories and lesser our roads? Can we lesser our wagons and lesser our loads?

With children, the place to start is growing an appreciation for things taught and not bought and to teach them the differences between wanting and needing. Children need to be taught to see their world as God sees it. Habits of mind are formed early in a child's life. Attention to

detail and the ability to recognize what is beautiful and true must be taught and modeled diligently. We must slow down and take the time to appreciate God's gift to us found in creation, and we must learn to think critically about how we make choices.

**SUGGESTIONS FOR READING
THIS BOOK WITH CHILDREN:**

A good place to read *The Lorax* is in a garden or outside under the shade trees. The teacher may want to bring a basket of toys for an ending discussion. Nature notebooks should also accompany each child. A Nature Notebook is a sketch pad that is to be used for careful observation of nature. The goal is to produce drawings and/or paintings that reflect the beauty of nature while teaching children to be careful and attentive observers of God's world. The habit of attention seems to be a missing ingredient in postmodern educational philosophy.

It is always helpful to give children ideas to ponder before reading a selection. It is important to understand genre and have an idea about what the author's purpose might be in writing the piece.

- After glancing through the pictures with the children, ask, "What do you notice about the first few pages and the last few pages that are similar?" Gloomy colors, sad mood.

- "What do the illustrations look like in the middle of the book?" Bright and cheerful.

- "Let's take a look to see if we can learn who the main characters might be." The orange creature with a yellow mustache, The Lorax; the little boy, and the

character with green arms, Once-ler.

- In most stories we read there are people making good choices and people making bad choices. The person making good choices is called the "protagonist" and the person making bad choices is called the "antagonist." "From looking at the illustrations, can we tell who the protagonist might be? What about the antagonist?" Let the children make predictions.

- It is always good to end the predictions with wonder statements. "Hmm, I wonder if these green arms are helpful or not? Will the little boy learn a lesson? I wonder why

some pages are dark and others are bright."

- "Let's read this story together and see if there is a message for you and me."

After reading through the book together, discuss whether the predictions were accurate. Discuss together the purpose of the author – why did he choose to write this story? Help the children come to the conclusion that we might all be like the Once-ler at different times (i.e., when we get gifts for our birthdays and then want more gifts a week



later; when we want to play outside in the water hose and don't remember to turn off the sprinkler when we are finished playing, etc.). Then guide the children to think about ways we can each be the little boy who has the power to start turning things around. "What are our 'seeds' of choice that can 'replant' good for greed?" In other words, how can each of us help make this world a cleaner and safer place? One good choice can grow into many good choices that produce change.

Using the basket of toys, lead a discus-

sion about how each toy was made. What natural resources were used to make each toy? With the children determine the worth. For example, do we really need the little plastic toys found in fast food kid meals? It takes factories that pollute our cities to make these little toys that we quickly throw away. Repeat with stuffed toys, balls. Think together how many toys we see in stores. Do we all have plenty of toys? Do we all need more toys? What do we do with our old toys? Encourage them to come up with ways to conserve resources. Some suggestions might include: recycling cans, paper, plastic, glass; making toys out of household items rather than always buying new ones; giving the clothes we've outgrown to friends; being mindful of the resources we're using while we play – if we're playing in the sprinkler set a timer for 10 minutes and then do another activity so we don't use too much water.

A good way to end the lesson is to teach the children to look carefully and attentively to the world around them. Start very small with an observation of one gift of creation: a leaf, a flower, a weed. Have the children draw what they see, not what they imagine. Once we learn to see God's creation as intricate beauty, we want to find ways to preserve it. The challenge is stopping; not just to stop and smell the Truffulas, but to plant, to watch grow and to marvel at their beauty.

Reviewer Andrea Harrell Moore, (BS Ed, MACE) currently serves as assistant head of school and chaplain at Live Oak Classical School in

Waco, TX. She is married to Scott H. Moore, director of the Great Texts Program at Baylor University, and mother to five children. Andrea has worked with children and families for more than 20 years in the fields of education and ministry.



LOVE YOU FOREVER by Robert Munsch, illustrated by Sheila McGraw

Firefly Books Ltd (1986)
ISBN 0-920668-36-4



Few children's books resonate so completely with children and adults as does Robert Munsch's classic *Love You Forever*. The story of a mother's love for her son from infancy through adulthood poignantly captures the devotion, frustration and humor of parenting. Complimenting Munsch's words are the vibrant and energy-filled illustrations of Sheila McGraw – from that of a toddler dropping a watch into the toilet with toilet paper strewn around him to the brightly clad teenage boys sprawled in a messy front room.

The heart of the book, though, is that at every stage and age, the mother's love assures her son, "I'll love you forever, I'll like you for always, As long as I'm living my baby you'll be."

I read this book endlessly to my three sons as they grew, and they never failed to giggle at the pictures or to smile at the sight of an older woman holding a grown man in her arms as she rocked him. Nor did they fail to choke up when that scene was reversed and the grown son now held his elderly, sick mother in his arms and sang their song to her.

In the last pages, the son returns to his own home and picks up his infant daughter and sings the "love you forever" song to her.

This is parental love as we all long for it to be – steadfast, unchanging, constant, never-ending. Too, it reflects the parental love we can experience in our acceptance and spiritual journey with our heavenly parent – a love-you-forever love that we all seek, regardless of our age.

Read this to your children, give it to your mother, use it in Children's Sermons, or just pull it out once in awhile to comfort your own soul. It never disappoints.

– Reviewed by Vicki M. Kabat



Five little girls were killed and five others injured in the West Nickel Mines Amish School shooting on Oct. 2, 2006. This Amish community reacted with the same shock, horror, and anger that all people feel when their children are harmed. Still, they came together to pray, and this prayer was read at a community prayer service by a Mennonite pastor the day after the killings in solidarity with the local Amish families in their grief.

Prayer for a Hurting Community

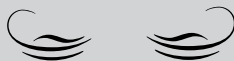
*Loving Jesus, you called children to you and held them in your arms.
Hold in your arms now the children who need healing in body and spirit:
the little girls lying in hospital beds and the little boys who have lost
sisters and friends. May they sense your arms of love around them.*

***Jesus, lover of little children,
hear our prayers.***

*Lord Jesus, we ask you to hold safely
in your arms also the children and
the wife of the man who brought grief and pain to his family
and community.*

*May they also know your love
surrounding them.*

***Jesus, friend of all who suffer,
hear our prayers.***



CONTRIBUTORS

Diana R. Garland is the dean of the School of Social Work at Baylor University and founding director of the Center for Family and Community Ministries. Diana_Garland@baylor.edu

Michael E. Sherr is assistant professor in the School of Social Work at Baylor University. He is the author of *Social Work with Volunteers* (Lyceum Books Inc., 2007) and assistant editor for *Social Work and Christianity*. Michael_Sherr@baylor.edu

LeAnn Gardner is a lecturer in the School of Social Work at Baylor University. LeAnn_Gardner@baylor.edu

Susan Cowley is a faith covenant partner in Talitha Koum Child Nurture Center in Waco, Texas, a ministry of Cross Ties Ecumenical Church. She and her husband, John, are co-owners of Cowley Group, a marketing, advertising and public relations firm.

Heidi Unruh directs the Congregations, Community Outreach and Leadership Development Project and serves as a staff associate with Evangelicals for Social Action (www.esa-online.org).

Ronald J. Sider is president and founder of Evangelicals for Social Action, director of the Sider Center on Ministr and Public Policy and professor of theology, holistic ministry and public policy at Palmer Seminary.

Jennifer Coulter Stapleton, a member of the communications department at Bread for the World (www.bread.org), previously worked with homeless families in Virginia and earned a Masters of Arts in Specialized Ministry in Justice and Peace from the Iliff School of Theology.

Amy L. Sherman is a senior fellow at the Sagamore Institute for Policy Research, where she directs the Center on Faith in Communities.

Michael S. Kelly is assistant professor at Loyola University Chicago School of Social Work. He is Roman Catholic and has served for more than 10 years as his church's youth minister. His research interests include the use of client's religious beliefs to improve treatment outcomes and the interface of religion/spirituality and school social work practice. mkell17@luc.edu

Michael D. Sciretti, Jr. is pursuing a doctorate in historical studies through Baylor University's Religion Department. After graduating from George W. Truett Theological Seminary, Michael attended the Epiphany Academy of Formative Spirituality in Pittsburgh, Penn. He and wife, Rachel, have two daughters, Anastasia and Zoe. Michael_Sciretti@baylor.edu

T. Laine Scales is a professor of social work at the School of Social Work and associate dean of Graduate Studies at Baylor University. She previously served as associate director of Baylor's Center for Family and Community Ministries. She is author or co-author of seven books and numerous articles including *All That Fits a Woman* (Mercer University Press). Laine_Scales@baylor.edu. Daughter April is 14 years old.

Amy Castello is a graduate of George W. Truett Theological Seminary and an ordained Baptist minister. She serves as preschool minister at Meadowbrook Baptist Church in Robinson, Texas. She is the mother of Sam, Will and Madison. She has served in ministry with college students and older adults. Amy_Castello@baylor.edu

Sterling Severns is pastor of Tabernacle Baptist Church in Richmond, Va., the father of three children and an avid amateur photographer.

Krista Petty is a research developer, coach and writer for church leadership and nonprofit agencies. She served as editor of *The Externally Focused Church* (Group Publishing, 2004) and *Living a Life on Loan* (Standard Publishing, 2007). A graduate of Milligan College, Krista resides in Concord, NC, with here husband Steve and their three children.

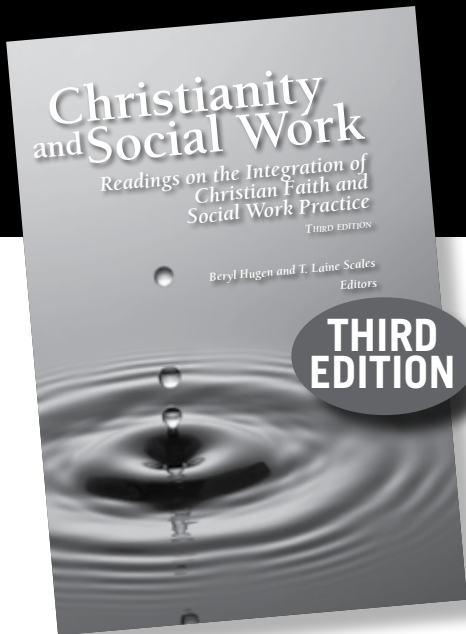
Leslie Bright McKinney is an amateur photographer who lives in Plano, Texas, with her husband Forrest. She graduated from Texas Woman's University with a degree in social work. She has been a member of Royal Lane Baptist Church since childhood. Leslie enjoys using photography to record her family history and to capture truly candid moments.

Speaking of Hunger...



Sermons of Challenge and Hope

*...a collection of sermons about hunger issues, brought to you by
Seeds of Hope Publishers and the Alliance of Baptists—
available now, free of charge, at www.seedspublishers.org*



Announcing from the North American Association of Christians in Social Work

Christianity and Social Work

One of the developments in social work in the second half of the 20th century was the marked decline in the recognition of the Christian religion in the teaching and practice of professional social work. The secularization of the social work profession, the notion of religion in both an ideological and institutional sense having little or no part in forming or informing the world of

social work, has been very extensive. For many in the social work profession, the question of the relationship of Christian faith and social work was inconsequential, irrelevant, and for some, an inappropriate topic for professional investigation. Even presently, when spirituality is being recognized by the profession as a legitimate area of inquiry, Christianity, as one spiritual voice, is recognized only hesitantly.

Ironically, social work once used the language of Christianity as a basis for its existence. Historically, such language was widely and eloquently used by both social work educators and practitioners. Spirituality, and to a large degree Christian spirituality, is very much part of our society and continues to play a significant role in providing moral rationale and reasoning to our political, social, and charitable institutions. As a result, many social workers want to know what role Christian faith plays in the social work profession. The purpose of this book is to help respond to this question.

Christianity & Social Work is intended for a variety of audiences, including social work practitioners, educators, and students at the undergraduate and graduate levels. The book is organized so that it can be used as training or reference materials for practitioners, or as a textbook or supplemental reading in a social work class. Readings address a breadth of curriculum areas such as social welfare history, human behavior and the social environment, social policy, and practice at the micro, mezzo, and macro levels.

The 3rd Edition includes *eleven new chapters* and is organized around four themes:

- **A Christian Worldview and Social Work**
- **Exploring Foundational Christian Beliefs and Values for Social Work**
- **Spiritual and Religious Dimensions in Social Work Practice**
- **The Changing Environment and Social Work Practice**

To order, contact: North American Association of Christians in Social Work
PO Box 121, Botsford, CT 06404-0121
Fax: 203-270-8770
Toll-free phone number: 888-426-4712
www.nacsw.org



Yes, I will

If I get scared and cry, will you hold me?
Yes, I will hold you.

If I fall down and scrape my knee and it
hurts, will you pick me up?
Yes, I will pick you up.

If I spill the milk when I try to pour
myself a drink, will you let
me try again?
Yes, I will let you try again and again.

If I feel sad and I don't know why,
will you let me sit in your lap?
Yes, I will let you sit in my lap.

If I feel sick to my stomach and I throw
up, will you sit with me till I'm better?
Yes, I will sit with you as long as it takes.

If I use bad words and stomp my feet,
will you forgive me?
Yes, I will forgive you.

If I tell you my worstest, baddest,
most awful secret, will you still
be my friend?
Yes, I will still be your friend.

If I pretend to be big and grown up
and that I don't need you,
will you still hold my hand?
Yes, I will still hold your hand.

If I get lost or run far, far away,
will you come and find me?
Yes, I will come and find you.

You will?
Yes, I will.

Okay.