Establishing a Church-Based Welfare-to-Work Ministry:
A Practical 'How-To" Manual

By Dr. Amy L. Sherman

Establishing A Church-based Welfare-to-Work Mentoring Ministry:

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I. Introduction: The Ministry Opportunity Presented by Welfare Reform

With the passage of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996, the landmark welfare reform law, churches and faith-based ministries possess new opportunities and challenges in serving poor and needy families. The old welfare system has been replaced with a new approach to poverty fighting that emphasizes hands-up help instead of handouts. Welfare aid now aims to free recipients from dependency on it, and help them achieve greater economic self-sufficiency. This transition to independence from welfare frequently requires intense, personalized assistance that churches and ministries are well-positioned to provide.

This manual is designed to help congregations seize the ministry opportunity afforded by welfare reform; namely, the chance to build face-to-face relationships with economically distressed families in our local communities through which humble, loving, Christ-like service can be demonstrated. To do this well, we must understand both the Biblical mandate for caring for the poor and the unique configuration of the *Church's* outreach (as distinct from the social service programs of government or secular nonprofits).

Welfare Reform at a Glance

- Two-year limit on continuous assistance;
- Five-year lifetime "cap" on assistance;
- States can exempt up to 20 percent of their caseloads from work requirements;
- Able-bodied recipients must participate in job training, or public or private sector employment, in order to continue receiving aid;
- States must meet Federal "caseload reduction" quotas in order to receive maximum Federal funding;
- In many states there is a "family cap" on assistance; a woman on welfare who has an additional child will not receive additional assistance;
- In many states women must identify the father of their children in order to receive assistance for that child;
- In many states working welfare recipients are eligible for daycare and transportation vouchers.

II. Biblical/Historical Basis for Holistic Ministry

Why should the Church get involved in helping welfare recipients make the transition to work? The simplest, most important reason is this: God is passionate for the poor and commands His disciples to imitate that passion and be His hands and feet of mercy to the needy. Over 400 verses in Scripture refer to God's intense love for the poor. Jeremiah 22:16 informs us that defending the cause of the poor is part of what it means to know God. James 1:27 tells us that "true religion" involves visiting widows and orphans in their distress. I John 3:16 says that if any one has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, the love of God is not in him. Proverbs 14:31 teaches us that "he who oppresses the poor shows contempt for their Maker, but he who is kind to the needy honors God." And Matthew 25:44-46 warns us that if we fail to care for the least of God's children, if we neglect the naked and poor and hungry, we will be guilty of neglecting Christ Himself. Scripture makes clear that caring for our needy neighbors is a central aspect of true Christian discipleship.

A second reason to vigorously engage our time and money in the effort to assist needy families is that our witness in the world rests in large part on what the world sees the Church doing through compassionate ministries. We become a visible, tangible demonstration of the reality and power of God when we imitate the Lord Jesus' compassion for the poor, weak, and broken. Many eyes are upon the Church these days — the eyes of politicians, the media, and poor people themselves. The question is whether we will rise to our challenge and embrace the many thousands of individuals who need help making the transition from welfare to work. If we do so, we will experience the great joy of "letting our light shine before men, that they may see our good deeds and glorify our Father in Heaven" (Matthew 5:16).

A final reason why we should gladly accept this challenge is that the spiritual health of our congregations will be enriched through our engagement with needy families. We gain at least six gifts when we share our lives with the lives of the poor:

We gain the gift of agitation. The New Testament makes it clear that the appropriate posture of the Church is the posture of the longing Bride, waiting at the altar for the appearing of the Bridegroom. The Bride is filled with a "holy discontent" over the absence of her Bridegroom and is busy crying out "Maranatha! Maranatha! Come Lord Jesus!"[1] But this is not the posture of the typical American congregation. We do not long fervently for the consummation of Christ's Kingdom because we're really rather happy just the way things are. American abundance and affluence anesthetize us. But when we allow ourselves to be touched with the brokenness and pain experienced by our needy neighbors, then an oh-so-needed "holy discontent" can begin to grow within us. As we share our lives with those who suffer, we can begin to become rightly agitated with the ways things are (because they are not the way they're supposed to be) and more eager for God to deliver on His promise to "make all things new" (Rev. 21:5).

We gain the gift of a growth in humility and dependence upon God. When we are engaged in personal, face-to-face friendships with needy, poor, hurting, struggling people, we quickly become aware of their overwhelming needs. We recognize that *we* cannot personally meet all these needs, and so we sense our desperate need

[1]This insight is John Piper's, from his book *A Hunger for God* (Crossway Books, 1997), pp. 85-86.

for God to intervene. We get shaken into the reality of our inadequacy, our own insufficiency. And it is a wonderful gift to be reminded of our inadequacy, for God has told us that it is when we are weak that Christ's strength is perfected in us. It is a good thing for us to feel overwhelmed, because this produces within us true humility. We begin to think *first* of getting people to Jesus, rather than being overly confident in ourselves and focused on what *we* have to offer to the hurting. It is good for us to be reminded of our *limits* so that we cast ourselves upon God because of His *limitlessness*. Our heart-to-heart engagement with poor and needy people can be a stimulus to our apprehension of our limitedness.

We gain the gift of learning about the nature of true faith. We can be taught important lessons from Christians who are economically poor. We who have support networks and retirement accounts and educational decrees have all sorts of safety nets in our lives. We begin to think we can depend on ourselves — or at least on these various forms of security. Christians without these security cushions have a deeply authentic dependency upon God. When they pray "God, give me my daily bread," there is a tangible sense of "Hey, if God doesn't come through, I'm sunk!" God intends that we learn from this witness of vital dependency. James writes in chapter 2:5, "Listen, my brothers: Has not God chosen those who are poor in the eyes of the world to be rich in faith?" There is an *immediacy* and an urgency about poor people's relationship to God that we can learn much from.

We gain what could be called "the gift of aroma." Author Ken Gire has called the Bible the recipe for life.[2] In the Church we are to be recipe-lovers and recipe-knowers and recipe-carriers and recipe-proclaimers. But the world can't smell a recipe; they smell fresh baked bread! Jesus is the incarnated recipe, the Bread of Life, the One who lives out the recipe. We Christians also are to be bread, to live out the recipe. Engaging in personalized, relational mercy ministry among struggling people is one very visible way of living out the recipe. When the world sees us ministering to hurting people the way Jesus Christ did, then it smells the Bread of Life. Our churches manifest the aroma of Christ and non-believers are drawn toward us.

We gain what might be called the "gift of the garden." God offers special promises to those who reach out in loving service to the poor and needy. Consider Isaiah 58:10-11:

> If you spend yourselves in behalf of the hungry and satisfy the needs of the oppressed, then your light will rise in the darkness, and your night will become like the noonday. The Lord will guide you always; he will satisfy your needs in a sun-scorched land and will strengthen your frame. You will be like a well-watered garden, like a spring whose waters never fail.

The promise to those who spend themselves on behalf of the poor is: "You will be like a well-watered garden, like a spring whose waters never fail." Sometimes we are reluctant to pour ourselves out for the sake of needy people. We are afraid that we if expend our energies on them we will get "burned out" or dried up. But God's promise is that He Himself will provide for our refreshment; He will pour into us all that we pour out (and more!). He will make us "well-watered gardens," showering us with all the

[2]Ken Gire, *Windows of the Soul* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996), p. 181.

provision, equipping, strengthening, and refreshing that we need.

We gain the gift of an invigorated worship.

Our vision of God becomes enlarged as we share our lives with the lives of people in circumstances very foreign to our own. This happens when we witness God's acting in other people's lives in ways that may be unfamiliar to us. We see new facets of who God is and we witness different kinds of deeds that He does that we may have otherwise missed. We can have a too-limited view of God's providence when our fellowship remains very homogenous. For an invigorated worship, we need to mingle with people whose prayer requests are very, very different than our own. When we are cut off from people with entirely different life situations than our own, we fail to learn how God gifts and graces those in circumstances unfamiliar to us—for example, the circumstance of being persecuted or discriminated against, or the circumstance of being healed from crack addiction, or the circumstance of obtaining a job after 16 years on welfare. When we are in relationships with people who are praying for God's deliverance and provision in ways that we have never prayed before—and no one we've ever known has prayed before—and then we see God answer those prayers, we get a whole new glimpse of the wonderful deeds of the Lord. We see more clearly the *multifaceted* grace and provision of our heavenly Father, and our adoration of Him is deepened.

A Church Mentor Says Giving is Receiving

Faye Lucius from Mississippi was part of a small team that worked for a year with "Mary," a highly motivated welfare recipient. She reports that she has learned much from Mary about contentment and gratitude to God. Also, Faye says she grew up in a family that was prejudiced toward African-Americans. She appreciated the opportunity to build a close friendship with an African-American woman, and the chance her children have had to develop friendships with Mary's children. "I've never wanted my children to be uncomfortable around black kids. I've taught them that God loves everybody, that we're all the same in God's eyes. My kids enjoy our visits with [Mary] and her kids, and they are seeing that blacks and whites can get along."

"I recognize that, but for the grace of God, I could easily be in [Mary's] situation," Faye says. "[Our friendship] got me out of my comfort zone. I'd helped with other benevolence type projects, but this involved more personal interaction. And getting involved personally makes you think of all that God has done for you. Churches need to be involved in this kind of face-to-face [ministry]."

III. Embracing the Challenge: Making the Shift From Commodity-based Benevolence to True Mercy

Once your congregation is persuaded of the necessity — and the blessing — of embracing needy families affected by welfare reform, some reassessment of the church's previous mercy ministry efforts is required. If the congregation's involvement in mercy ministry has been limited to traditional, "commodity-based" benevolence (giving poor people food, clothing, and money), some changes are needed. While a commodity-based benevolence is legitimate in certain cases, it can be misguided in others. Temporary relief assistance is valuable in situations where families have experienced an unexpected crisis, such as a house fire. However, when relief is merely a band-aid that alleviates the symptoms of poverty but fails to address the root causes, then it is illegitimate. Such assistance merely helps people to *manage* their poverty rather than to *escape* from it. When we are dealing with the able-bodied poor who experience chronic financial instability, then cash and commodities are inadequate.

What's needed is relational, holistic ministry that provides a hand-up to self-sufficiency. Of course, this type of ministry demands much more from us — not necessarily more of our money (though that may be true), but more of ourselves and our time. Commodity-based benevolence allows us to interact with poor people at arm's length. By contrast, relational, holistic ministry is much less clinical and sterile. As the Church father Gregory of Nyssa said many centuries ago, "Mercy is a voluntary sorrow that joins itself to the suffering of another." Clearly this kind of mercy requires sharing our lives with the lives of the poor. It involves more than being willing to *help* the poor; it means being willing to *know* them. This kind of Biblically-faithful, relational, holistic ministry is characterized by several elements, described next.

From Fifty to Two: It's Progress!

"We kept good records of the material assistance we provided. But follow-up — personal contact with the families — was basically zero. In those years, the people we 'helped' weren't really being helped. They became dependent upon us and the other churches. When someone comes in asking for help, giving them assistance to pay their bill or giving them a way out is not really helping them. What we need to do is, in a very kind and understanding way, ask them 'How are you *going to pay this bill? Or 'How are* you *going to provide child care for your children?' You have to be there for the families, but helping means more than just finding the solution for them. It means helping* them *to find the solution."*

— Assistant pastor of a Baptist church in Virginia that shifted from helping fifty families each month with emergency cash and food assistance to mentoring two welfare-to-work families.

IV. Biblical Guidelines for Effective Mercy Ministry

Ministry to the Whole Person

Holistic ministry means treating people as whole people, the way Jesus did. Jesus did not treat people as bodies without souls or as souls without bodies. He was concerned for their emotional, physical, and spiritual needs. Jesus' compassion led Him not only to feed the 5000, but to exhort them to seek the Bread of Life (John 6:1-13, 25-58). He understands our material and spiritual needs. He physically healed the hemorrhaging woman (Mark 5:25-34), but also encouraged her emotionally. Given her medical problem, she would have been considered perpetually unclean. Ashamed, she wants to remain unnoticed. Yet Jesus insists that she tell her story, and then publicly praises her for her faith. Jesus deals with people as *whole* persons, and our outreach must similarly touch heart and mind, body and soul.

Risk-taking, Up-Close-And-Personal Outreach

Biblically faithful ministry also involves taking risks. As Reverend Tim Keller notes in his helpful book, *Ministries of Mercy*[3], the Good Samaritan was a risk-taker. The treacherous, winding road from Jerusalem to Jericho was a frequent site of crime and violence. Keller likens the Samaritan's compassion on the wounded traveler to a brave person who, while walking down a littered street at midnight in an inner-city ghetto, hears a moan from within a darkened alley, and rushes in to help. May God grant us such courage as we go to the unfamiliar and disconcerting places "on the wrong side of the tracks" to attend to the needy.

When the Good Samaritan encounters the battered victim, he doesn't toss the man money, canned goods, used clothing, or religious tracts. Instead, he gets up close and personal. He dirties his hands tending to the man's wounds. He gives sacrificially — of his time and money. Genuine compassion mixes our lives with the lives of the needy, and sometimes brings grief. On Thanksgiving day a few years ago, the 23-year-old mother of a little boy in our church's urban tutoring program was murdered by her ex-boyfriend. There were few dry eyes in our sanctuary when our pastor announced the tragedy. Because of the church's connection to this family, because this was the mother of one of "our" students, the news pierced us more deeply than if this were merely another grim crime statistic. True mercy is rarely sterile; instead, it allows pain into our lives that we'd rather avoid. Sometimes, mercy cannot be confined to a predictable schedule, but spills over into time slots that we'd rather protect. It requires building genuine friendships with poor people — friendships where *mutual* learning and giving occurs.

Deliberateness

Effective ministry among the poor also requires a deliberateness that is too often missing in church benevolence endeavors. Our culture urges us to "practice random kindness and senseless acts of beauty," as the bumper sticker puts it. But effective outreach is neither random nor senseless. In John Calvin's Geneva, the Church operated a thoughtful, well-conceived, effective assistance ministry that today's churches could imitate.

Poor families in 16th century Geneva were *categorized* according to the different nature of their needs. Some were unable to work and required charity. Those who could work — and were willing to do so — were given tools or no-interest loans to start their own businesses. The able-bodied poor who refused to work were

[3](Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1989).

A Better Return on the Church's Investment

Tom, the business manager at a "megachurch" in Michigan, reports that prior to adopting a mentoring approach in working with low-income families, "we knew we weren't doing a good job of really addressing people's problems. We were just helping to take care of the symptoms. We didn't have a formal structure in place to walk families through whatever particular crisis they were in — there wasn't a lot of ongoing contact with the people, there wasn't much accountability. Now we are able to really get alongside people and encourage and counsel them, give them direction and advice, and sometimes correct them if necessary. Now we're seeing visible changes in families' lives. They're making good progress getting out of debt, we're seeing them feel better about themselves, we're seeing positive results. We're seeing a better return on our investment [of benevolence money]. The families have never had any one care about them or be concerned about them, and now someone is. That has made them want to become a part of what's going on here at Calvary [the church]. So we're seeing them become part of our different programs, coming under some teaching so they can grow in their spiritual journey."

exhorted to change their ways; ongoing financial outcome was made contingent upon better behavior.

Deacons paid quarterly home visits to every family that received financial aid from the church. They knew personally those they helped, and used their knowledge to shape an individually-tailored, strategic assistance plan. In the context of these personal relationships, they could address recipients' spiritual needs. They encouraged the drunkard toward sobriety, gave practical money management advice to the young widow, and placed orphans into apprenticeships. They personally investigated needs to prevent fraud and they refrained from indiscriminate charity that engendered dependence. In short, they employed their minds as well as their hearts when loving the needy.

Deacons in Calvin's Geneva employed their minds as well as their hearts when helping the needy.

As Marvin Olasky has described in his important book, *The Tragedy of American Compassion*, Evangelicals in 19th century America conducted similarly clear-headed, warm-hearted outreach among the poor. These Christians befriended just a few families at a time and worked with them over the long term, until they no longer required help. By contrast, today we too often practice a "bigger is better" approach. We are busy doing many charitable things — like operating soup kitchens or handing out holiday baskets at Christmas — but we're changing nothing. Our efforts gloss over real needs and fail to encourage *permanent* change.

Making the shift to relational ministry is difficult because it requires that we give more of ourselves and our time, as well as our money. By concentrating church resources on fewer families, though, we are able to make a long-lasting impact. Through time-intensive, individually-tailored aid, we can address the root causes of persistent poverty and help people become economically self-sufficient. As participants no longer require assistance, our funds are freed up to help new families. This is simply better stewardship of God's money.

Treating the Poor as Friends

Octavia Hill was a leading 19th century British social reformer and social worker. In 1865 she began her system of providing housing for the poor, in which civic-minded investors bought apartments that were run on a business-like basis, under the supervision of a middle-class social worker-manager. She lived among the poor for many years and advocated both the dignity and personal responsibility of the poor. In his edited collection of her essays, author James L. Payne chose to call Octavia Hill "the befriending leader." The following reflection comes from her 1871 article, "A Landlady of a Different Kind."

I knew I should learn to feel these people as my friends, and so should instinctively feel the same respect for their privacy and their independence, and should treat them with the same courtesy that I would show towards any other friends. There would be no interference, no entering their rooms uninvited, no offer of money or the necessaries of life. But when occasion presented itself, I should give them any help I could, such as I might offer without insult to other friends — sympathy in their distresses; advice, help, and counsel in their difficulties; introductions that might be of use to them; means of education; visits to the country; a loan of books; a bunch of flowers brought on purpose; an invitation to any entertainment, in a room built at the back of my house, which would be likely to give them pleasure.

I am convinced that one of the evils of much that is done for the poor springs from the want of delicacy felt, and courtesy shown, towards them, and that we cannot beneficially help them in any spirit different to that in which we help those who are better off. The help may differ in amount, because their needs are greater. It should not differ in kind.

V. Welfare-to-Work Mentoring: Settling the Big Questions

With these general guidelines for effective mercy ministry in mind, the church can move on to the specifics of getting a welfare-to-work mentoring program launched. At this point, a "Start-up Committee" for the mentoring initiative should be mobilized. The Committee's first job is to wrestle through *key questions* about the nature of the proposed mentoring program. These are discussed below. (For simplicity's sake, throughout the rest of this manual, I have referred to individuals who are mentored by the church as "participants," and have used the pronoun "she" since in most cases — though not all! — the head of the family being mentored is a female.)

(1) What are the mentoring team's objectives? The first key question the Start-up Committee must think through involves the two different kinds of mentoring situations: *Will the mentoring effort focus primarily on individuals who do not yet have jobs or on individuals who have obtained employment but need help in retaining their jobs and planning for their future?* A church can decide to embrace one or the other, or both, kinds of program participants, but the objectives of the mentoring teams will be distinct in each case. The team working with an individual with no job will focus on such issues as the development of job readiness skills, writing a resume, practicing job interviews, identifying potential job opportunities, making child care and transportation arrangements, etc.

The team working with an individual who has already secured a job will want to focus on two main areas: job retention and "personal strategic planning." First the team and the participant should identify potential problems that could jeopardize the participant's ability to retain her current position. Most organizations involved in job training report that finding an individual a new job is not as difficult as helping to ensure that the individual retains the job. Mentoring teams can help prepare the participant to cope appropriately with potential on-the-job unpleasantries, such as how to relate to a difficult boss, co-workers or irate customers. The team should also help the participant strategize about balancing family and work effectively. Most employees struggle with this question and it can be a particularly difficult one for single mothers with children too young to look after themselves. Mentoring teams can discuss with their participants at least three relevant issues in this regard: (1) strategies for discussing with your supervisor arrangements for dealing with pressing family/ child matters that require time away from the job; (2) assessing when something is really a "family crisis" that requires leaving work and when the situation must wait for your attention until after work hours; and (3) planning ahead for child-care contingencies (What will you do if your regular babysitter can't watch your kids? What is your plan A and plan B for when your child is sick on a workday?, etc.).

Second, the team and the participant should develop a plan that will place the participant in a position of greater job and financial stability within the next two years. The time limits set on welfare benefits (in most states, two years of continuous assistance and a lifetime cap of five years' assistance) mean that individuals in financially precarious situations must carefully and deliberately decide when to "lean on" such aid and when to struggle along without it, reserving the possibility of getting aid at a future time when it may be more needed. Welfare reform was aimed in part at encouraging recipients' greater economic self-sufficiency through work. The first job a recipient is able to secure, however, may not provide an income adequate to meet the family's legitimate expenses. Consequently, the participant must think beyond the first job. The participant and the team can discuss such important questions as: How much income do I need to provide for myself and my family? Is there room for advancement in the job I have just secured? How can I be training myself and enhancing my job skills now so that in another year I will be in a position to obtain a higher-paying job? Should I continue to receive welfare benefits now that I have obtained employment, or should I try to make it without public assistance now so that I may rely on it in the future if needed? Helping the participant to develop a workable monthly budget — and stick to it — can also be a critical objective of the mentoring relationship.

(2) Will we pursue team mentoring or a one-on-one model? While a few churches have run effective mentoring programs that utilize a one-on-one approach, most employ a team approach. It can be easier to mobilize volunteers when they realize that they will not be alone in the ministry to the participant. Team ministry helps protect volunteers from "burnout." It also increases the number of contacts the participant can lean upon in her job search. A team will also have a broader diversity of gifts and life experiences to share with the participant. On the other hand, the one-on-one approach can be less overwhelming to the participant, as she recognizes that she has to build a relationship with just one person. Some churches have utilized a hybrid approach: putting one individual in the "front line" relationship with the participant, but mobilizing a small support team around that front line mentor. This team stays in the background, but is available to help the front line mentor with tasks he/she cannot do. For example, the front line mentor may learn that the participant's child needs a tutor and that the participant's car needs repairing. Rather than trying to provide these helps himself/herself, the front line mentor asks the support team to step in to meet those specific needs or identify other people in the church who could help.

Intense, but Rewarding

Ed and Elaine Kirk of Our Lady of the Fields Catholic Church in Millersville, Maryland spent 14 intense months helping "Jane," a 32-year-old single mom who was on welfare but wanted to improve herself. Jane had had a substance abuse problem some years before, but enrolled in a drug rehabilitation program when she became pregnant with her first child. Elaine Kirk first met Jane when Jane was living in a special residential program ministering to unwed mothers. After the baby was born, Jane enrolled in the Community-Directed Assistance Program, in which welfare recipients are paired with church mentors who help them develop a budget, locate affordable housing and transportation, and secure employment.

The Kirks helped Jane in numerous ways — clearing her driving record, helping her pay back taxes, re-affiliating her with her family members, and providing transportation daily for about four months to various jobs Jane found through a temporary employment agency. Today, Jane lives in an apartment in Washington, D.C. and has a full-time secretarial job with benefits. Last Mother's Day, Jane called Elaine Kirk and thanked her for "being like a mom." She also said that if Ed hadn't picked her up every day in those first few months, she would have skipped work. But she knew she had to keep on trying because he and Elaine were working so hard to help her. "We'll never forget her," Elaine says, "and she says she'll never forget us."

(3) Will the mentoring relationship involve any financial assistance from the church to the participant? Study of church-based mentoring models around the country indicates that churches have widely differing experiences in this area. Some provide no financial assistance to the participant whatsoever and believe that the introduction of money can negatively influence the mentoring relationship. Other churches provide outright grants to the participant, sometimes in amounts greater than $1000. Still others have integrated no-interest loans into the participant's overall strategy for greater economic self-reliance. Others have provided in-kind aid to program participants (for example, used household goods, furniture, or clothing) or have subsidized participants' rent or child care expenses through direct payments to the providers.

Should the church decide that it is willing to include financial assistance as part of the "package" of support for the participant, some important guidelines should be kept in mind (see text box).

Suggested Guidelines for Financial Assistance

1) Decide on a ceiling amount of assistance.
2) Communicate clearly to the participant what the policies of financial aid are.
3) Never give money directly to the participant; rather, pay service providers (e.g., landlord, utility company, creditors) directly.
4) Decide in advance what constitute legitimate expenditures and under what conditions the church will provide financial aid.
5) Be able to answer the question: How will this financial aid contribute to the achievement of the participant's overall plan for greater economic self-reliance? (How is this gift or loan part of a larger, clearly defined strategy of help?)
6) Financial assistance should usually be given in conjunction with budget counseling.

Be *creative* in your use of the church's financial assistance and think through ways that the money can be used strategically as an *investment* in the participant's future, rather than as a band-aid to deal with a current crisis. Money given to repair the person's car or to pay for a training course is typically better than money given to pay the person's furniture rental bill.

Or, suppose a participant has a long record of public assistance and little or no solid work history. Consider using church funds to underwrite a paid internship. Contact local nonprofit organizations to see if they would be willing to be a placement site for such "work experience internships." It doesn't cost them anything financially, since the church is providing the funds for the participant's stipend. The participant earns the stipend by her work at the internship site; thus it is not a handout. Potential internship placements should be selected on the basis of what new skills training they would offer to the participant (e.g., will there be an opportunity to learn how to manage a multi-line phone or learn new computer applications or practice typing skills?) The nonprofit should also agree to supervise the intern and provide a formal, written evaluation of her performance at the conclusion of the internship. If the participant's performance is good, she will be in a better position to enter the labor market, having in hand a positive recommendation and a steady period of employment. (It is best to set the internship up on a less than 40 hours/week basis — say 30 hours — to allow the participant some weekday time to engage in job search activities and interviews.)

Churches can also design ways of using financial aid as an incentive for positive change. For example, suppose a program participant has come to see the value of getting out of debt. The church might encourage the participant to use her disposable income to start repaying back debt (as opposed to increasing current expenditures) by agreeing to match each dollar she puts toward repayment. Or, if the individual has developed a budget that calls for saving $10 per week in a "rainy day fund," the church can offer to match her savings efforts for the first few months.

(4) What will be the basic structure of the mentoring relationship? To be effective, the mentoring program must be built on a more specific and concrete strategy than merely "being the participant's friend." Obviously, the mentors should befriend the participant and work diligently at developing an open, honest, caring, supportive relationship marked by winsomeness and humility. But the mentoring should be aimed at achieving various well-defined objectives. These could include: developing a monthly budget, writing a resume, completing a certain number of job interviews, taking the GED test, enrolling in a computer training class, identifying affordable day care, developing a plan to get out of debt, conducting informational interviews, moving into more affordable housing, purchasing a reliable used car, and so forth.

The church should decide the *length of time commitment* required of the mentors. Most programs I have studied involve at least a six months' commitment; many require a one-year commitment. Also, the leaders of the mentoring program should *develop a basic "covenant"* to be used with each team and participant. This covenant outlines the responsibilities and expectations of both parties. The specific details of the covenant will be unique to each participant and team, but all covenants should include the minimum expectation of the participant's agreement to meet face-to-face on a regular basis with her team (I recommend at least once every two weeks) and to be honest with the team. The team members and the participant should jointly formulate an "action plan" that will guide their work together. The action plan should be based on a careful assessment of the participant's needs, assets, and goals. The plan should state the specific objectives sought (e.g., completing a resume) and the time line for achieving them. The plan will then serve as an overall road map to guide the team in its relationship with the participant. A good covenant communicates clearly the role of the mentoring team (what they will and will not do) and the responsibilities of

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"I Want My Children to See Me Doing Right"

Jennifer, a single mother in Mississippi's Faith and Families program, was mentored by the pastor and a few volunteers from a Greenville church throughout 1995-1996. She enrolled in a CNA (certified nurse's assistant) program and eventually landed a job at a private medical clinic, where she has worked for about a year and a half. Jennifer earns about $7 an hour and receives health and retirement benefits; she no longer receives cash welfare, but does get a modest amount of food stamps. She says the church members gave her much emotional support and the pastor offered advice on everything from resume writing to child-rearing. She had this to say about her relationship with him:

"[Pastor Jim] gave me the get up and go. I've got a better attitude. [His counsel] has helped me spiritually, as far as my being too carnally minded. I want my children to see me doing right. I don't want them to come back and say, 'Mama, you fussin' at me about this, but everything I'm doing, I'm doing because you're doing it.' I want them to be able to say, 'My mama raised me well.'"

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the participant. In this way, the expectations are clearly communicated from the beginning. The covenant and action plan then also serve as a basis of accountability and of demarcating the participant's overall progress.

To be effective, the mentoring program must be built on a more specific and concrete strategy than merely "being the participant's friend."

VI. Getting Started

Once these overarching issues are decided upon, the Start-up Committee can take responsibility for each of the four, key *implementation* areas:

1) *Participant Research and Recruitment.* Many congregations desire to serve needy families, but don't know where they live or how to establish a relationship with them. One of the functions of the Start-up Committee is to investigate potential partnerships that can link church members with families making the transition from welfare to work. Local Christian parachurch ministries serving the poor are a great place to start. The Committee should identify whether there are local Christian ministries engaged with specific families needing assistance with whom the church can partner. The Salvation Army and Love, INC are two examples of such potential partners.

In the absence of these kinds of organizations, the Start-up Committee should approach the local Department of Social Services (DSS) to inquire whether it would be interested in establishing a welfare-to-work mentoring program. Such church-state partnerships are already underway in Mississippi (the Faith and Families Program), Michigan (Project Zero), Texas (Texas Family Pathfinders), Maryland (the Community-Directed Assistance Program), and Minnesota (Hope Makers Jobs Partnership), among other states. Welfare reform has created new incentives for local governments to turn to the faith community for help in transitioning families from welfare to work. Many caseworkers know that they cannot provide individualized, time-intensive assistance to each of their clients when they are carrying a caseload of 40 or 50 individuals. Thus, many welcome the support of mentors from the churches who can invest significant time and care into the life of their clients. An effective partnership with the local DSS can be pursued if several conditions are met (see Appendix Six for a detailed discussion of this topic).

A third way of linking church-based mentoring teams with families on welfare is to pursue relationships with specific families the church has assisted in the past. For example, the church may have records of families that have recently received financial assistance or groceries. These families can be contacted to see whether the head of household is affected by welfare reform and if she would like to discuss the possibility of receiving help from the church as she makes the transition off of public assistance.

Or, the church can adopt a new benevolence policy in which families that request financial assistance are screened for potential involvement in a mentoring program. Several churches have successfully "remodeled" their traditional financial benevolence programs into systems for conducting relational, holistic ministry with the help of a Christian organization called New Focus. Under the New Focus system, families requesting aid from the church are invited to a short meeting in which they can learn about the New Focus program and decide whether they want to work with church members in designing a personalized strategy for achieving greater financial stability through employment

Testimonial From Virginia Welfare Recipients

The S.T.E.P. [Strategies to Elevate People] ministry in Richmond, Virginia has been matching church mentors with women in Gilpin Court, the city's largest public housing complex, for several years. Participants in S.T.E.P.'s adult education and job training programs are linked with a "Family Share Team" of mentors for at least one year. The three participants quoted below have remained in contact with their Share Teams for much longer than that, because they have developed genuine friendships with Team members despite differences of race and class.

"I used to sit around a lot and my family used to treat me real bad. My sisters would just dump their children on me and go away partying and I wouldn't see them for days. They took advantage of me a lot and expected me to do things that were their responsibility. So I used to feel so bad all the time and cry a lot. But [my Share Team] built up my self-esteem and made me feel good about myself. They let me know that I could do whatever I wanted to do and should never give up on my dreams. At first, I was nervous [about meeting her Share Team] because I didn't know what to think. But when I got to know them, I'd never in my life met so many nice white people! They care, they help me, and if I need encouragement, they give it to me. My family was coming down hard on me but I could talk with my Share Team; the talking was very soothing."

—L.R., 28-year-old mother of four who became a Christian through the S.T.E.P. ministry

"With this kind of support, you're around people who won't let you quit. [My mentor] pulled me and pushed me. She didn't look at me as some black woman living in the projects that didn't want to change; she looked at me as a person. And that's so important to me."

— C.C., 31-year-old mother of three

"When I got my Share Team, it was my first year of going to [community] college and I had been out of school for over 15 years. My Share Team helped me out a lot and supported me. They showed me that they cared about me and that they had faith in me. They kept telling me things like, "You can do it, Sheila. You can do it!" I feel like I've got people who love me and care about me. And you don't get too much of that out here in the [projects]. My Team members were genuine; they made me feel I could trust them. I can talk to them about any issue. I wouldn't have made it as far as I have if it weren't for my Share Team.

— S.A., 34-year-old mother of two who is now working full-time and recently moved out of public housing and purchased her first home and wise family budgeting. (See Appendix One for a description of New Focus.)

2) *Lay Mobilization.* The Start-up Committee is also responsible for designing a system for promoting the mentoring program and recruiting mentors. In most instances, lay mobilization will be easier if the church's senior pastor is a vocal supporter of the mentoring initiative. The pastor need not be involved personally in the day-to-day activities of the mentoring program, but his public support of the initiative will usually help the recruiting efforts. The pastor can legitimize the outreach in the eyes of the average pew-sitter, and can exhort the laity to service. The Start-up Committee should utilize whatever communication vehicles are available to promote the new mentoring initiative: church newsletter, the Sunday bulletin, bulletin board, display booths, etc.

One helpful principle of volunteer recruitment is to design ways for existing groups within the congregation to serve as a group. Our church, for example, has a large number of "home fellowship groups," small groups of 5-10 people who meet regularly for prayer, Bible study, and fellowship. The individuals involved already know and enjoy one another and they may be more willing to serve as a mentoring team because they see such service as an opportunity to deepen their relationships and stretch and grow as a group. An adult Sunday school class that breaks into small prayer or discussion groups or a women's weekly prayer circle are other potential pools of mentoring teams. (For further tips on volunteer recruitment, see Appendix Two.)

3) *Mentor Training*. One individual on the Start-up Committee should lay the groundwork for the training program that will be necessary once several congregants have volunteered to serve as mentors. This will involve (a) identifying good trainers, either inside or outside the church; (b) gathering appropriate training materials (including information on cross-cultural ministry, active listening skills and problem-solving skills, and how to avoid volunteer burnout); and (c) designing a "mentor support" system (mobilizing a prayer team to undergird the mentors in prayer and organizing regular — e.g. monthly or quarterly — mentor gatherings where mentors can swap information and experiences and encourage and refresh one another). If the church already has a "Stephen Ministry" program in place, a leader from that ministry would make an excellent trainer, since the Stephen Ministry aims at equipping lay counselors. (See Appendix Three for a more detailed discussion of mentor training.)

4) *Support Services.* Once mentor teams are actively engaged in relationships with individuals making the transition from welfare to work, they will typically discover various needs that the larger church body could help meet. For example, the participant might need her car repaired, or a tutor to help her study for the GED, or some training in computer skills, or some clothes appropriate for job interviewing. A member of the Start-up Committee should begin to "catalogue" the various support services church members could provide. This could be done in the form of a "Talents and Resources Survey" given to church members to complete. The questionnaire would list various *talents* people have that they would be willing to share with the families being mentored (for example, ability to teach computer skills, ability to help someone prepare a resume, mechanical ability) and various *resources* they could contribute to

> Not everyone in the congregation will be willing to serve as mentors, but many will be eager to help in some other capacity.

the family (business clothing, good condition children's clothing, a car, a computer, etc.)

To recap, the Start-up Committee (composed of 6 to 12 individuals) get the mentoring initiative going by completing four key implementation areas: participant research and recruiting, lay mobilization, mentor training, and supportive services. **The start-up phase of the welfare-to-work mentoring program is complete when...**

✓ The whole initiative is undergirded in prayer.

✓ The church has partnered with an organization that can screen potential participant families and refer them to the church, or has developed its own participant recruitment and screening procedure.

✓The pastor has encouraged congregants to support the new initiative in whatever ways they can — by being mentors or prayer-warriors or part of the large "support services" network standing behind the "front line" mentors.

✓ The Start-up Committee has a clear idea of the nature and goals of the mentoring program and is prepared to oversee the initiative (i.e., be the liaison with the partnering agency; shepherd, advise, encourage, and evaluate the mentor teams; and provide reporting on the initiative to church leaders).

✓ The congregation is truly mobilized for action. Church members are aware of the new initiative. Mentors have stepped forward and are beginning their training.

✓ The church has thought through its financial assistance guidelines and has determined the length and nature of the mentoring relationship.

✓ The Start-up Committee has renewed the church's liability insurance and made any necessary additions to cover volunteer mentors working under the church's auspices. (For example, the church may wish to purchase additional insurance covering volunteers who use their own personal vehicles to transport program participants.)

VII. Run With It!

On-going Role of the Start-up Committee

The Start-up Committee is responsible for monitoring how the relationships between mentor teams and participants are going. If the church mentors several families, the Committee may want to assign one of its members to the role of "Program Director," or even hire an individual part-time to fulfill this job. Also, mentor teams should assign one of their members to be the secretary for the group, taking notes at each meeting and keeping track of the participant's progress in reaching the goals outlined in her personal action plan. These notes should be shared with the Start-up Committee or Program Director. Depending on the closeness of the church's partnership with whatever agency referred the participant to the church's mentoring program (e.g., the Department of Social Services), the mentoring team may also want to keep the participant's caseworker informed about the team's work with the participant.

The Multifaceted Role of the Mentor Teams

The mentoring team should include a mix of "relationally-oriented" people and "task-oriented" people. (See Appendix Three for a detailed discussion of the composition of mentor teams.) Part of the work of the team is to be good listeners, encouragers, and cheerleaders. *Often, the participant will want to talk about issues that seem only indirectly related to the questions of finding and retaining a good job. It is important to keep in mind that these indirect issues (for example, difficulty collecting child support, a stressful relationship with a boyfriend, or a teenage child failing in school) consume enormous emotional energy, energy that is then not available for channeling into the job pursuit.* During the first year of our church's mentoring program, one mentor team found itself spending much time counseling its participant to break up with her abusive boyfriend. Another team spent many hours helping its participant work through the guilt she felt concerning an abortion she had had some years before. In both instances, members of the mentoring team wondered whether they were talking about the "right" issues with their participant, since these issues didn't have any direct relationship to the participant's job goals. I encouraged them to remember that these issues were the ones on the participants' "front burners," and until they could be dealt with to some extent, the participants' ability to focus on "job-related pursuits" would be hindered. Team members who are more relationally-oriented can help the participant work through whatever her "front burner" issues happen to be. As the participant feels secure and supported by those individuals, feeling that she does have someone to talk to, she will be better empowered to work constructively with the more task-oriented team members on concrete projects, such as her resume or job applications.

Emotional Support is Vital

"Though we were strangers at first, I grew to feel comfortable telling [my mentors] about myself. I felt like my Friendship Circle understood me and my goals. They'd ask why I did, or didn't, do this or that. They were supportive. They cared about me. They taught me to be less shy. They asked me good questions, like 'Where do you want to be in five or ten years?' They helped me focus better, they challenged me."

— Y.A., 21-year-old welfare recipient in Charlottesville, Virginia. With the support of her Friendship Circle, this woman kicked out her abusive boyfriend and enrolled in a church-based single mother's support group.

The participant's ability to make progress in terms of greater economic self-reliance will be affected to some degree by her relationships with friends and neighbors, by her family life, by her health, and so forth. The mentor team must not be blind to the ways in which these facets of the participant's life help or hinder her progress in achieving the specific goals she and the team have formulated.

What all of this implies is that the church should define "success" broadly enough to include not only progress in job-specific areas (completing a resume, securing a new job), but overall progress (educational, family, spiritual, relational). Clearly the mentor team needs to focus on the concrete specifics of improving the participant's economic self-reliance through stable employment. But individuals are more than merely workers — they are mothers and daughters and sisters and friends and aunts. As Christians, our ministry should be flexible enough to provide help in areas that are not economic, but that will usually have some kind of impact on the family's economic life. The woman in an abusive relationship, for example, may secure a job but not improve her (or her children's) quality of life because the boyfriend drinks the paycheck away. The mother whose teenager is constantly in trouble in school may lose her new job because of the multiple times she must leave work to deal with her delinquent son. Obviously, the mentor team cannot "solve" all the participant's problems, nor should it even attempt to. The point is that the participant's ability to make progress in terms of greater economic self-reliance will be affected to some degree by her relationships with friends and neighbors, by her family life, by her health, and so forth. The mentor team must not be blind to the ways in which these facets of the participant's life help or hinder her progress in achieving the specific goals she and the team have formulated.

Managing Problems

It is pleasant for me to be able to report that I have witnessed few problems in the mentoring efforts I have studied in several states. Nonetheless, conflicts sometimes do arise and every mentor team must be prepared for the possibility of some tough times. The most common problem is that the participant loses motivation and begins missing meetings or failing to do the tasks she had agreed to do under the action plan. The first step in handling this sort of problem is for one or two people on the team to gently confront the participant and ask why she has missed meetings. The issue may be simply that the participant had legitimate reasons for missing the meeting (sick child, her ride fell through, etc.) and that she dropped the ball in calling the team members to inform them of what was going on. In this case the participant should simply be encouraged to remember to call if she encounters a problem.

In other cases, it may be that the participant is going through something stressful that has sapped her motivation for working with the team. She may want to work with the team, but expresses feelings of great discouragement or weariness — "I don't like my life the way it is now, but it is so hard to change it and I'm just too worn out." In this instance, the team may want to step back and take a modest break from its work. The team should ask how they can support the participant through this particular time and then check in again with the participant in two to three weeks to see how things are going. If the participant's motivation level is still very low, then the team members should suggest a face-to-face meeting to decide whether the working relationship should continue at this time.

In other instances, the participant may not be willing to do whatever is necessary for her self-improvement. At this point, the old cliche comes true: "it's hard to help someone who isn't willing to help herself." If a participant misses three meetings without offering a legitimate excuse, the team should communicate clearly that it is willing to continue the working relationship, but that the participant needs to prove with her actions that she is truly committed to that working relationship. If a conversation between the team members and the participant does not produce constructive change, the team may want to ask the Start-up Committee (or the Program Director) to step in and speak with the participant. Also, the team may want to contact the participant's caseworker, to see whether he/she has any insight on how to motivate/exhort the participant. If contacts by these individuals do not help to resolve the situation, the team may have to accept that there is no choice but to sever the relationship.

Demolishing Stereotypes

"Being a mentor has broken up my stereotypes of welfare recipients. It's easy to form a we/they attitude. Getting to know these women personally has made me re-evaluate my stereotypes. I understand now on a deeper level where they've come from. I know they really want to change, and watching them change has increased my hope."

— B.B., a mentor involved in Mississippi's Faith and Families program

Closure

If it appears that the relationship is going to be severed, the team should make every effort to have face-to-face closure with the participant. This allows the team to communicate its concern and care for the participant and its disappointment that things did not work out. In the absence of a face-to-face meeting, the team may want to write a letter to the participant, reaffirming their love and concern for her and highlighting any good experiences they had in working with her.

Near the end of any mentoring relationship, the team, the participant, and the Start-up Committee (or Program Director, if the church chooses to have one), should complete a "pre-exit" interview. At this meeting (usually about one month before the end of the "formal" time commitment the team has made), the team and the participant review their original covenant and action plan and assess the progress they have made together. They can also identify the priority tasks to complete within the final month of the working relationship. If things have been going well, and both the team and the participant feel they would benefit from working together further, then they can draw up a new action plan for an extension of their work — for example, a commitment to work together for three more months. While it is possible that team members and the participant may end up having a friendship that will continue well beyond the extension of time agreed to, it is a good idea to set up formal parameters (e.g., we will work together three more months and then have another assessment/evaluation time) rather than leaving it indefinite.

Exit interviews, with mentors and participants — separately — provide the church with helpful feedback that can further strengthen the welfare-to-work mentoring initiative.

At the conclusion of the formal relationship, the Start-up Committee or Program Director should complete exit interviews, separately, with the team and with the participant. In these interviews, the Committee or Program Director asks the team members to evaluate their experience in the mentoring program. Similarly, the Committee or Program Director interviews the participant to learn what was most helpful, and what was not that helpful, about her work with the team. This feedback from the teams and the participants can then serve as the basis for making improvements to the overall mentoring program. Listening to the team's experience can improve the mentor training process, for example. Perhaps one team successfully worked through some rocky times with its participant. That experience should be "documented" in a form that can help future mentor teams deal with problems they may encounter. And by listening to the participant, the church demonstrates that it values her input and believes that her comments can help future participants to flourish in the mentoring program. By incorporating these assessments, the mentoring program can be continually improved.

Maintaining the Vision

To keep the church's commitment to and enthusiasm for the mentoring program, success stories should be shared regularly (through the church newsletter or a testimony in church by a mentor or a participant). As the congregation hears these stories, more church members may decide to sign up as mentors. Most importantly, the congregation is edified by hearing how God has been at work in the lives of the mentors and the program participants.

APPENDIX ONE
Shifting to Relational Ministry: The NEW FOCUS Model

Probably 75 percent of the church secretaries in America have, at least at one time, received a telephone call from a stranger asking for the church's financial assistance. The Bible makes clear that the Church is responsible for helping the needy; the tricky part is discerning what kind of help is truly helpful. Many churches offer emergency financial aid, clothing, and groceries to lower income families. These kinds of "relief" assistance are often very useful and appropriate. But, as discussed earlier in this handbook, "relief" can be inadequate — or irrelevant — for certain families. Able-bodied poor people often need "developmental" assistance, not mere relief aid. Developmental aid is aimed at addressing the underlying causes of the individual's financial distress. Most churches desire that their help truly helps, rather than merely being a temporary band-aid. So many churches ask, "How can we make the shift from commodity-based "relief" assistance only to a relational, developmental outreach ministry?" New Focus, a Christ-centered ministry in Michigan, can help.

New Focus's comprehensive strategy for effectively targeting the use of church benevolence funds embodies sound Biblical principles concerning responsible compassion. Churches adopting the New Focus program must commit a specific percentage of their benevolence funds to the program, including money to pay a part-time New Focus director at their own church. (Churches are, of course, free to find whether there is a church member willing to serve in this position without a salary.) New Focus trains the church director on how to establish an incentive-based budget counseling program and mobilize the laity for involvement in "Compassion Circles" that befriend and mentor individuals participating in the weekly New Focus program. (These individuals are called New Focus "members.") Participating churches agree to make space available in their own buildings for the weekly evening meeting and for a "store" at which New Focus members can redeem earned vouchers for clothing and food. New Focus calls itself a "change management system," since it seeks to help people in financial trouble to take small, consistent steps toward positive change. Its core is the Biblically-based budget counseling program, but New Focus is about much more than just money management. The illustration below shows how New Focus works.

Let's suppose Sandy calls a church utilizing the New Focus system and asks for $200. She needs the money to pay an electricity bill; she doesn't have the funds herself and fears her service will be turned off. As the phone counselor who answered Sandy's call continues the conversation, she learns that Sandy frequently runs short of cash to pay her utility bills. Based on what Sandy reports concerning her income from part-time work, food stamps, and housing assistance, it seems that Sandy should be able to meet her monthly financial obligations. So, the phone counselor lets Sandy know that the church might be willing to help her with this specific need, if Sandy is willing to adopt a plan for managing her finances that will help her to avoid this situation in the future. If Sandy is interested, she can attend a New Focus introductory meeting at the church on Wednesday night, and she'll receive a free bag of groceries just for showing up. In addition, the phone volunteer lets Sandy know that the church provides free child care during the New Focus meeting and that refreshments will be served. The volunteer also informs Sandy that, if after attending the meeting she decides she wants to join New Focus and get some help in taking positive steps toward change, then trained church volunteers will meet with her to design an action plan and figure out the ways in which the church can help.

So, Sandy and her kids go the New Focus-affiliated church on Wednesday night for the introductory meeting. Her children join the other kids for a time of crafts, singing, Bible lessons, and games. Sandy and the other adults hear a presentation about the New Focus system. The church offers no-interest loans, small financial gifts, other material resources (food, clothing, household items) and services (budget counseling, prayer support, transportation) to individuals who become members of New Focus. Members, in turn, agree to attend weekly meetings with a personal financial coach who helps them establish a workable spending plan. If the member possesses credit cards or checking accounts, the financial coach may hold them if compulsive spending is a problem. Otherwise, the member keeps the checkbook but writes his/her checks once a week during the budget counseling session. Members without checking accounts follow the rules of New Focus' "cash envelope" system, in which their cash is distributed across several envelopes, each of which is designated for specific spending purposes (for example, rent, groceries, phone bill). Counselors and members discuss the small steps members can take to get back on their feet financially and eventually to become debt-free.

Basically, the New Focus volunteers encourage Sandy to envision a better, healthier future for herself and her family, and then help her to identify the steps she needs to take to get there.

If Sandy makes a commitment to become a New Focus member and attend the weekly class, the New Focus Director will complete an "intake" with her. (An intake is a form on which basic information about Sandy — age, family size, address, phone number, occupation, sources of income, fixed monthly expenditures, availability of relatives or friends nearby who can help, church affiliation if any, etc. — is recorded.) Or, the church may use an existing intake already completed by staff at the agency which referred Sandy to the church. After completing the intake, the New Focus Director converses with Sandy about what Sandy's immediate needs are and what areas of her life she would like to change. Then the Director, a financial coach, and a deacon involved with the New Focus program meet with Sandy in her home to begin designing together a strategic, long-term plan for helping Sandy to exit the welfare system or otherwise achieve greater economic self-sufficiency. After this planning session, Sandy begins attending the weekly "Steps to Change" class at the church. Through completing this six-week course, Sandy will have made a list of her top spending priorities in a "Spending Plan Book." She will also have had the opportunity to complete a "self-assessment" by using a unique tool called the "Heart House" booklet. The Heart House booklet allows New Focus members to evaluate themselves, assess what's going right and what's going wrong in their lives, what their needs and assets are, what goals they wish to pursue, and the changes they might need to make to accomplish those goals. Sandy can go through the Heart House booklet privately, which allows her to do some genuine soul-searching. Then, once the booklet is completed, Sandy can share it with her financial coach or other New Focus helpers, and they will be able to get a better idea of what Sandy thinks about Sandy — and what the main changes Sandy wants to make are. Equipped with this knowledge, the financial coach and other New Focus volunteers are better positioned both to encourage Sandy and to assist her in making good choices that accord with the goals and priorities she has set for herself. This allows the New Focus volunteers to offer different kinds of choices to Sandy rather than making the choices for her.

The work Sandy and the New Focus volunteers do with her are guided by the goals Sandy has outlined — goals in relationship to her family relationships, her education, her career, her housing situation, etc. With everyone "on the same page" about where Sandy is and where she wants to be, the New Focus helpers are able to encourage Sandy and celebrate with her as she makes progress towards her goals. Basically, the New Focus volunteers encourage Sandy to envision a better, healthier future for herself and her family, and then help her to identify the steps she needs to take to get there.

As a New Focus member, Sandy and her kids will attend the New Focus meetings once a week. Each meeting consists of two sessions. During the first session, Sandy will meet individually with her financial coach. Each week, Sandy determines three small steps that she can take to move her toward her long-range goals. The coach and she review her progress in taking those steps. As Sandy accomplishes the various steps, she will be rewarded with various incentives provided by the church: laundry soap, discounted goods, groceries. Sandy can also let her financial coach know of any specific needs she has — such as the need for car repairs or a winter coat. The coach then writes these requests on small pieces of paper resembling apples and hangs them on the church's "Giving Tree." (The Tree is placed in a public area in the church building where church members can look over the various requests and see whether they can provide the good or service needed.) During the second session, Sandy and other members will participate in a small group discussion on "Steps to Financial Freedom," a Bible-based budgeting curriculum. The small group will also hold a "prayer and share" time together and fellowship around a light meal.

After Sandy graduates from the six-week "Steps to Change" class, she is included in a "Compassion Circle" that will support her as she continues to take small steps to positive change. (Members of Sandy's Circle will likely have already attended her graduation ceremony and celebrated her completion of the first phase of the New Focus program.) The Circle is a small group of individuals or couples from the church who will meet regularly with Sandy to cheer her progress. New Focus recruits volunteers interested in being in a Circle and asks them to identify what their ministry passion is, and what unique life experiences and/or educational experiences they can draw from. Some volunteers may want to help a single mom; others may want to help an unemployed man; others may have a burden for the low-income elderly; while still others may feel they could best be used as a mentor to a young mother. The Circle members will already have been meeting together twice a month before they meet Sandy. This allows them to get to know each other and build a sense of "team." They will have also each completed a "Heart House" assessment, which helps them to look carefully at their own lives and see where God's faithfulness and power has been evident in the past. The Circle members will also discuss together their personal testimonies and their convictions about how to serve others, how to achieve family harmony, how to respect authority and how to be authority, how to forgive others, and other crucial issues.

Let's say that a Circle that had requested to work with single moms is the one chosen to be matched with Sandy. Sandy and her Circle will then start meeting twice per month for at least a year; during this time, Sandy also continues meeting weekly with her financial coach. Once a month, Circle members will help each other complete a service project: one month they might repaint Sandy's apartment, another month they might resurface another member's driveway. This way, people who have difficulty receiving become receivers and givers, and people who have difficulty giving become givers and receivers.

New Focus' model is relational, it's aimed at long-term change, and it builds in accountability. New Focus' approach is also volunteer friendly. Individuals are more likely to be willing to help Sandy when they understand that they are part of a whole team surrounding her. Also, each friend in the Compassion Circle makes only a twice-per-month time commitment. Financial coaches make a more significant commitment — a weekly meeting. Financial coaches, however, benefit from the fact that their coaching is reinforced by the weekly general teaching session and by the incentive/rewards system built into New Focus' program. Churches involved in the New Focus program benefit because their benevolence funds now are tied to a variety of other supports (Bible-based teaching, budget counseling, emotional succor, and other practical helps) that help address the root problems underlying a person's immediate cash emergency. Moreover, church money is going to help individuals whom church members are getting to know personally.

Even more importantly, the New Focus program is evangelistic, overtly encouraging members to follow God's ways in dealing with their money, their family, their work, and their problems. While a member need not be a Christian to join the program, he/she is told up front that the Bible is the program's main textbook.

New Focus members benefit from the ministry because in addition to financial aid, they are given emotional support and taught the skills they need to live healthier, balanced, responsible lives. Often, people are dissatisfied with their current lifestyles, but feel that they lack the strength to take the steps necessary to improve their lives. New Focus provides them a network of caring support and tangible incentives for taking those steps.

For more information, contact New Focus at 1-616-895-5356 or write New Focus; P.O. Box 351; Allendale, MI 49401.

APPENDIX TWO
Top Ten Tips on Recruiting and Encouraging Volunteers[4]

1. Know your mission, and put it in writing, so volunteers can clearly understand it. (A person's got to know and understand the vision in order to "catch" it!)

2. Know what kind of people you are looking for. List the types of skills, interests, passions, life experiences, resources, and spiritual gifts you believe would be helpful for effective mentors to have. (Keep in mind that a mentor team should have a variety of kinds of people and personalities.)

3. Write out "job descriptions" for the various volunteer positions (not only job descriptions of the different mentor roles, but also of the other "support services" roles, such as an administrative assistant to the Program Director). Share these with interested individuals and post them on the church's community bulletin board.

4. Educate volunteers by describing profiles of "typical" program participants. If you are partnering with a non-profit agency or the Department of Social Services, have one of their staff come to the recruitment/orientation meetings to talk about the potential program participants and their needs.

5. Excite and inspire volunteers by sharing testimonies about welfare-to-work "success stories" from other churches.[5] If possible, have experienced mentors from other churches' programs on hand to talk about their experiences and answer questions that new (or potential) mentors may have about what's involved in being a mentor.

6. Clearly define the ministry's expectations (time commitment, role, responsibilities).

7. Appreciate your volunteers! Hold an annual Volunteer Appreciation Banquet, highlight volunteers teams and their work in the church's newsletter, send thank-you notes, give out certificates of achievement, etc.

8. Solicit volunteer input. As mentioned earlier in this manual, the Program Director or Start-up Committee should conduct "exit interviews" with mentors to hear their suggestions and constructive criticisms. Mentors could also be asked to complete a survey that asks for suggestions for improvement.

9. Communicate regularly with your volunteers — never let them feel they have been forgotten! You may even want to create a volunteer publication.

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[4]Most of this material is drawn from a 1997 workshop at the Christian Community Development Conference by Yvonne Dodd, Executive Director, Hope for New York.

[5]Several such stories are recorded in the following articles by Amy L. Sherman: "Little Miracles: How Churches are Responding to Welfare Reform," *The American Enterprise* (Jan-Feb 1998); "Thy Neighbor's Keeper," *Reason* (Aug-Sep 1996); "A New Path Out of Poverty? A Close Look at Mississippi's Faith and Families Program," *The American Enterprise* (July-Aug 1996); "A Measure of Our Greatness," *Rutherford* (November 1996); and "STEP-ping Out on Faith — And Off Welfare," *Christianity Today* (June 17, 1996).

10. Celebrate success. Give the mentors the opportunity to testify about how God worked in their lives through their experiences as mentors. Have mentors share these testimonies before adult Sunday school classes or in a worship service. Or ask them to write up their testimony for church publications. This both affirms the mentors and communicates vision to the rest of the congregation, thus stimulating greater interest in, and support of, the welfare-to-work ministry.

APPENDIX THREE[6]
Key Elements of Effective Mentor Training

The mentor training I have witnessed around the country tends to include attention to four major areas, discussed below.

A) Review of Administrative Details

There are several mundane, but nonetheless important, items every mentor needs to know, such as: time commitment expected from mentors; the key dates for meetings; where meetings will be held (include directions to the meeting site); and where to park.

Mentors may also have questions about liability. For example, what happens if the mentor is driving the participant to a job interview and they get involved in a car accident in which the participant is injured? The Start-up Committee should already have discussed such liability issues and checked with the church administrator to get an overview of the church's liability insurance policy. The church may need to add a rider to its general insurance policy that covers accidents in vehicles utilized by church members who are conducting a service (e.g. giving the participant a ride to a job interview) under the auspices of the church.

It is best to distribute written hand-outs with the basic information a mentor will need (telephone number for contacting the Program Director or Start-up Committee members, list of key dates, etc.) That way the mentors carry home from the training an informational reference guide that they can consult as needed.

B) Build the Mentor Team

The mentor team will minister more effectively if the team members have the opportunity to get acquainted before they meet the program participant with whom they will be matched. The team members should conduct an "inventory;" that is, identify the special talents of each person and the role each would feel most comfortable with, given their personality type. Some people are more relational and will be best used as encouragers and informal counselors. Other people are more task-oriented and will be most effective if they are given a role in assisting the participant in attaining specific objectives (such as writing a resume or developing a monthly budget or learning how to drive). One person should serve as team secretary, taking notes at each meeting with the participant so that the mentors and the participant clearly recall what plans they have set, what action steps the participants and the mentors will be taking the next week or two, when the group will next meet, etc. Another individual can serve as the team's link to the broader congregation (and specifically to the "supportive services" organized by the Start-up Committee (see page 16).

The mentor team will minister more effectively if the team members have the opportunity to get acquainted before they meet the program participant with whom they will be matched.

Good Samaritan Ministries in Holland, MI has been training churches in relational ministries for several years and is actively in-

[6]Much information in this Appendix is drawn from Good Samaritan Ministries' manual, *Building Transformational Relationships with Low-Income Families.*

volved in assisting churches in establishing welfare-to-work mentoring programs. They have identified the main "functions" of the mentoring team as follows (not all mentoring teams need to be this large; this list is given as a guide to the typical roles different people on the mentoring teams play):

1) Team Leader(s):

*Establishes primary relationship with the family

*Communicates the needs of the family to the appropriate team members

*Maintains regular contact with the family being mentored and with team members

*Calls team meetings

*Watches overall morale of team members

*Submits/completes monthly planning agreements and progress reports to the Program Director or Start-up Committee

2) Prayer Coordinator:

*Organizes ongoing prayer for the team and the family being mentored

*Leads devotional or prayer time prior to team meetings

3) Friend/Encourager:

A non-judgmental friend for the family to lean upon in time of need. Someone who is willing to exchange phone numbers so the family can call someone if they need someone in whom to confide. This person should be an encourager and able to motivate the family in a positive manner.

4) Volunteer/Support Services Coordinator:

*Helps find church resources to fill immediate needs (clothing, supplies)

*Acts as secretary during team meetings

5) Budget Counselor:

*Works with the participant in developing a workable monthly budget

*Reviews options with participant for increasing income and decreasing expenses

6) Employment Coordinator:

*Addresses obstacles to adequate employment (i.e., training needed for a job, resume help)

*Assists parent(s) in arranging childcare (daily care and "back up" care)

*Assists parent(s) with making long-term transportation arrangements

7) Education Coordinator:

*Assists parent(s) with enrolling for necessary educational or job skills training

8) Living Skills/Needs Coordinator:

*Assists family in finding long-term solutions for transportation, clothing, food, furniture

*Addresses legal/medical needs as they arise

C. Learning to Relate Across Racial and Class Differences

One of the first concerns some mentors

have is that they have not built friendships before with someone from a different racial or ethnic background. Other mentors have had cross-cultural relationships, but not with individuals from a lower socio-economic status. Awareness of differences makes some mentors nervous about their relationship with the program participant. What follows are some suggestions from existing mentoring programs that may be helpful in alleviating that nervousness and equipping people for cross-cultural relationships.

(1) Build on common elements. Perhaps the participant is a Christian; thus there is already a spiritual bond between the participant and the mentors. Find out the participant's hobbies or favorite sports teams or previous places of residence — these might also be possible points of connection. Or perhaps the participant has children who are similar in age to a mentor's children, or children who are engaged in the same kinds of activities. Remember that we have far more in common with others that we may initially recognize.

(2) Keep the first two meetings between the participant and the mentoring team short. A half-hour "get-acquainted time" over coffee and doughnuts might be appropriate. The next meeting might then be a special lunch out or some other social activity, such as a picnic or attending a sports game together. The third meeting between the participant and the mentoring team can be the first true "working session;" it will go more smoothly because a basic comfort level will already have been achieved.

(3) The mentoring team should, prior to meeting the participant, examine themselves and ask God to cleanse them of any prejudices. The team will benefit greatly from reading a book on racial reconciliation from a Christian perspective, such as *More Than Equals* by Spencer Perkins and Chris Rice, published by Intervarsity Press. (Perkins and Rice also co-authored a chapter on

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Good Samaritan Ministries also emphasizes the following important guidelines for effective team work:

1) "To speak the truth in love" is an expectation for all team members.
2) Team members should always communicate regularly with each other in order to promote consistency.
3) Team members should never do for the family what they can and want to do for themselves.
4) Team members must not be pitted against one another.
5) Team members should regularly re-evaluate their involvement in the ministry.
6) Team members should respect the family's privacy and not discuss their situation with other church members, family members, or friends without express written permission from the family.
7) Team members should divide work responsibilities as evenly as possible.

"We've Become Real Good Friends"

"To know Maria is to love her. She feels like I'm a mother figure — that's what she has said. Mainly I see myself as an encourager. We've become real good friends. When I met Maria, she had come through a nervous breakdown, had really been struggling emotionally, and I had been too, so that was an instant bond. We've been able to encourage each other emotionally because we've had some shared experiences there. We really enjoy talking. She's real open with me [about spiritual things]. That's another way I encourage her."

— J.T., church mentor in Michigan who has worked with Maria, a 27-year-old Hispanic mother of four, for several months racial reconciliation in *Restoring At-Risk Communities: Doing it Together and Doing it Right*, edited by John Perkins [Baker Books]). According to Rice and Perkins, there are three basic steps involved in racial reconciliation:

(a) ADMIT: The first step to building positive cross-cultural friendships is to admit that racial tensions still exist, and that we are probably guilty of wearing "racial blinders." We have to be courageous enough to take a long, hard look at our own underlying attitudes towards people of other races and admit that our attitudes may fall severely short of Christ's standard. A second common blinder that whites often need to admit is a "fix-it" mentality. This mindset looks at people as problems which need to be solved or cases which need to be managed. Our motivation in serving others ought to go beyond the idea that "we are going in there to help them." This condescending mentality fails to see that "we" may need "them" as much as "they" need "us." It fails to see their capacity for designing their own solutions; it looks only at needs rather than at assets. By focusing on building specific relationships, we can move beyond a "case worker mentality" because we begin to really *see* the people we are helping. We begin to see beyond their needs alone to their personalities, strengths, idiosyncracies, histories, and achievements. We begin to recognize that we are receiving from them — wisdom or encouragement or new ideas and perspectives. We begin to see that they are helping us.

(b) SUBMIT: The second step Perkins and Rice counsel is to submit. This means candidly acknowledging before God and others our inability, on our own strength, to love others as He loved. It means submitting to His Word and authority and following Him on the road of racial reconciliation. And it means submitting to one another — being willing to learn rather than only to teach; willing to receive rather than only to give.

(c) COMMIT: Finally, say Perkins and Rice, we must commit for the long haul. We must decide to stick with the cross cultural friendships we're forging even when they cause pain and stress.

4) The mentoring team must expect the participant to take responsibility for her life and decisions. The team must not pity the participant so much that it takes responsibility for her problems. Also, the team should not assume that the participant has no family support, a poor education, or kids that are on drugs or have dropped out of school or gotten pregnant. The team should treat the participant as an individual, not on the basis of stereotypes about her racial group or economic class. The team also must not assume that the participant has no job skills or is otherwise "helpless" to help herself. The team is not the "rescuer." Simultaneously, team members should recognize that some of the participants may never have learned certain "life skills," so there is a place for teaching/informal counseling. Also, some participants may have been victims of abuse or dysfunctional families; some may have struggled in the past with substance abuse. Team members should be sympathetic and caring, while not allowing people to excuse their present-day responsibilities because of unfortunate, painful events in the past.

D. Develop Effective Problem-Solving Skills

One of the most important roles of the mentoring team is to assist the participants in becoming effective problem-solvers. This is a learned skill, not one that necessarily comes naturally. A person's ability to solve problems may depend in part on what sort of behavior was modeled before them. Some people were raised in homes where problems were simply ignored. Others grew up in homes where a "wait and see" attitude was always present in regards to problems — the hope that by waiting, time would eliminate the need for action. Still others find themselves so overwhelmed by the problem that even considering possible responses causes them to become almost paralyzed. Other people respond to problems by lashing out and blaming others. And still others turn to those around them for help and advice.

Good Samaritan Ministries suggests that mentor teams utilize the following five-point process for problem-solving with their participants:

1) *Listen to the stated problem.* Team members should practice "active listening," that is, reflecting back to others what you understand them to be saying. It means communicating to the speaker that you are "tracking" with him/her.

2) *Define the problem and identify possible causes.* Having a clear, well-defined understanding of the problem aids in finding solutions. Problems can relate to lack of resources (money, job), lack of skills (in using a computer or managing money); lack of information (about where to shop or how to apply for a job or conduct an effective job interview); lack of support (from friends who can encourage or provide practical help such as a ride to an interview); or lack of motivation (the failure to carry through decisions). Mentors should help the participant write short, clear, specific, objective problem statements: for example, rather than defining the problem as "financial difficulties," define it as "there is a $50 per month shortfall between my income and my expenses."

3) *Establish goals.* Goal statements, like problem statements, should be clear, specific, and objective. Mentors should help participants identify "SMART" goals, that is, goals that are:

Specifically related to the problem;
Measurable, not vague;
Attainable rather than unrealistic;
Results-oriented, rather than process oriented;
Time-limited, rather than endless.

4) *Plan a solution:*

a) Generate alternatives - ask the participant how she thinks the goal can be reached. Ask what the participant has already tried, what her friends have suggested, what she thinks would be helpful for achieving the goal.

b) Evaluate the alternatives - Think aloud with the participant about the pros and cons of each suggestion. Ask whether a particular suggestion is possible, likely to be effective, and acceptable to the participant and her family.

c) Develop a plan - A good plan is crafted with much involvement by the participant; it should not be imposed on the participant by the mentor team. It should be a detailed, step-by-step plan for tackling the problems the participant has defined and moving toward her goals. The complete plan will identify, for each action item, *who* is doing *what* by *when.*

5) *Implement and evaluate.* The mentor team should ask the participant for progress updates and hold the participant accountable for implementing different action items according to the time frame defined in the plan. The team should be a sounding board for the participant, as she confronts various obstacles to implementation or has to reconsider earlier decisions and/or change course. Remember that transformation usually comes in a long series of small steps. Expect some "three steps forward, two steps back" type progress. Celebrate every small step and think of creative ways to be supportive and encouraging when the participant faces challenges and feels discouraged.

APPENDIX FOUR
Case Study: Relational Ministries Involve Problem Solving[7]

Participant's View of Problems

When problem solving, it is well to remember that a participant may view problems quite differently than the church volunteers. Try to put yourself in the participant's shoes. Daily problems facing a needy person could overwhelm anyone. Imagine this scenario:

> *"The Unbearable Life"*
>
> The alarm goes off at 5 a.m. Mary Smith drags herself out of bed and into a cold shower (the water heater is broken). She has no breakfast—there is just enough cereal to feed the children. She awakens the eight-year-old who must stay home by himself for two hours and then walk to the school bus stop. Mary takes the four-year-old with her on the bus to drop her off at daycare. The little girl sneezes and Mary fervently hopes the child is not coming down with a cold (or worse) because she will lose her job if she misses another day of work to stay home with a sick child. One hour and three bus transfers later Mary, already weary, arrives at work. After four hours of waiting tables, the boss sends her home because there aren't enough customers to justify working a full shift. Mary picks up her daughter at daycare and then stops by the welfare office to see a caseworker, and waits for two hours with a cranky child who has had no nap. On the way home, Mary gets off the bus at the store to buy groceries and cigarettes with the $8 she earned in tips today. Now, with no bus fare left, she walks half a mile lugging the bag of groceries in one arm with the still cranky child in the other. When she gets home, the eight-year-old is waiting outside. He got sick at school but since Mary had already left work when the school called, the sent him home with a volunteer. She puts together a few things for dinner and then walks to the laundromat to do three loads of laundry. The children stay at home by themselves. At 9 p.m. she tucks the children into bed, falls into bed herself soon after, and cries herself to sleep.

It's hard for most of us to imagine how someone could live this way for one day, much less for days on end. This mother has financial needs, child care needs, lack of transportation, nobody to turn to for help in a crisis, unbearable stress, and hopelessness. How can a team of volunteers sort through all these problems and help this mother create a self-sufficient life?

Problem Solving

As the volunteer team tries to help Mary, they realize she has come to a breaking point. How can the volunteers best help her? The process for problem solving includes the following steps.

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[7]Reprinted by permission of the Evergreen Freedom Foundation. This case study comes from the Foundation's "Church Training Manual" for the Faith-Based Welfare Reform Project.

1. ***State what appears to be the problem.*** This is the problem as presented by the participant, but it can be changed later based on additional information and analysis.

   Example: The mother in "The Unbearable Life" says, "Life is no longer worth living." The volunteer team responds, "Frustrating things are happening in your life that cause you to feel this way."

2. ***Gather facts.*** What happened. What were the circumstances? Who is affected? Is the problem likely to happen again?

   Example: A volunteer says to Mary, "Tell us more about what's happening in your life." Mary then proceeds to tell the team about the horrible day she experienced.

3. ***Restate the problem.*** Based on additional information, the problem may not be exactly the same as was originally stated. But be sure that the participant is in agreement with the problem before going on to the next steps.

   Example: "All of the following (list items) happened to you in one day, and you would like to gain more control over your life. But we can't work on all of these problems at once. What is the most important thing that you would like to work on first?" Mary responds, "I don't have a decent job that will support my family."

   The team has helped Mary identify a specific, manageable problem that they can now work on and solve together.

4. ***Identify some possible solutions.*** This is the time for brainstorming which involves spontaneous, free thinking. It may seem childlike, but don't critique or evaluate ideas at this point—just let them flow!

   Example: A volunteer says to Mary, "What would you consider the ideal job?" For the next 20 minutes the team and Mary discuss job possibilities based on what she really enjoys doing.

5. ***Evaluate alternatives.*** Now you can weed out ideas and select those that are most workable. Remember, alternatives must be workable from the participant's point of view, not the volunteer team's.

   Example: Mary enjoys working with her hands and is an excellent typist. She would like to do computer data entry, but has no computer skills.

The team is now ready to plan solutions and set goals.

Goal Setting

A goal is a statement of results to be achieved. Goals describe (a) conditions that will exist when the desired outcome has been accomplished, and (b) a time frame during which the outcome is to be completed.

1. *Goals answer three questions*—who, what, and when. Goals can be measured. Goals can be evaluated.

   Example: Mary and the volunteers use [a] Goals/Action Steps form [that lists goals and the action steps necessary to accomplish them. It specifies who is responsible for implementing them under a specific time frame.] They write the first goal: Within the next eight months Mary will have a full-time job doing computer data entry.

2. *Implement the goal.* This answers the "how" question by listing the action steps that must be done in order to achieve the goal. Each person responsible for the action step is named as well as the expected completion date.

   Example: Under Action Steps on the form, the team lists the following:

Person Responsible	Action Step	Date for Completion
Mary	Enroll in computer course at community College -- two nights a week for six months	w/in one week
Mrs. Johnson *(volunteer, retired teacher)*	Babysit Mary's children two nights a week and tutor the eight-year-old in reading	every week for six months
Mr. and Mrs. Thomas *(volunteer couple)*	Help Mary develop a budget, plan menus, and take her grocery shopping once a week for one month	w/in one
Mary	Ask neighbor who has nine-year-old boy if she can be available for emergency child care assistance	w/in one week
Mr. Owens *(young single volunteer)*	Repair water heater	w/in one week

Note that these steps address some of Mary's problems, but not all of them. She still has inadequate transportation and child care, but she now has a specific time frame in which she can expect things to be better. The volunteers offer some concrete forms of help (babysitting, budgeting, and home repair), but this assistance is time-limited and aimed at helping Mary achieve her goal of self-sufficiency. The volunteers do not offer cash or other "easy" solutions, but offer their time, talents, and personal involvement. The volunteers also do not have unrealistic expectations. Mary wants to quit smoking, but has never been able to do so. Even though none of the volunteers smoke, no one suggests that Mary try to quit smoking at this point in time. They believe it is far more important for her to work on her employment goal, and they will address the smoking issue at another time.

3. *Evaluate the results.* Did the goal achieve the desired results? If not, make the changes necessary to achieve the desired results.

Example: Mary tries to enroll in a computer course but finds that the course is full and that she will have to wait for one month. Mr. and Mrs. Thomas have an old computer and will set it up in Mary's home and teach her some fundamentals while she waits to enroll in the course.

Confronting in Love

Probably the most difficult part of relational ministry will be confronting. No one likes to have to confront another, but sometimes it is necessary for change and growth. Ignoring problems and hoping they will go away may result in the participant not achieving self-sufficiency. But confrontation should never be done in an impulsive, demeaning manner. Be thoroughly prepared before confronting, and consider these guidelines:

- ☐ ***The motive is love.***
  Before confronting someone, it is always a good idea to start with a prayer. Check your motive. Why are you confronting? Are you angry? Do you enjoy pointing out someone else's mistakes? Is this the right time and place? Is the other person in the right frame of mind to respond to the confrontation? You may one day need to be confronted yourself, so it's wise to deal with others in the same way that you would like to be approached. Always start by stating a positive.
  Example: A volunteer says to Mary, "I am pleased that you are doing so well in your computer course. But it seems you are having a problem with budgeting. May I discuss this with you?"

- ☐ ***Change cannot be forced.***
  It's natural to want people to see your point of view and change their behavior accordingly. But you can't force people to change. So don't set changing another person as *your* goal. Speak clearly, listen with an open mind, and leave the responsibility for choices and change to the other person.
  Example: Don't say, "Well, Mary, you will just have to learn to follow a budget." Say, "Mary, let's discuss your budget situation and see if we can come up with some better solutions."

- ☐ ***Talk about behavior, don't attack the person.***
  Remember: A person and the person's behavior are two different things. Use specific examples and focus on the behavior. Eliminate words like *never* or *always*.
  Example: Don't say, "Mary, you're always out of money. Here it is the third week of the month and you've spent the entire monthly income already." Say, "Mary, during the past three months, you have not had any money available for the last week of the month."

- ☐ ***Be a good listener.***
  Don't assume that you have all the facts and all the answers. Listen to the other person

without interrupting. Restate what you are hearing and then ask if they want to add anything else.

Example: Don't say, "I'm not interested in excuses." Say, "Tell me why you think this is happening, Mary."

- ☐ ***Don't be put off by a negative response.***
It's natural to be defensive when confronted. The person may offer excuses, blame others, become angry, or verbally attack you. If the other person expresses these feelings, do not judge them. Just bring them back to the issue at hand.

Example: Mary explodes, "I *hate* cooking and you are always bugging me to cook meals to save money. So when I can't take it any more, I end up buying junk food for a week and then I don't have any money left for anything else."

You respond, "I understand. There are times when I don't feel like cooking either. Let's see what we can come up with to address the cooking issues and still live within your budget."

- ☐ ***Identify a solution that is acceptable to everyone.***
If you have followed all of the guidelines, it's quite likely that the person being confronted will now be willing to make some changes. Try to arrive at a solution that incorporates the person's desires while moving to resolve the issue that caused the confrontation.

Example: You say, "How about having a junk food night once a week when you know you won't have to cook? I just bought a ten-minute recipe book, and perhaps we could look at it together and choose some recipes that will work better for you on the nights when you have to cook. Would you like to try that?" Mary nods in agreement, and this confrontation has been successful.

- ☐ ***Don't be discouraged if people don't change right away. It takes time to break bad habits and learn to implement brand new ones.***

Evaluation

Evaluation is an ongoing process to determine whether or not goals are being achieved. Once a goal has been set, it should be evaluated within the first 30 days and modified if necessary. Remember, the relational team is committed to working together for one year, and you will want to identify progress regularly in order to help the family reach the goal of self-sufficiency within that period of time. If there is no progress, change the goal or the action steps.

This ministry requires personal involvement, so ask the participant family how they think things are going and if they would like to do anything differently. *Celebrate successes*: completing job training, finding employment, living within a budget for two months in a row, children getting good grades in school, children completing all of their chores. These are major milestones to becoming self-sufficient and should be recognized and applauded by the entire team.

APPENDIX FIVE
Providing Structure to the Mentoring Relationship

While just "being a friend" is critical to the effectiveness of any mentoring program, it also is usually inadequate. The mentoring relationship typically feels awkward at first, because it begins between strangers who, at least initially, may be more focused on their dissimilarities than on their similarities. Even as the relationship grows, the mentor may feel uncertain about his or her role if certain minimum expectations are not specified. The mentoring relationship should be a *directed friendship*, and it needs a certain amount of structure in order to flourish. Specifically, there should be in place a means of spiritual discipleship and of socio-economic improvement. The program participant should be on a journey towards "true sufficiency;" in other words, she should be engaged in taking steps to increase her economic self-reliance and her understanding of God's providence and care.

If the mentoring component is part of a larger training program operated by the church's partner agency, then the church itself need not create a lot of structure. For example, in our city the Salvation Army operates a program called "Project Breakthrough." Low-income residents enroll in Project Breakthrough and attend weekly classes at the Salvation Army facility covering such topics as job readiness and family budgeting. The Project Breakthrough staff person enjoys regular contact with the program participants and is available for informal counseling and advice. Churches participate in Project Breakthrough by providing mentor teams. Each team is matched with a program participant, and cheers the participant through the Salvation Army's program. After graduation from Project Breakthrough's classes, the mentor team continues to meet regularly with the participant. It provides tailored assistance according to the action plan the participant, the mentor team, and the Project Breakthrough staff person have designed.

Personal Transformation in the Delta

Denise, a 27-year-old mother of three kids in Mississippi's rural delta, says she used to be a "rowdy street lady" before getting matched, through the Faith and Families program, with a female pastor of a tiny Protestant church. "My life wasn't going too far," Denise admits. "Before I met Pastor Booker, I was just a lady out there that didn't care about nothing. I used to have a nasty attitude. Pastor Booker taught me how to treat people nice. She taught me how to carry myself — because I didn't even know how to dress! I act different now. People see me and they say, 'Denise, is that you?' And I say, 'Yeah, this is the new me.' What I really needed in life was a role model. And I didn't have one until I met Pastor Booker. Now I got a momma. And when I get out of place, she puts me back in my place."

In our church's ministry, called JobKEYS, the Friendship Circles play a similar role to that played by church mentor teams involved with Project Breakthrough. Church staff members operate the "structured" part of the JobKEYS program. This involves a 6-week Biblically-based life skills class (which includes lessons on personal budgeting), an 18- week course in basic word processing, and several job readiness seminars (on such topics as "Balancing Family and Work" and "Effective Interviewing").

Participants in the JobKEYS program are introduced to their Friendship Circle mentors about 4 weeks into the program. The first meeting is held at the facility where the computer classes are taught. Circles and their assigned participants get acquainted for thirty minutes over coffee and doughnuts. Then, on the final day of the life skills course, the Circles and the JobKEYS participants all go out for lunch.

The next week, the JobKEYS participants attend a workshop on "personal strategic planning," where they are encouraged to write down their personal assets and liabilities, as well as brainstorm about their goals and their needs. They also complete a "job needs and preferences" questionnaire that summarizes their career interests, work background, type of job environment they think they would do well in, and desired salary and work schedule. These activities help prepare them for their first "working session" with the Friendship Circle. At that meeting, the participants and Circles flesh out an action plan to guide their work together over the next months.

In our model, the church is providing both the *training* component and the *support* component. Through the JobKEYS course, participants are introduced to Biblical principles concerning work, time and money management, and family and they learn marketable computer skills that enhance their prospects for obtaining jobs paying more than the minimum wage. Through the Friendship Circles, they enjoy the emotional and practical support of new friends who care about and respect them.

Not all churches have the financial and volunteer resources to provide both the training and the support components. These churches do best to partner with some agency (preferably a Christian non-profit) that offers a training program (as in the example above about the Salvation Army's Project Breakthrough). Where no viable options for partnerships exist, the church should creatively consider how to incorporate some sort of "formal" instruction into the mentoring program.

Celebrating Success

"We had already begun to shift towards a more relationally-oriented ministry when we joined Faith and Families. But our experience with Francis [the welfare recipient they were matched with] confirmed that we were going in the right direction. Our congregation has been blessed by Francis' testimony. And my work with her has confirmed to me the power of prayer."

- Associate pastor of a church in Jackson, MS

APPENDIX SIX
Five Characteristics of Fruitful Collaboration Between Churches & Local Governments

Many welfare-to-work mentoring initiatives around the country involve some level of collaboration between the faith community and the government (usually county or state). Such church-state cooperation is not new; many religious organizations have been involved in direct financial relationships with governmental entities or in non-financial partnerships well before the national welfare reforms became law. Prior to the reforms, though, these partnerships were sometimes marked by government-imposed restrictions that hindered the religious character of the faith-based groups' service. To address this problem, Congress included in the national welfare reform law a section called "Charitable Choice."

Charitable Choice provides a sort of "bill of rights" for religious groups or churches that accept governmental funding.

"Charitable Choice" encourages government to cooperate with the faith community in meeting the needs of low-income families. Religious nonprofits and churches can, under the new rules of Charitable Choice, seek public funding to underwrite their social outreach initiatives (such as job training, mentoring, providing transportation, etc.). In the past such public money came with "strings" that made faith groups wary — for example, the regulation that the group could not discriminate on the basis of religion in its hiring practices. Charitable Choice provides a sort of "bill of rights" for religious groups or churches that accept governmental funding. For example, such groups can discriminate on the basis of religion in their hiring, maintain the religious atmosphere of their facilities (continue having religious artwork and symbols in their facilities), control their mission and their Board of Directors without governmental interference, and hold limited audits (i.e., audits that scrutinize only the funds granted for the church's social outreach program, rather than auditing all of the congregation's financial books).

Both Charitable Choice and the general sense emerging from welfare reform that the government cannot, alone, address the crisis of underclass poverty in America have stimulated more interest in public-private partnerships between religious nonprofits/churches and governmental agencies. Church-based welfare-to-work mentoring programs need not involve a collaboration with government (for example, Delaware's "One Church, One Family" does not), but often they will. Consequently, it is helpful for churches to know what characterizes a fruitful partnership.

Three current examples of positive public-private collaboration — Mississippi's "Faith and Families" initiative, Detroit Rescue Mission Ministries' partnership with Michigan's Wayne County Department of Social Services (DSS), and Richmond, Virginia's innovative "Spiritual Family Development" program — designate positive partnership models. These initiatives illuminate five principles, described below, that characterize effective, healthy cooperation between churches/religious nonprofits and governmental agencies.

Ground-Floor-Up Involvement. When both the church and the government are involved in the designing the partnership, both will have a greater comfort with it and sense of ownership of it. In the past, public-private "collaboration" has been marked by what we might call the "delivery system" approach. Under it, the governmental agency presents faith-based groups with a pre-packaged venture that they can either join or ignore. This approach neglects the insights of the churches about what they think will work "on the ground" and what kind of initiative is realistic given the churches' resources.

Richmond's Department of Juvenile Justice understood these realities. When designing a comprehensive outreach to serve families of juvenile delinquents, it sought the input of local pastors from the city's crime-ridden East End. Ministers brainstormed with agency staff and designed their own program component, called Spiritual Family Development, to complement the Department's overall initiative. Through the program, several local churches have "adopted" troubled families, and the churches' involvement has boosted the Juvenile Justice Department's credibility in the neighborhood.

Connected Autonomy. Many churches and faith-based ministries are willing to work with governmental agencies, but don't want *full* responsibility for disadvantaged and dysfunctional families. Religious organizations want assurances that the individuals they serve will also be linked to government-sponsored programs that address needs that the ministries themselves cannot meet. At the same time, churches and faith-based groups want to help poor people without excessive governmental interference that might squelch the spiritual character of their outreach.

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They desire, in short, "connected autonomy." That is, they want to be part of a team that surrounds the needy family—a team on which they play a significant, largely unfettered, and unique role — but a team nonetheless.

Mississippi's Faith and Families program provides this "connected autonomy." Mississippi congregations "adopt" families on welfare who are simultaneously enrolled in the state-mandated JOBS program. Thus, the churches provide participating families one key piece in a larger package of support. Mississippi's Department of Human Services has given churches great latitude in designing their relationships with their adopted families. But the participating family isn't cut adrift from the social services system. This is important both for reassuring churches that they are not alone in helping their adopted family and for providing "leverage."

Churches can encourage and cajole their "adoptees" to take the steps necessary for self-improvement. But clients' participation is totally voluntary. Theoretically, "adoptees" can persistently reject the churches' advice, leaving churches no recourse but to terminate the mentorship. The state government, in contrast, wields more effective and diverse sanctions: it can hold clients accountable by reducing or eliminating benefits. Although Mississippi officials have not yet determined exactly how to keep Faith and Families' clients accountable to their adopting churches, all participating clients are bound by the rules of the JOBS program, and can be disciplined for noncompliance with the expectations of that program.

Sympathetic Respect. For "connected autonomy" to work, governmental bureaucrats and faith-based ministries must adopt the proper attitudes towards one another. Bureaucrats should display sympathetic respect. They should eschew the elitist perspective that only highly educated professionals are equipped to help poor people. And they should acknowledge that lay volunteers can provide crucial emotional support and moral guidance to needy families — things that government, by its nature, cannot offer. The governmental entity must allow religious groups the flexibility and creativity to meet clients' needs — even when ministries rely on strategies remarkably different from those employed by government agencies.

Discerning Teachability. Churches and religious nonprofits, for their part, should respect their governmental partners. The failure of the government's War on Poverty doesn't imply that every DSS caseworker is incompetent. Many staffers have valuable, practical wisdom to offer churches wanting to enhance their community outreach, and the churches should listen. Nonetheless, religious groups must also be discerning, since their presuppositions may differ substantially from those of their secular partners.

Agency personnel may be able, for example, to instruct churches in techniques for helping substance abusers quit drinking and drugging. But as one former addict who had repeatedly relapsed during his time in government-sponsored recovery programs explained, "Those programs generally take addictions from you, but don't place anything within you. I needed a spiritual lifting."[8] Secular specialists who neglect to treat individuals holistically — addressing people's spiritual as well as physical needs — will offer churches incomplete advice.

Moreover, faith-based groups must be alert to the moral relativism of secular state agents. A brief anecdote highlights this problem. While doing research for a book, historian Gertrude Himmelfarb wrote to a federal agency to inquire about the latest statistics on illegitimacy. "I received a letter firmly rebuking me for using that term; the proper term, I was told, is either 'nontraditional child bearing,' or 'alternative modes of parenting'—hence legitimizing illegitimacy."[9] Churches ground their outreach among the poor on certain assumptions about right and wrong, while governmental entities refuse to call sin, sin. Faith-based groups shouldn't forget this fundamental distinction.

Strategic Internal Organization. In their desire to avoid replicating the government's bureaucratic, impersonal approach, churches sometimes err too far on the side of informality. As discussed earlier in this handbook, even ministry that is highly relational in nature requires some level of internal organization and definition. Churches must have a clear idea, for example, of what "adopting" a welfare family means. What are the goals and expectations for the relationship? How often, when, and where should volunteers meet with their adopted family? In Mississippi's Faith and Families program, the churches having the greatest impact in the lives of their adopted families are those that have established structured times for meetings, that assign different volunteers to address different aspects of each family's problems, and that provide friendly support in the context of a "directed relationship" that has defined, time-

[8] Quoted in Dan Coats, "Can Congress Revive Civil Society?" *Policy Review* (January-February 1996): 27.

[9] Gertrude Himmelfarb, "Remoralizing Civil Society," *Policy Review* (January-February 1996): 29.

bound goals. One church which lacked this level of internal organization was burned by a client who abused the congregation's charity; another church frustrated one of its adoptees because the adoptee had no clear idea of what she could, and couldn't, expect from the church.

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