

# Ending Poverty in Community (EPIC): A Toolkit for Young Advocates



**EPIC** is an interactive, interdisciplinary curriculum for youth ministry programs and high school classrooms from the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB). The lessons will introduce participants to the epidemic of poverty in the United States and to the steps they can take to work with the poor in eliminating the root causes of poverty today. The curriculum comprises six lessons with classroom-ready handouts, warm-up exercises and reflection activities that reinforce student learning and inspire a faith response.

The first four lessons provide the foundation. Lesson 1 features a PowerPoint presentation that answers the question, "Who is poor in America today?" In Lesson 2, participants reflect on the causes of poverty and the barriers faced by those who are poor. Lessons 3 and 4 help participants reflect on the epidemic of poverty through the lens of Catholic social teaching.

The curriculum culminates in Lessons 5 and 6 with the Ending Poverty in Community (EPIC) Action Project – a strategy for identifying a local community need and working with the poor to address that need.

Finally, the Appendix provides additional action strategies and templates to help participants educate others about poverty and to advocate with the poor.

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**This packet includes all of the instructions and supplementary handouts that you will need to implement each lesson (except for the PowerPoint presentation for Lesson 1 – see note below). Links are also provided so that you can access the materials online if desired.**

**\*Note: To download Lesson 1 PowerPoint, please follow this link:**

**<http://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/who-we-teach/youth/upload/EPIC-Lesson-1-PowerPoint.ppt>**

**Ending Poverty In Community**  
A Toolkit for Young Advocates

**Lesson 1**  
**Putting a Face on Poverty: Who is Poor in America Today?**

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**Overview**

Using the most current data, 46.2 million Americans live below the poverty line (U.S. Census 2010). That's one out of every seven Americans struggling to meet their basic needs. The numbers are staggering. But behind the numbers are real people who deserve to live and grow in dignity. In this lesson, participants complete a Poverty Quiz, view a multimedia presentation on the nature of poverty in the United States, and reflect on how our faith calls us to help those in need.



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**Objectives**

- Participants reflect on what it means to live in need today by completing the CCHD Poverty Quiz.
- Participants interpret images and statistics that connect real people to the staggering numbers behind poverty.
- Participants listen to a song and respond to reflection prompts that challenge them to consider how our faith demands that we address poverty in our own communities.

**Materials Checklist**

See page 6 for a list of materials required for this lesson.

**Part I: Opening Prayer and Warm-up**

(Estimated Time: 15 minutes)

1. Before the session, cut the [quotations](#), provided on page 7, into strips and place the strips into a bowl. Place the bowl, a lit candle and a Bible opened to Matthew 25:31-46 on a small table in the meeting room. The quotations are from real people around the country reflecting on what it means to be poor in America today. Since the quotations will be used as part of the final reflection, they should remain in the bowl beside the lit candle throughout the session.
2. Ask a volunteer to proclaim the Gospel [Matthew 25: 31-46](#). After the Gospel is proclaimed, ask participants to consider the following questions for large group discussion or silent reflection:
  - *According to the Scripture passage, what is Jesus asking us to do?*
  - *When you hear the word "poor," who or what comes to mind?*
  - *What does it mean to be poor today?*
3. Participants now will have an opportunity to find out how much they know about the state of poverty in America today. Divide participants into groups of three or four. Distribute photocopies of [Participant Handout 1A](#) (page 8) so that everyone has a copy. Ask participants to work together to complete the quiz.

Note: The answers to the quiz are contained in [Leader Handout 1A](#) (page 9) and in the PowerPoint presentation that follows.

## Part II: Activity — PowerPoint Presentation

(Estimated Times: PowerPoint Presentation, 30-35 minutes)

4. Once participants have completed the Poverty Quiz in their small groups, view the PowerPoint Presentation, titled "Who is Poor in America Today?" This presentation provides the correct answers to the quiz as well as additional information about the state of poverty in America. Ask participants to review their answers to the quiz as they view the PowerPoint Presentation.

**The presentation can be found in the Lesson 1 folder of this CD, or online**

 [Click here to download PowerPoint](#)

Note: Facilitators may wish to review the presentation at least once before the class or session to familiarize themselves with the content.

## Part III: Reflection

(Estimated Time: 10 minutes with discussion)

5. Ask participants to silently reflect on whether their understanding of the word "poor" changed after this session. If so, how? Invite seven volunteers to come forward. Ask one volunteer to re-read the following passage from the opening Gospel passage:

*"Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father. Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me, naked and you clothed me, ill and you cared for me, in prison and you visited me... Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me.'"*

Then ask the other six volunteers to pick one of the paper strips from the bowl on the table at the front of the meeting room. Ask them to read the quotation found on their strip to the rest of the class.

6. Distribute [Participant Handout 1B](#) (page 10) so everyone has a copy. Ask participants to reflect on and respond to each answer in silence. If time permits, ask them to share their responses in small groups or with the rest of the large group.

The facilitator may wish to play a contemporary song in the background as participants complete the handout or to use the song as a discussion prompt. Several examples of contemporary songs related to the issue of poverty and our response are included below: "If We are the Body" (Casting Crowns); "Give Me Your Eyes" (Brandon Heath); "Beautiful Stranger" (Rebecca St. James); "Yours" (Steven Curtis Chapman); "Always Enough" (Casting Crowns); "Hold Us Together" (Matt Maher); "Something Beautiful for God" (Bryan Sirchio); "Man in the Mirror" (Michael Jackson); "Dreaming on a World" (Tracy Chapman); "Right On" (Marvin Gaye); "Poor Man's House" (Patty Griffin); "World Poverty" (Hannah Montana); "Mr. Wendal" (Arrested Development); "Another Day In Paradise" (Phil Collins); "Fan the Fire"

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(Earth, Wind & Fire); "God Save Us All" (Lenny Kravitz); "Hands" (Jewel); "How Can a Poor Man Stand Such Times and Live?" (Blind Alfred Reed); "Homeless" (Pennywise).

### **Additional Resources**

See the [additional resources](#) (page 11) for supports to this lesson.

### **Faith in Action Extension Activities**

#### **Activity 1**

Instruct youth to create a public awareness campaign based on the statistics they found most compelling in the Poverty Quiz and PowerPoint Presentation. The campaign may include posters, flyers, banners, etc. that would raise awareness in their school or parish community.

#### **Activity 2**

Each year, the federal government calculates the minimum amount of money required by families to meet basic needs. The resulting calculation is what is commonly referred to as the "**Poverty Line.**" The federal poverty line is set at **\$22,113** for a family of 2 adults and 2 children in the United States. How far does **\$22,113** go in America?

Instruct participants to break into small groups of four and, as a family, "live" on a budget of **\$22,113** a year, or **\$1,843** a month. Participants should research the cost of living in their own community – including housing, utilities, transportation, food, health care, child care and other expenses they need or want to live. Participants can interview adults and use information from newspapers (e.g. classified advertisements on apartment rentals, etc.) and magazines to complete their research. Ask them to prepare a visual display or a report to be presented to the rest of their school and/or parish community. Facilitators may wish to have students view CCHD's Poverty Tour (found on this CD) after completing the activity.

**Lesson 1: Putting a Face on Poverty**  
**Materials Checklist**

**Opening Prayer/Warm-up**

- A Bible opened to [Matthew 25:31-46](#)
- Quotes (cut into strips) from the Quotations Sheet
- Bowl
- Candle and matches
- A small table
- Copies of Participant Handout 1A, one per participant

**Activity – PowerPoint Presentation**

- Computer (for running PowerPoint presentation).
- LCD Projector connected to computer (for showing PowerPoint presentation)
- PowerPoint Presentation
- Facilitator Handout 1A

**Reflection**

- Copies of Participant Handout 1B, one per participant
- CD player
- Song of choice and lyrics (Note: Songs and lyrics are not available with this curriculum. See the Facilitator Instructions Page for suggested songs.)

**Lesson 1: Putting a Face on Poverty**  
**Opening Prayer Quotations**

Directions: Cut out the following quotations and place in a bowl. Ask volunteers to take a quotation out of the bowl and read it to the group. Each quotation is from a real person who is responding to the question: What does it mean to be poor in America today?

*"You are voiceless and somewhat powerless to change your situation because you are too busy trying to survive to make the changes you need to improve your situation."*

- Female, 40, Washington, household of one, income less than \$10,294

*"I'm a senior, disabled, all alone, no money, sit in front of T.V. all day - why? Too poor to socialize. Poverty is like being in prison. Why even try to stay alive? For what?"*

- Female, 62, Oregon, household of one, income less than \$10,294

*"Struggling to pay bills, constant disconnection notices, not having money to wash and purchase clothing to work in because bills and household needs have to come first. Listening to your children say they are hungry, but not knowing what you are going to be able to give them before your food stamps come."*

- Female, 32, Missouri, household of five, income of less than \$10,294

*"Feeling like you always owe everyone either an apology or an explanation or both."*

- Female, 52, Kansas, household of four, income of less than \$10,294

*"Not having enough money to have a nice Christmas. Not being able to have nice things for birthdays."*

- Female, 23, Michigan, household of one, income of less than \$10,294

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Lesson 1: Putting a Face on Poverty**  
**Participant Handout 1A**  
**Poverty Quiz**

Directions: Answer the following questions by circling the correct response.

1. TRUE or FALSE: If all the poor in the United States lived in the same state, it would be the largest state in the nation – the state of “Poverty, USA.”
2. TRUE or FALSE: The number of people living in poverty in the United States decreased from 2009 to 2010.
3. TRUE or FALSE: Most Americans could get out of poverty if they only had a job.
4. TRUE or FALSE: One of every five children in America lives in poverty.
5. TRUE or FALSE: Adults who have regular work, but remain poor – the “working poor” in America – are growing even poorer.
6. TRUE or FALSE: The government says that a family of four is poor if it earns at least \$25,000 annually.
7. TRUE or FALSE: The federal minimum wage is now \$7.25 per hour.
8. TRUE or FALSE: In a 36 month period almost one out of every three Americans lives in poverty at least two months.
9. TRUE or FALSE: The majority of people living in poverty are white.
10. TRUE or FALSE: While the number of people in poverty is increasing, the number of people in extreme poverty is decreasing.
11. TRUE or FALSE: Children of single mothers are more likely to experience poverty than the children of married-couple families.
12. TRUE or FALSE: More than one quarter of people in households with annual incomes of less than \$25,000 had no health insurance in 2010.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Lesson 1: Putting a Face on Poverty**  
**Leader Handout 1A**  
**Poverty Quiz- Answers**

Directions: Answer the following questions by circling the correct response.

1. **TRUE** or FALSE: If all the poor in the United States lived in the same state, it would be the largest state in the nation – the state of “Poverty, USA.”
2. TRUE or **FALSE**: The number of people living in poverty in the United States decreased from 2009 to 2010.
3. TRUE or **FALSE**: Most Americans could get out of poverty if they only had a job.
4. **TRUE** or FALSE: One of every five children in America lives in poverty.
5. **TRUE** or FALSE: Adults who have regular work, but remain poor – the “working poor” in America – are growing even poorer.
6. TRUE or **FALSE**: The government says that a family of four is poor if it earns \$25,000 annually.
7. **TRUE** or FALSE: The federal minimum wage is now \$7.25 per hour.
8. **TRUE** or FALSE: In a 36 month period almost one out of every three Americans lives in poverty at least two months.
9. **TRUE** or FALSE: The majority of people living in poverty are white.
10. TRUE or **FALSE**: While the number of people in poverty is increasing, the number of people in extreme poverty is decreasing.
11. **TRUE** or FALSE: Children of single mothers are more likely to experience poverty than the children of married-couple families.
12. **TRUE** or FALSE: More than one quarter of people in households with annual incomes of less than \$25,000 had no health insurance in 2010.



**Lesson 1: Putting a Face on Poverty**  
**Additional Resources**

- Catholic Campaign for Human Development: The State of Poverty in America  
[www.facebook.com/#!/povertyusa](http://www.facebook.com/#!/povertyusa)  
Join us on Facebook in the fight against poverty.
- United States Census Bureau  
[www.census.gov/hhes/www/poverty/about/overview/index.html](http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/poverty/about/overview/index.html)  
This is a quick overview of the most recent poverty statistics in the United States. This site also contains the most current poverty facts, descriptions of how poverty is measured and statistical and historical tables.
- Department of Justice, Peace and Human Development  
[www.usccb.org/about/justice-peace-and-human-development/](http://www.usccb.org/about/justice-peace-and-human-development/)  
The Department of Justice, Peace and Human Development (JPHD) works on behalf of the United States Catholic Bishops to share and apply Catholic social teaching on domestic and international issues.

**Ending Poverty In Community**  
A Toolkit for Young Advocates

**Lesson 2**  
**The Causes of Poverty**

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**Overview**

In the world's richest nation, why does poverty continue to exist? In this activity, participants are challenged to move beyond stereotypes of why people are poor to consider the root causes of poverty. Participants work in groups to build a "wall of poverty" with bricks representing the structural barriers that prevent the poor from realizing their full human potential. They then reflect on ways they can work with the poor to help break down those social structures.



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**Objectives**

- Participants review the extent of poverty in the United States by analyzing the CCHD Poverty Map and correlated Top Ten lists.
- Participants move beyond stereotypes to consider the root causes of poverty by building a "wall of poverty" representing the structural barriers that allow poverty to persist in the world's richest nation.
- Participants reflect on prophetic voices and create a personal response to help break down the wall of poverty in their own community.

**Materials Checklist:**

See page 16 for a list of materials required for this lesson.

**Part I: Opening Prayer and Warm-up**

(Estimated Time: 15 minutes)

1. Before the class or session, ask participants to bring a can of food to the meeting as a symbol of one way that our faith calls on us to respond. Have the participants deposit the collected food on a table next to an open Bible and a lit candle.
2. Ask a volunteer to proclaim the Scripture passage from [Isaiah 58: 6-11](#). After the reading, ask participants to consider the following questions for large group discussion or silent reflection:
  - *According to the prophet Isaiah, what is God calling us to do?*
  - *Why do you think that hunger and homelessness continue to exist today?*
3. Handout the resource Poverty Rates by State, found on page 17, for participants to look over and reflect.

As participants view the lists, offer the following questions for reflection:

- *What is the rate of poverty in my state?*
- *How does my faith call me to respond to people living in poverty in my state? In my local community?*

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## Part II: Activity – The Wall of Poverty

(Estimated Times: 30 minutes)

In this activity, participants are challenged to move beyond stereotypes of why people are poor to consider the existence of structural barriers that perpetuate poverty. The barriers that exist throughout society are often beyond the control of an individual person.

In 1964, President Lyndon B. Johnson delivered a speech that initiated what he called the “*War on Poverty*.” This speech identified some of the structural barriers that he believed perpetuated poverty in the United States. The facilitator can distribute a copy of [President Johnson’s speech](#) (page 18) and have participants read it. Alternatively, the facilitator can copy the following paragraph from the speech onto the chalkboard or dry erase board and then read it aloud:

*“The young man or woman who grows up without a decent education, in a broken home, in a hostile and squalid environment, in ill health or in the face of racial injustice – that young man or woman is often trapped in a life of poverty. He does not have the skills demanded by a complex society. He does not know how to acquire those skills. He faces a mounting sense of despair which drains initiative and ambition and energy...”*

Ask participants which of these structural barriers identified by President Johnson continue to exist today. Many of these barriers continue to create a wall that keeps millions of Americans in a state of poverty and unable to realize their full human potential.

Divide participants into small groups based on the barriers identified by President Johnson. Distribute the correlated handouts below so that each member of a group receives an appropriate copy. The handouts provide basic information regarding the various causes of poverty and the challenges people face in attempting to break through the wall.

If there are a large number of participants, create multiple groups for each topic. Assign at least one group to each of the various causes.

Group A: Education and Poverty ([Participant Handout 2A](#) on page 19)

Group B: Family Environment ([Participant Handout 2B](#) on page 20)

Group C: Business Cycle ([Participant Handout 2C](#) on page 21)

Group D: Disabilities and Mental Health ([Participant Handout 2D](#) on page 22)

Group E: Racial Injustice ([Participant Handout 2E](#) on page 23)

Provide each group with a large piece of butcher paper, magazines, scissors, glue, and a variety of colored markers. Ask the members of each group to complete the following tasks:

- Write their assigned “structural barrier” in large print on their piece of butcher paper.
- Make their piece of butcher paper look like a “brick” or a “stone.”
- Use pictures, symbols and drawings to illustrate what their barrier means.
- Use pictures, symbols and drawings to illustrate how their structural barrier affects people living in poverty.

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After participants have had time to create their “brick,” ask a representative from each group to present their structural barrier to the larger group and then post their brick to create a wall. Each group should have a chance to add its “brick” to the wall.

After all the groups have presented and posted their “brick,” they will have created a wall of poverty. Combined, this structure represents the barriers that prevent a significant number of Americans from breaking through to a life more consistent with human dignity.

### **Part III: Reflection**

(Estimated Time: 15 minutes)

At the beginning of this session, participants donated a can of food to represent a concrete action that addresses poverty. Ask participants the following question: “How did the canned food donation address the cause of poverty that you explored in this activity?”

Supplying a can of food is important but doesn’t resolve the deeper causes of poverty. What can be done beyond our routine actions to address some of these causes – to help take down the “bricks” in the wall of poverty?

#### **Reflection 1**

Distribute [Participant Handout 2F](#) (page 24) so each participant has one copy. Invite five volunteers to read the quotations printed on the reflection handout to the group. Give participants time to individually reflect on each of the quotations and to consider how their faith calls them to respond to these prophetic voices.

Invite participants to share their reflections with their small group. Ask participants to tape their reflections around the “wall of poverty” – creating a border that addresses the causes and prevents the wall from expanding.

#### **Reflection 2**

Now have students move back into small groups and reflect on the following questions:

1. Now that you have learned about some of the root causes of poverty, has your perspective changed about what you think makes people poor in the United States?
2. Can a hardworking individual overcome poverty on their own or are structural changes needed? If the latter, what kind of changes?
3. What outside obstacles might someone who is trying to overcome poverty face?
4. Who is responsible for bringing about such changes?

### **Additional Resources**

[Additional resources](#) that will support this lesson can be found on page 26.

### **Faith in Action Extension Activities**

#### **Activity 1**

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Display the “wall of poverty” and the ideas for tearing down the bricks in a public place (e.g. parish hall, outside the Church, school cafeteria, main office) to help educate the community about the structural barriers that perpetuate poverty in America.

**Activity 2**

Ask participants to determine which barriers may exist in their own community. Identify steps that can be taken to address them and post them next to the “wall of poverty.”

**Activity 3**

Invite a news reporter to the next class or session, or have participants write a letter to the newspaper presenting the “wall of poverty.”

## **Lesson 2: The Causes of Poverty**

### **Materials Checklist**

#### **Opening Prayer/Warm-up**

- Ask participants to bring canned food items to this session as a symbol of one way our faith calls us to respond to the needs of the poor. You may choose to place the food in a basket.
- A small table
- A Bible opened to [Isaiah 58:6-11](#)
- Candle and matches
- Distribute handout on Poverty Rates by State, one per participant

#### **Activity – The Wall of Poverty**

- Copies of President Johnson's *War on Poverty Speech*, one per participant
- Distribute Handouts 2A, 2B, 2C, 2D, and 2E so each participant has a copy of the appropriate handout for his/her group.
- Large piece of butcher paper per group
- Magazines (that may be cut and used for pictures)
- Scissors and glue, at least one set per group
- Variety of colored markers, enough for each group
- Tape (appropriate to affix butcher paper to a wall)

#### **Reflection**

- Copies of Handout 2F: Reflection, 1 per participant

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

### Poverty Rate by State

	Population	Poverty Status in 2010	
		In Poverty	Poverty Rate
<b>Totals</b>	305,687,691	46,179,687	15.10%
<b>AL</b>	4,671,707	808,132	17.30%
<b>AK</b>	692,025	86,076	12.40%
<b>AZ</b>	6,688,617	1,240,791	18.60%
<b>AR</b>	2,878,397	444,934	15.50%
<b>CA</b>	37,168,400	6,076,654	16.30%
<b>CO</b>	5,045,631	617,034	12.20%
<b>CT</b>	3,492,344	291,589	8.30%
<b>DE</b>	880,350	106,440	12.10%
<b>DC</b>	607,716	121,152	19.90%
<b>FL</b>	18,514,273	2,961,915	16.00%
<b>GA</b>	9,823,090	1,836,363	18.70%
<b>HI</b>	1,252,500	152,139	12.10%
<b>ID</b>	1,529,089	213,651	14.00%
<b>IL</b>	12,891,850	1,816,897	14.10%
<b>IN</b>	6,340,624	1,034,899	16.30%
<b>IA</b>	2,955,254	305,191	10.30%
<b>KS</b>	2,753,542	393,657	14.30%
<b>KY</b>	4,276,230	757,832	17.70%
<b>LA</b>	4,431,556	958,049	21.60%
<b>ME</b>	1,282,135	160,901	12.50%
<b>MD</b>	5,723,928	620,107	10.80%
<b>MA</b>	6,605,365	702,375	10.60%
<b>MI</b>	9,759,725	1,511,391	15.50%
<b>MN</b>	5,182,499	543,947	10.50%
<b>MS</b>	2,920,945	663,943	22.70%
<b>MO</b>	5,966,629	885,034	14.80%
<b>MT</b>	968,946	135,619	14.00%
<b>NE</b>	1,786,855	181,699	10.20%
<b>NV</b>	2,637,678	431,948	16.40%
<b>NH</b>	1,298,643	85,304	6.60%

<b>NJ</b>	8,662,516	930,646	10.70%
<b>NM</b>	2,014,025	375,574	18.60%
<b>NY</b>	19,268,666	3,085,807	16.00%
<b>NC</b>	9,224,973	1,609,035	17.40%
<b>ND</b>	632,969	77,380	12.20%
<b>OH</b>	11,332,319	1,738,733	15.30%
<b>OK</b>	3,667,824	597,333	16.30%
<b>OR</b>	3,759,910	534,977	14.20%
<b>PA</b>	12,440,052	1,520,903	12.20%
<b>RI</b>	1,046,753	141,861	13.60%
<b>SC</b>	4,520,975	767,169	17.00%
<b>SD</b>	804,723	106,191	13.20%
<b>TN</b>	6,302,173	1,049,529	16.70%
<b>TX</b>	25,129,220	4,634,694	18.40%
<b>UT</b>	2,827,593	283,401	10.00%
<b>VT</b>	621,143	67,185	10.80%
<b>VA</b>	7,763,552	831,726	10.70%
<b>WA</b>	6,708,174	774,011	11.50%
<b>WV</b>	1,800,298	303,856	16.90%
<b>WI</b>	5,598,710	552,862	9.90%
<b>WY</b>	534,582	51,149	9.60%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Current Population Survey, Annual  
Social and Economic Supplement, 2011

**Lesson 2: The Causes of Poverty**  
**President Lyndon B. Johnson**  
***War on Poverty Speech, 1964***

We are citizens of the richest and most fortunate nation in the history of the world...[W]e have never lost sight of our goal: an America in which every citizen shares all the opportunities of his society, in which every man has a chance to advance his welfare to the limit of his capacities. We have come a long way toward this goal. We still have a long way to go.

The distance which remains is the measure of the great unfinished work of our society. To finish that work I have called for a national war on poverty. Our objective: total victory.

There are millions of Americans – one fifth of our people – who have not shared in the abundance which has been granted to most of us, and on whom the gates of opportunity have been closed.

What does this poverty mean to those who endure it? It means a daily struggle to secure the necessities for ever a meager existence. It means that the abundance, the comforts, the opportunities they see all around them are beyond their grasp. Worst of all, it means hopelessness for the young.

The young man or woman who grows up without a decent education, in a broken home, in a hostile and squalid environment, in ill health or in the face of racial injustice--that young man or woman is often trapped in a life of poverty. He does not have the skills demanded by a complex society. He does not know how to acquire those skills. He faces a mounting sense of despair which drains initiative and ambition and energy...

[W]e must also strike down all the barriers which keep many from using those exits. The war on poverty is not a struggle simply to support people, to make them dependent on the generosity of others. It is a struggle to give people a chance. It is an effort to allow them to develop and use their capacities, as we have been allowed to develop and use ours, so that they can share, as others share, in the promise of this nation.

We do this, first of all, because it is right that we should...We do it also because helping some will increase the prosperity of all. Our fight against poverty will be an investment in the most valuable of our resources--the skills and strength of our people...It strikes at the causes, not just the consequences of poverty.

From *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States*, Lyndon B. Johnson, 1965 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1966).

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Handout 2A: Education and Poverty**

Directions: Review the following material. On a piece of butcher paper, use pictures, symbols, drawings and the information presented on this handout to illustrate the link between education and poverty.

<b>United States Education</b>	<b>Estimate of Median Income</b>	<b>Poverty Rate</b>
Less than high school graduate	\$18,413	26.7%
High school graduate (includes equivalency)	\$26,349	13.5%
Some college or associates degree	\$31,928	9.8%
Bachelor's degree	\$47,422	4.2%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Data Set: 2010 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates, S1501 and U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics News Release: College Enrollment and Work Activity of 2010 High School Graduates, 8 April 2011.

The more education a person has, the less likely he or she will live in poverty. The poverty rate among people who earn a college degree is much lower than the poverty rate among people with only a high school diploma. Those who earn a high school diploma do much better than those without one. Almost 43% of high school drop outs are now jobless. People who leave high school without a diploma typically do not have the skills they need to earn above the minimum wage.

A lack of education can result from bad individual choices. However, there are a multitude of factors that still stand in the way of ensuring that all Americans have access to a good education. Studies show that high-poverty schools have fewer teachers qualified in their subject areas, larger class sizes, and rank among the worst funded in the nation. Also, students who attend them tend to move a lot – often because their parents are moving from job to job. High school-age students often feel pressure to help support their families by taking jobs, leaving little time to keep up with school work and earn a diploma.

It's not just what kids are learning in school that matters. What goes on at home also matters. Students who live in poverty are less likely to attend preschool, less likely to read at home and learn basic skills, and they often enter the educational system behind other students. Living in poverty means it's difficult to catch up.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

### **Handout 2B: Family Environment and Poverty**

Directions: Review the following material. On a piece of butcher paper, use pictures, symbols, drawings and the information presented on this handout to describe the link between single-parent families and poverty.

#### Child Poverty by Family Type

Estimate	
Total number of families	78.6 million
Number of families below poverty line	9.2 million
Female Householder (no husband present) below poverty line	4.7 million families
Male Householder (no wife present) below poverty line	880,000 families

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Income, Poverty, and Health Insurance Coverage in the United States: 2010.

More than one in every five children in the United States lives in poverty. Studies show that one major factor in predicting child poverty is family composition. Less than 8.8% of married-couple families live in poverty, while 40.7% households headed by single mothers are below the poverty line, and 24.2% of households headed by single fathers are in poverty.

When couples do separate, children are more likely to live with their mother. On average, women’s earnings tend to lag behind men – sometimes because women stop working to have children and start at a lower wage rate when they return to the workforce. Many single moms work, but their jobs pay so little that many of them remain eligible for public assistance. The most common jobs held by women with children who receive welfare assistance include maid, waitress, cashier and childcare worker.

According to the 2010 Current Population Survey by the U.S. Census Bureau, 37.8% of white families with children headed by a female with no husband are poor. Among African American families that same figure jumps to 47.6% and it reaches 50.3% among Hispanic families.

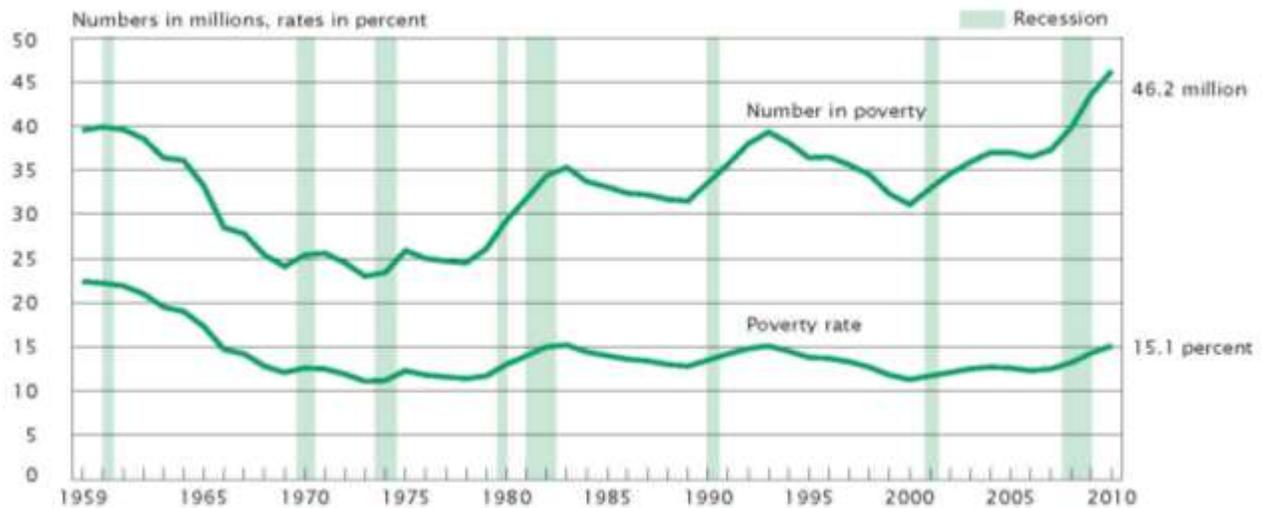
Regardless of race, children in single-parent households are almost four times as likely to live in poverty as those in married couple households. This is one reason why the Church encourages faithful, committed, married life both before and after starting a family.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

### Handout 2C: Business Cycle and Poverty

Directions: Review the following material. On a separate piece of butcher paper, use pictures, symbols, drawings and the information presented on this handout to describe how the business cycle is connected to poverty.

Figure 4.  
**Number in Poverty and Poverty Rate: 1959 to 2010**



Note: The data points are placed at the midpoints of the respective years. For information on recessions, see Appendix A.  
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, 1960 to 2011 Annual Social and Economic Supplements.

The number of people who experience poverty in the United States tends to increase or decrease with the economic cycle. If the economy is doing well, fewer people live in poverty. If the economy is doing poorly, more people tend to fall below the poverty line. This relationship appears to be true regardless of a person's race or where they live in the country.

When the country is in a recession (the vertical green lines on the graph above), the working poor and the unemployed are the most affected. A recession is a period of general economic decline. During a recession people often buy less. When people buy less, they reduce the demand for products. This means fewer people are needed to provide these products. Those who work full time and earn a minimum wage often don't make enough to lift themselves out of poverty. During a recession, these men and women are the most likely to lose their jobs as companies lay off employees and look for other ways to cut their expenses.

The result is that the families who live on the edge of poverty often cross over the line when the economy does poorly.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Handout 2D: Disabilities, Mental Health and Poverty

Directions: Review the following material. On a separate piece of butcher paper, use pictures, symbols, drawings and the information presented on this handout to describe how mental health and/or disabilities are connected to poverty.

United States	Estimate in millions	Estimate percentage
<b>Total Population 18 to 64 years:</b>	191.1	--
<b>With any disability:</b>	19.0	--
<b>Unemployed or not in labor force</b>	12.7	66.7%
<b>No disability:</b>	172.1	--
<b>Unemployed or not in labor force</b>	46.7	27.1%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Data Set: 2010 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates, C18120 and Income, Poverty, and Health Insurance Coverage: 2010 Consumer Report.

People who suffer from disabilities or mental disorders may be unable to work or may have difficulty finding employment. Two in three people with a disability are either unemployed or not in the labor force. People with disabilities may rely upon family members or public assistance. When the disabled can find work, it is often part time – leaving these people at high risk of living below the poverty line. 27.9% of working age (18-64) persons with a disability live below the poverty line, in contrast with 12.5% of persons in the same age group who do not have a disability.

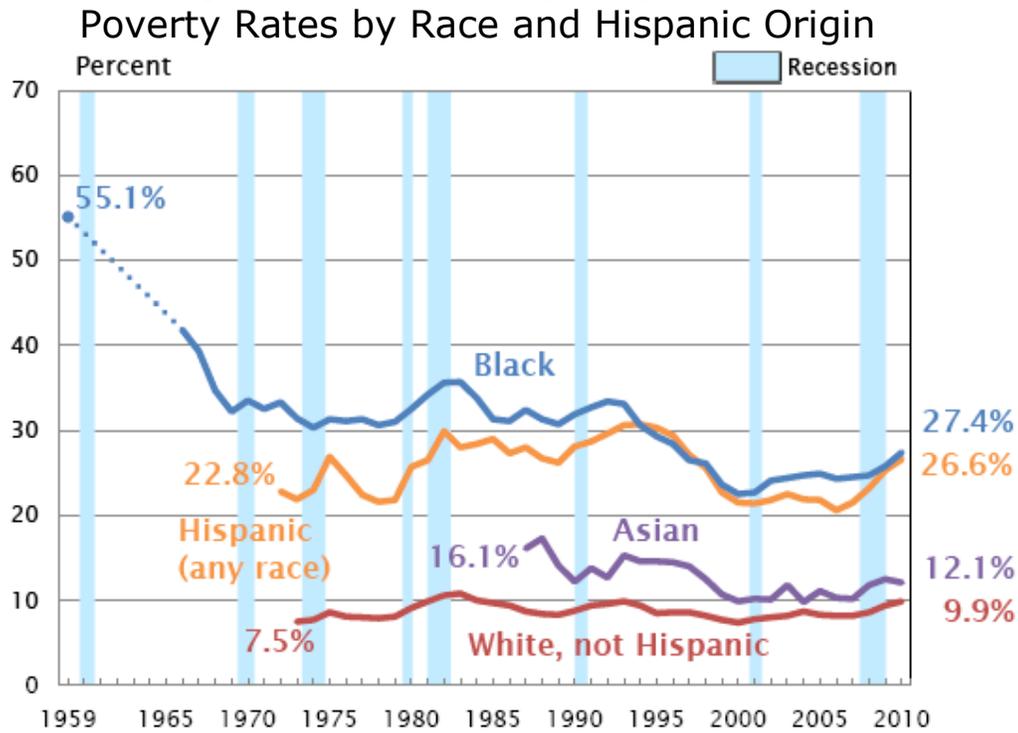
Mental and physical disabilities appear in families across social and ethnic lines. Children who live in poverty, however, suffer the highest risk of physical and mental disability. Poor nutrition can result in physical and developmental disabilities.

Addictions can increase a family's chance of living in poverty. Studies also show that abusive behavior is sometimes linked to the increased stress and isolation that accompanies poverty. Abuse or neglect by a primary caregiver or separation from a primary caregiver can lead to mental health problems and may make it harder for children to break the cycle from one generation to another.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

### Handout 2E: Racial Injustice and Poverty

Directions: Review the following material. On a separate piece of butcher paper, use pictures, symbols, drawings and the information presented on this handout to describe how racial injustice is connected to poverty.



Source: US Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, 1960 to 2011 Annual and Social Economic Supplements.

The majority of people living in poverty today are non-Hispanic white persons – over 19.6 million Americans. These men, women and children make up 9.9% of the total white population.

By comparison, minority groups are three times as likely to live in poverty. For instance, the poverty rate among African Americans was 27.4% in 2010. That’s more than one out of every four African Americans living in poverty. For Hispanics, the poverty rate was 26.6% in 2010. For Asian Americans, the poverty rate was 12.1%.

While poverty affects people across racial lines, a disproportionate percentage of those in poverty are people of color. Segregation, discrimination and other racial injustices that continue to exist may help to explain why this is true.

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Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

### **Handout 2F: Reflection**

Directions: Reflect on the quotations below. On the back of this handout, write a portion of a quotation that you find particularly meaningful. How is God calling you to help tear down the "wall of poverty?"

"This, rather, is the fasting that I wish:  
releasing those bound unjustly,  
untying the thongs of the yoke;  
Setting free the oppressed,  
breaking every yoke;  
Sharing your bread with the hungry,  
sheltering the oppressed and the homeless;  
Clothing the naked when you see them,  
and not turning your back on your own."

--Isaiah 58:6-7

"I know that you as young people have great aspirations, that you want to pledge yourselves to build a better world. Let others see this, let the world see it."

- Pope Benedict XVI, Homily at World Youth Day, 2005

"The direct duty to work for a just ordering of society . . . is proper to the lay faithful. As citizens of the State, they are called to take part in public life in a personal capacity. . . The mission of the lay faithful is therefore to configure social life correctly."

-- Pope Benedict XVI, *God is Love*, 2005, no. 29

"A society of genuine solidarity can be built only if...we consider it an honor to be able to devote our care and attention to the needs of our brothers and sisters in difficulty.... Those living in poverty can wait no longer. They need help now...."

-- Pope John Paul II, *Message for World Day of Peace*, January 1, 1998, no. 8

“Men and women who are made ‘new’ by the love of God are able to change the rules and the quality of relationships, transforming even social structures. They are people capable of bringing peace where there is conflict, of building and nurturing fraternal relationships where there is hatred, of seeking justice where there prevails the exploitation of man by man.”

-- *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, 2004, par. 4

“The responsibility for alleviating the plight of the poor falls upon all members of society. As individuals, all citizens have a duty to assist the poor through acts of charity and personal commitment. But private charity and voluntary action are not sufficient. We also carry out our moral responsibility to assist and empower the poor by working collectively through government to establish just and effective public policies.”

-- United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Economic Justice for All: Catholic Social Teaching and the U.S. Economy*, 1986, no. 189

“What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him?

If a brother or sister has nothing to wear and has no food for the day, and one of you says to them, “Go in peace, keep warm, and eat well,” but you do not give them the necessities of the body, what good is it?

So also faith of itself, if it does not have works, is dead.”

--James 2:14-17

“As Catholics, we must come together with a common conviction that we can no longer tolerate the moral scandal of poverty in our land and so much hunger and deprivation in our world. As believers, we can debate how best to overcome these realities, but we must be united in our determination to do so. Our faith teaches us that poor people are not issues or problems but sisters and brothers in God's one human family.”

-- United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *A Place at the Table*, 2002

“The equal dignity of persons demands that a more humane and just condition of life be brought about. For excessive economic and social differences between the members of the one human family or population groups cause scandal, and militate against social justice, equity, the dignity of the human person, as well as social and international peace.”

-- The Second Vatican Council, *The Church in the Modern World*, 1965, no. 29

## Lesson 2: The Causes of Poverty Additional Resources

- *A Place at the Table: A Catholic Recommitment to Overcome Poverty and to Respect the Dignity of All God's Children*, A Pastoral Reflection of the U.S. Catholic Bishops, 2002.  
[www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/human-life-and-dignity/poverty/place-at-the-table.cfm](http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/human-life-and-dignity/poverty/place-at-the-table.cfm)

*Section IV: Analysis* offers a brief reflection on some of the structural causes of poverty. *Section VI: Direction* describes the four legs of the table referenced in this lesson.

- United States Census Bureau, *Annual Demographic Survey, Poverty Tables*  
[www.census.gov/cps/](http://www.census.gov/cps/)
- United States Census Bureau, *Earnings, Income, and Poverty Data from the 2010 American Community Survey*.  
[www.census.gov/prod/2011pubs/p60-239.pdf](http://www.census.gov/prod/2011pubs/p60-239.pdf)

The above two resources are for those who wish to pursue a sophisticated analysis of poverty rates throughout the U.S. They are the sources for current statistics and tables on poverty rates for various sub-populations.

- Department of Justice, Peace and Human Development  
[www.usccb.org/about/justice-peace-and-human-development/](http://www.usccb.org/about/justice-peace-and-human-development/)

The Department of Justice, Peace and Human Development works on behalf of the United States Catholic Bishops to *share* and *apply* Catholic social teaching on domestic and international issues. Domestic Social Development works to address many issues related to the root causes of poverty.

**Ending Poverty In Community**  
A Toolkit for Young Advocates

**Lesson 3**

***A Place at the Table: Who is Responsible for Addressing Poverty?***

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**Overview**

In this activity, participants will read a portion of the United States Catholic bishops' pastoral reflection titled *A Place at the Table*. This reflection uses the metaphor of a table. Each leg of the table represents a unique social institution: 1) families and individuals; 2) community and religious institutions; 3) private sector and business; and 4) the government. This activity will help participants understand how their faith calls upon various institutions to act collectively to address poverty in the United States and throughout the world.



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**Objectives**

- To identify ways that our faith calls upon various social institutions to address poverty both in the United States and throughout the world.
- To assess how our faith calls upon each individual to respond to the needs of the poor.

**Materials Checklist:**

See page 30 for a list of materials required for this lesson.

**Part I: Opening Prayer and Warm-up**

(Estimated Time: 15 minutes)

1. Set up one table in the middle of the meeting room with snacks and treats. Have an open Bible and lit candles displayed on the same table. Hand participants a slip of paper as they walk into the room. The slip of paper will signify where they will sit – some will be assigned to chairs seated around the table while others will be instructed to stand against the wall – away from the table.

2. Invite participants at the table to eat the snacks. After a few minutes have passed, ask those at the table to decide who at the table will read the opening prayer – the Scripture passage from [1 Corinthians 12:12 -27](#) (One Body, Many Parts).

After the reading, ask participants to consider the following questions.

*Note: To continue the "table exercise," only call on those seated at the table or ask those seated at the table to respond before anyone else.*

- *What does it mean to be part of the Body of Christ?*
- *What did it feel like for participants at the table to eat when others are standing around watching you?*

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- For participants standing against the wall, what did it feel like to be left out?
- How can we respond to the Scripture reading and help make a place for everyone at the table?

## **Part II: Activity – A Place at the Table**

(Estimated Times: 35 minutes)

In this activity, participants reflect on the pastoral reflection of the United States Catholic bishops titled, *A Place at the Table: A Catholic Recommitment to Overcome Poverty and to Respect the Dignity of All God’s Children*.

### **Overview**

Explain to participants that they will review a pastoral reflection about poverty written by the Catholic bishops of the United States. In this reflection, the bishops reaffirm the Church’s commitment to serve the poor and use the metaphor of a table to describe how the faithful should address poverty both in the United States and throughout the world. Each “leg” on the table represents a distinct social group that shares responsibility for meeting the needs of the poor: 1) families and individuals; 2) community and religious institutions; 3) private sector/business; and 4) government. If one leg on the table is missing, the table falters.

As the bishops note, the metaphor of a table reminds us that:

- “A table is where people come together for food. For many, there is not enough food and, in some cases, no table at all.”
- “A table is where people meet to make decisions – in neighborhoods, nations, and the global community. Many people have no place at the table. Their voices and needs are ignored or dismissed.”
- “When we gather as Catholics to worship, we gather around a table to celebrate the Eucharist. . . . As the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* insists, ‘The Eucharist commits us to the poor. To receive in truth the Body and Blood of Christ given up for us, we must recognize Christ in the poorest’ (no. 1397).”
- “In our world and nation, many of our sisters and brothers live in poverty. The causes are complex, but the results are clear. They cannot find decent work, feed their families, educate their children, secure health care, or find adequate housing. Millions of children live in nations with too much debt and not enough development, in societies with deadly diseases and inadequate health care, in lands where conflict and corruption leave people without a place at the table. Millions of families cannot live in dignity because they lack the conditions worthy of human life.” In this activity, participants will read a portion of the United States Catholic bishops’ pastoral reflection titled *A Place at the Table*. This reflection uses the metaphor of a table. Each leg of the table represents a unique social institution: 1) families and individuals; 2) community and religious institutions; 3) private sector and business; and 4) the government. This activity will help participants understand how their faith calls upon various institutions to act collectively to address poverty in the United States and throughout the world.

### **Directions**

Divide participants into four groups – one group for each of the four legs of the table. Distribute the following handouts, one for each participant in each respective group:

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- Group A:** Families and Individuals ([Participant Handout 3A](#) on page 31)  
**Group B:** Community and Religious Institutions ([Participant Handout 3B](#) on page 32)  
**Group C:** Private Sector/Business ([Participant Handout 3C](#) on page 33)  
**Group D:** Government ([Participant Handout 3D](#) on page 34)

Provide each group with a piece of butcher paper or poster board. Ask participants in each group to accomplish the following two tasks:

1. Summarize the passage. Describe their “leg” on the table; and
2. Identify ways that their “leg” can address poverty both in the United States and throughout the world.

Ask a representative from each group to present his or her group’s summaries and recommendations. After their presentation to the large group, ask the representative to tape the group’s butcher paper or poster board to one side of the table that was used in the opening activity.

*Note: Allow all participants in the room to share the remaining snacks while they work. The facilitator may bring out additional snacks to ensure that there is enough to go around. If the size of the group is large, the facilitator should divide participants into multiple groups for each “leg” of the table.*

### **Part III: Reflection**

(Estimated Time: 10 minutes)

In the activity, participants reflected on the United States bishops’ pastoral reflection entitled *A Place at the Table*. After all the groups have presented their summaries and recommendations, ask them to reflect on the metaphor of the table. Ask a volunteer – preferably someone not seated at the original table in the opening activity – to read [1 John 3:17-18](#). Ask participants to reflect on the following questions either individually or with their small groups.

*Note: Distribute [Participant Handout 3E](#) (page 35) if you would like participants to have a copy of the following questions.*

- *What happens to a table if one “leg” is missing?*
- *How does my faith call upon me to respond to the needs of the poor in my community? In the United States? Throughout the world?*

### **Additional Resources**

Additional resources that will support this lesson can be found on page 36.

### **Faith in Action Extension Activity**

Ask participants to create an advertisement, bulletin announcement, video or audio public service announcement, banner, checklist, etc. that highlights how various legs of the table can respond to poverty in the United States and beyond and how their parish or school community can help support one or more of these legs.

**Lesson 3: A Place at the Table**  
**Materials Checklist**

**Opening Prayer/Warm-up**

- A table and chairs where 6-8 participants can be seated
- A Bible opened to [1 Corinthians 12: 12-27](#)
- Candle and matches
- Snacks or treats for participants seated at the table

**Activity – A Place at the Table**

- Butcher paper or poster boards – one per group
- Handouts 3A – 3D, one per participant in each respective group
- Variety of colored markers, enough for each group
- Tape to affix butcher paper to the table
- Snacks and treats for all participants in the room

**Reflection**

- A Bible open to [1John 3:17-18](#)

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Lesson 3: A Place at the Table**  
**Participant Handout 3A**  
**Families and Individuals**

Directions: Read the following passage from the United States Catholic bishops' pastoral reflection *A Place at the Table*. Using words, pictures or symbols complete the following two tasks:

- Summarize the passage. Describe the "leg" on the table; and
- Identify ways that families and individuals can address poverty both in the United States and throughout the world.

*Introduction*

"Our efforts to serve and stand with the poor recognize and build on the essential roles and responsibilities of four institutions. In a sense, the table we seek for all rests on these four institutions, or legs: (1) what families and individuals can do, (2) what community and religious institutions can do, (3) what the private sector can do, and (4) what the government can do to work together to overcome poverty."

*Families and Individuals*

"A first leg of the table is what *families and individuals* are called to do. Every person has a responsibility to respect the dignity of others and to work to secure not only their own rights but also the rights of others. Every day, parents throughout the world make sacrifices for the well-being of their children. Parents are the guardians of the life and dignity of their children. Support for marriage and family life is at the center of our campaign to restore dignity and to overcome poverty for children. Public policy and all our institutions must reward, encourage, and support parents, including single parents, who make wise decisions for their children. Their hard work, their love and discipline, and their time and presence within their families are a gift not only to their children, but to our society and to the common good. They are also significant investments in avoiding or escaping poverty."

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Lesson 3: A Place at the Table**  
**Participant Handout 3B**  
**Community Organizations and Faith-Based Institutions**

Directions: Read the following passage from the United States Catholic bishops' pastoral reflection *A Place at the Table*. Using words, pictures or symbols complete the following two tasks:

- Summarize the passage. Describe the "leg" on the table; and
- Identify ways that community organizations and faith-based institutions can address poverty both in the United States and throughout the world.

*Introduction*

"Our efforts to serve and stand with the poor recognize and build on the essential roles and responsibilities of four institutions. In a sense, the table we seek for all rests on these four institutions, or legs: (1) what families and individuals can do, (2) what community and religious institutions can do, (3) what the private sector can do, and (4) what the government can do to work together to overcome poverty."

*Community Organizations and Faith-based Institutions*

"A second leg of the table is the role and responsibility of community organizations and faith-based institutions. These institutions can help families make good choices and overcome discrimination and other obstacles. They can confront structures of injustice and build community, and they can demand accountability from public officials. Faith is a religious commitment; it is also a community resource. On the toughest problems, in the toughest, most desperate neighborhoods and villages, religious and community institutions are present and making a difference. In the United States, the growing attention to faith-based and other community institutions is overdue recognition of the work of Catholic schools, Catholic health care institutions, Catholic Charities, the Catholic Campaign for Human Development, and other groups. Here and abroad, our parishes and schools must continue to be clear about their identity and mission and must continue to be beacons of hope and centers of help for poor families and communities."

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Lesson 3: A Place at the Table**  
**Participant Handout 3C**  
**Private Sector / Business**

Directions: Read the following passage from the United States Catholic bishops' pastoral reflection, *A Place at the Table*. Using words, pictures or symbols complete the following two tasks:

- Summarize the passage. Describe the "leg" on the table; and
- Identify ways that the private sector/business can address poverty both in the United States and throughout the world.

*Introduction*

"Our efforts to serve and stand with the poor recognize and build on the essential roles and responsibilities of four institutions. In a sense, the table we seek for all rests on these four institutions, or legs: (1) what families and individuals can do, (2) what community and religious institutions can do, (3) what the private sector can do, and (4) what the government can do to work together to overcome poverty."

*Private Sector / Business*

"A third leg of the table is *the marketplace and institutions of business, commerce, and labor*. The private sector must be not only an engine of growth and productivity, but also a reflection of our values and priorities, a contributor to the common good. Examples of greed and misconduct must be replaced with models of corporate responsibility. Both employers and the labor movement must help the poorest workers to have a voice and a place at the table where wages and working conditions are set. A key measure of the marketplace is whether it provides decent work and wages for people, especially those on the margins of economic life. Parents need to be able to provide a life of dignity for their children by their work. Workers and farmers in this country and around the world need living wages; access to health care; vacation time and family and medical leave; a voice and real participation in the workplace; and the prospect of a decent retirement. Work must be an escape from poverty, not another version of it."

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Lesson 3: A Place at the Table**  
**Participant Handout 3D**  
**Government**

Directions: Read the following passage from the United States Catholic bishops' pastoral reflection, *A Place at the Table*. Using words, pictures or symbols complete the following two tasks:

- Summarize the passage. Describe the "leg" on the table; and
- Identify ways that government can address poverty both in the United States and throughout the world.

*Introduction*

"Our efforts to serve and stand with the poor recognize and build on the essential roles and responsibilities of four institutions. In a sense, the table we seek for all rests on these four institutions, or legs: (1) what families and individuals can do, (2) what community and religious institutions can do, (3) what the private sector can do, and (4) what the government can do to work together to overcome poverty."

*Government*

"A fourth essential leg of the table is the role and responsibilities of *government*—a means to do together what we cannot accomplish on our own. In the Catholic tradition, government has a positive role because of its responsibility to serve the common good, provide a safety net for the vulnerable and help overcome discrimination and ensure equal opportunity for all. Government has inescapable responsibilities toward those who are poor and vulnerable, to ensure their rights and defend their dignity. Government action is necessary to help overcome structures of injustice and misuse of power and to address problems beyond the reach of individual and community efforts. Government must act when these other institutions fall short in defending the weak and protecting human life and human rights."



**Lesson 3: A Place at the Table**  
**Additional Resources**

- *A Place at the Table: A Catholic Recommitment to Overcome Poverty and to Respect the Dignity of All God's Children*, A Pastoral Reflection of the U.S. Catholic Bishops, 2002.  
[www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/human-life-and-dignity/poverty/place-at-the-table.cfm](http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/human-life-and-dignity/poverty/place-at-the-table.cfm)
- Learn about efforts of the Catholic Church to address poverty in the United States and throughout the world:
  - Catholic Campaign for Human Development  
[www.usccb.org/about/catholic-campaign-for-human-development/](http://www.usccb.org/about/catholic-campaign-for-human-development/)
  - Catholic Relief Services  
[www.crs.org](http://www.crs.org)
  - Catholic Charities USA  
[www.catholiccharitiesusa.org/](http://www.catholiccharitiesusa.org/)
  - National Catholic Rural Life Conference  
[www.ncrlc.com/](http://www.ncrlc.com/)
- Learn how the Catholic Church advocates for policies that address the root causes of poverty both in the United States and throughout the world.
  - Domestic Issues  
[www.usccb.org/about/domestic-social-development/](http://www.usccb.org/about/domestic-social-development/)
  - International Issues  
[www.usccb.org/about/international-justice-and-peace/](http://www.usccb.org/about/international-justice-and-peace/)
  - Catholics Confront Global Poverty  
[www.crs.org/globalpoverty](http://www.crs.org/globalpoverty)

**Ending Poverty In Community**  
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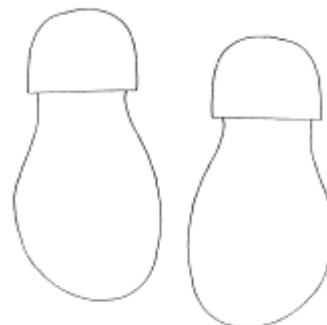
**Lesson 4**  
**Walking with Christ: The Two Feet of Social Action**

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**Overview**

As the Catechism of the Catholic Church reminds us, “*The Eucharist commits us to the poor*” (no. 1397). Our faith challenges us to alleviate poverty. We have many role models to suggest how this may be done. As a champion of “charitable works,” Mother Teresa met human need “one person at a time.” As a champion of “social justice,” Archbishop Oscar Romero sought to address social structures that gave rise to poverty. To follow Christ, it is necessary to walk with both feet of social action –charitable works and social justice. In this activity, participants will consider the differences between these two approaches and how they are personally called to respond.

---



**Objectives**

- To identify ways that our Catholic faith requires individuals and groups *both* to engage in charitable works *and* to work for social justice as methods of alleviating poverty.
- To consider a personal faith response to meet the needs of the poor that is grounded in charitable works and social justice.

**Materials Checklist:**

A list of materials for this lesson can be found in the Lesson 4 folder on this CD.

**Part I: Opening Prayer/Warm-up – The Two Feet**

(Estimated Time: 10 minutes prayer / 15 minutes warm-up)

Before the session begins, place a lit candle and bible open to [Luke 10:25-37](#) (Good Samaritan) on a table at the front of the meeting room. Photocopy the facilitator [Warm-Up Reflections](#) (which can be found in the Lesson 4 folder on this CD) handout and cut each of the eight quotations into individual strips.

As participants enter the room, ask for eight volunteers. When everyone is seated and quiet, ask one of the volunteers to proclaim the Gospel. After the Gospel proclamation, give participants a moment for quiet reflection. Direct them to reflect on the following questions as a large group:

- Who is my neighbor?
- How does the Gospel challenge me to respond to my neighbors?

Explain that in this warm-up activity, participants will consider two approaches to serving the poor. These approaches are known as the two feet of social action: “charitable works” and “social justice.” Mother Teresa was a champion of “charitable works.” Her faith called her to serve God by meeting people’s immediate needs for comfort, food and medicine.

Archbishop Oscar Romero was a champion of “social justice.” He believed that it was important to address the social conditions that give rise to poverty.

Now distribute one of the quotations from the [Warm-Up Reflections](#) handout to each of the eight volunteers. Ask them to read their quotation. Challenge the participants to compare and contrast the approaches offered by Mother Teresa and Archbishop Romero. Explain that while our individual talents and experiences may lead us to one approach or another, our Catholic faith identifies both charitable works and social justice as elements essential to living out a faith that does justice.

Now divide participants into small groups of no more than four. Provide each group with one copy of the [Two Feet of Love in Action](#) handout (page 43). Ask participants to brainstorm examples of Charitable Works and Social Justice and to “fill in the feet” with their ideas.

*Suggested Responses:*

*Charitable Works – Helping **individuals** meet their present needs by serving in soup kitchens; donating food, clothing, money, etc.; tutoring or mentoring; sponsoring a refugee family, etc.*

*Social Justice – Correcting long term problems in **communities** by participating in community self-help projects; advocating for just public policies; developing local community enterprises; etc.*

## **Part II: Activity – Poverty Scenarios**

(Estimated Times: 30 minutes)

This activity will help participants apply their understanding of “charitable works” and “social justice” to real scenarios based on issues faced by CCHD-funded groups. Before the session begins, select some or all (depending on the size of your group) of the following scenarios for the participants to consider in small groups. Make enough photocopies of the correlated student handout so that each group receives one copy.

**Handout 4A:** [Housing Foreclosure](#) (Page 44)

**Handout 4B:** [Lack of a Living Wage](#) (Page 45)

**Handout 4C:** [Underdevelopment](#) (Page 46)

**Handout 4D:** [Homelessness](#) (Page 47)

**Handout 4E:** [Environmental challenges](#) (Page 48)

*Note: The facilitator may wish to select scenarios based on the relevance to your group, number of small groups, and the amount of time available.*

Divide participants into groups of four. Each group should receive one copy of each scenario you selected above. Give groups ten minutes to read the scenario and brainstorm at least two solutions to the problem presented. One solution should be a involve charitable works. Participants should decide how they could meet the immediate needs of the individuals involved through charitable works. The other solution should be a social justice solution. Participants should decide how they could help to correct the problem in the community in the long term.

Ask volunteers to share their solutions. Write the solutions on a white board or presentation board for the entire group to see. After groups have presented their solutions, consult the facilitator handout [CCHD Funded Group Solutions](#) (page 49). Read the

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description of what the CCHD-funded group actually did. Discuss with the participants the difference, if any, between the solutions they devised and the solution created by the people who are actually living in the situation.

### **Part III: Reflection**

(Estimated Time: 10 minutes)

Have the participants recall the story of the Good Samaritan, and ask them to reflect on the following questions:

1. How is the story of the Good Samaritan an example of "charitable works"? Can you think of any ways the story raises issues about "social justice?" How?

*Suggested Response:*

*The Samaritan's response demonstrated love through "charitable works" by providing for the immediate needs of an individual.*

*We can also look at the historical context to consider why the priest and the Levite did not help the injured man. Biblical commentaries note that the bloodied man would have been considered ritually unclean according to laws of the time. The story is not only about charitable works; it is also about social justice. It highlights the need to change laws that prevent the fulfillment of basic needs.*

*Students could also mention other issues about social justice the story raises. For example, why is the road so dangerous? What changes would need to occur in order to better provide for the protection of travelers in the long term?*

2. If you wanted to more explicitly highlight the "social justice" dimension of the story, what might the "next chapter" look like? How could the Good Samaritan work to correct the long-term problems in the community that lead to unsafe conditions along the Jerusalem-to-Jericho road? How could attitudes toward the injured as "unclean" be challenged?

### **Additional Resources**

Additional resources that will support this lesson can be found on page 51.

### **Faith in Action Extension Activity**

Many students are already involved in community service projects either as individuals or members of a larger group. Most of these projects ask them to perform some type of charitable work or direct service. Challenge participants to consider, as they have done with the Good Samaritan story, the social justice dimensions of the issues they are addressing in service. Ask them to brainstorm specific questions they could ask about the causes of these issues and what could be done, in addition to the essential and important services that are already offered, to alleviate problems permanently in the long-term project.

Excellent project suggestions can be found by asking a local CCHD funded group, or a CCHD diocesan director for suggestions or opportunities to assist the group in their work.

**Lesson 4**  
**Walking with Christ: The Two Feet of Social Action**  
**Materials Checklist**

**Opening Prayer/ Warm-up**

- A Bible opened to [Luke 10:25-37](#) (Good Samaritan)
- Candle and matches
- A small table
- Facilitator Handout Warm-Up Reflections (1 copy)  
Cut the eight reflections into strips – one for each of the eight volunteers.
- Two Feet of Social Action (1 copy for each participant group)

**Activity – Poverty Scenarios**

- Some or all of the following poverty scenarios:
  - Participant Handout 4A:** Housing Foreclosure (Massachusetts)
  - Participant Handout 4B:** Lack of a Living Wage (California)
  - Participant Handout 4C:** Underdevelopment (New Mexico)
  - Participant Handout 4D:** Homelessness (Kansas)
  - Participant Handout 4E:** Environmental challenges (Louisiana)
- Based on your selection(s) above, photocopy the correlated student handouts (provide several copies per group)
- Facilitator Handout CCHD Funded Group Solutions (1 copy)

**Reflection**

- Reflection questions can be found in the Facilitator's Instructions.

**Lesson 4**  
**Facilitator Handout**  
**Charitable Works and Social Justice**  
**Warm-Up Reflections**

"I want to satisfy this desire of Our Lord. . . by going amongst the people—nursing the sick in their homes—helping the dying make their peace with God, having little free schools in the slums for the little children—visiting the poor in the hospitals—and helping the beggars of the streets lead respectful lives.—In a word, act the charity of Christ among the poorest—and so make them know Him."

- Mother Teresa to Archbishop Périer, Feast of Corpus Christi, June 5, 1947

"This is the mission entrusted to the church, a hard mission: to uproot sins from history, to uproot sins from the political order, to uproot sins from the economy, to uproot sins wherever they are. . . . The church must suffer for speaking the truth, for pointing out sin, for uprooting sin. No one wants to have a sore spot touched, and therefore a society with so many sores twitches when someone has the courage to touch it and say: 'You have to treat that. You have to get rid of that. Believe in Christ. Be converted.'"

- Archbishop Oscar Romero, Jan. 15, 1978

"I don't know what their success will be—but if the Missionaries of Charity have brought joy to one unhappy home—made one innocent child from the street keep pure for Jesus—one dying person die in peace with God—don't you think, Your Grace, it would be worth offering everything—for just that one—because that one would bring great joy to the Heart of Jesus."

- Mother Teresa to Archbishop Périer, Feast of Corpus Christi, June 5, 1947

"The Christian knows that Christ has been working in humanity for twenty centuries and that the person that is converted to Christ is the new human being that society needs to organize a world according to God's heart."

- Archbishop Oscar Romero, Dec. 3, 1978

“Let me offer myself and those who will join me for those unwanted poor, the little street children, the sick, the dying, the beggars, let me go into their very holes and bring in their broken homes the joy and peace of Christ.”

- Mother Teresa to Archbishop Périer, Mar. 30, 1947

“What marks the genuine church is when the word, burning like the word of the prophets, proclaims and denounces: proclaims to the people God’s wonders to be believed and venerated, and denounces the sins of those who oppose God’s reign, so that they may tear those sins out of their hearts, out of their societies, out of their laws—out of the structures that oppress, that imprison, that violate the rights of God and humanity. This is the hard service of the word.”

- Archbishop Oscar Romero, Dec, 10, 1977

“Let us be pure and humble like Mary and we are sure to be holy like Jesus. . . because a pure heart can see God in the Poor—a humble heart can love and serve Jesus in the Poor. Remember the five fingers—you—did—it—to—Me. Remember—love begins at home—our community—our family. Remember—works of love are works of peace. . . . Try to be Jesus’ love, Jesus’ compassion, Jesus’ presence to each other and the Poor you serve.”

- Mother Teresa to the Missionaries of Charity Sisters, Brothers, Father, Lay Missionaries, and Co-workers, June 1990

“One of the signs of the present time is the idea of participation, the right of all persons to participate in the construction of their own common good. . . . Everyone can contribute much that is good, and in that way trust is achieved. . . . Thus we can, all of us together, build the republic—the *res publica*, the public concern—what belongs to all of us and what we all have the duty of building.”

- Archbishop Oscar Romero, July 10, 1977

Sources:

Mother Teresa. *Come Be My Light—The Private Writings of the Saint of Calcutta*. Edited by Brian Kolodiejchuk. New York: Doubleday, 2007. Pages 73, 77, 65, and 313-14, respectively. Used with permission.

Oscar Romero. *The Violence of Love*. Translated and compiled by James R. Brockman. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2004. Pages 30, 103, 18, and 3, respectively. Used with permission.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**The Two Feet of Love in Action**



Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**CCHD Poverty Scenarios**  
**Scenario A**

Directions: In this activity, you will receive a scenario based on a real problem confronted by people living in poverty. Your group needs to come up with two solutions to this situation. One solution has to be based on "charitable works." How can you meet the immediate needs of individuals or families? The other solution needs to be based on "social justice." How can we help to correct the problem in the community in the long term?

In Brockton, Massachusetts, families are being forced out of their homes due to foreclosure. Many of the homeowners were exploited by unscrupulous mortgage brokers when they originally purchased their homes, accepting variable long-term interest rates in exchange for a lower down payment on the home up front. Now interest rates have skyrocketed and many of these families are unable to keep up with their mortgage payments and they face foreclosure. Some have approached lenders to modify the terms of their loans, but the process is very slow. Without the resources to pay their mortgages, many families will soon become homeless and thus enter an even tougher cycle of poverty. This problem is affecting over 3000 families who are of varying ethnicities, religions, and race.

What would you do to help address this situation?

Charitable Works:

Social Justice:

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**CCHD Poverty Scenarios**  
**Scenario B**

Directions: In this activity, you will receive a scenario based on a real problem confronted by people living in poverty. Your group needs to come up with two solutions to this situation. One solution has to be based on "charitable works." How can you meet the immediate needs of individuals or families? The other solution needs to be based on "social justice." How can we help to correct the problem in the community in the long term?

Women, especially minority women, generally have a lower income and fewer work opportunities than men. In the San Francisco Bay Area, an estimated 37% of Latino households are barely able to meet their basic needs. It is difficult for these households to escape poverty because few employment opportunities are available. Existing employment opportunities for low-income women often involve unskilled, sometimes hazardous, labor and minimal pay. For example a woman may work cleaning hospital rooms with toxic products while not wearing gloves. As she heads home from work she may struggle with cracking skin on her hands as well as headaches and dizziness. These women carry the chemicals home with them on their clothing, consequently putting their children at risk. Finally, despite working full time, these women are often without benefits like health insurance.

What would you do to help address this situation?

Charitable Works:

Social Justice:

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**CCHD Poverty Scenarios**  
**Scenario C**

Directions: In this activity, you will receive a scenario based on a real problem confronted by people living in poverty. Your group needs to come up with two solutions to this situation. One solution has to be based on "charitable works." How can you meet the immediate needs of individuals or families? The other solution needs to be based on "social justice." How can we help to correct the problem in the community in the long term?

During a time of housing shortage in the late 1980s in southern New Mexico, developers preyed on low-wage migrants and farmworkers. For very little down and low monthly payments, the migrants and farmworkers were illegally "sold" small plots of land in unincorporated rural areas. But deeds of ownership were not awarded and buyers often did not know that the illegal subdivisions, called *colonias*, would not be serviced by the state or city and had no access to clean water, plumbing, gas, sewage, solid waste disposal, paved roads and other basic services. The lack of clean water and sewage disposal caused environmental and health problems such as: hepatitis, gastrointestinal infections and other water borne diseases. With few possibilities for economic development and little access to educational opportunity, the future of those who lived in the *colonias* looked bleak.

What would you do to help address this situation?

Charitable Works:

Social Justice:

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**CCHD Poverty Scenarios**  
**Scenario D**

Directions: In this activity, you will receive a scenario based on a real problem confronted by people living in poverty. Your group needs to come up with two solutions to this situation. One solution has to be based on "charitable works." How can you meet the immediate needs of individuals or families? The other solution needs to be based on "social justice." How can we help to correct the problem in the community in the long term?

Like many cities with populations of less than 100,000 inhabitants, several hundred residents in Lawrence, Kansas, are homeless at any given time during the year. Many families are impacted by homelessness, with a 2007 survey revealing that over half the 373 homeless persons counted in the survey were from families with children under 18.

A man named Florid is one member of Lawrence's homeless population who has been living at Lawrence Community Shelter for two and a half months. Although he is married, he lives in a shelter away from his family, who he says left him because he could not find or maintain a job. The fact that Florid suffers from a mental illness has made his situation even harder to overcome.

What would you do to help address this situation?

Charitable Works:

Social Justice:

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**CCHD Poverty Scenarios**  
**Scenario E**

Directions: In this activity, you will receive a scenario based on a real problem confronted by people living in poverty. Your group needs to come up with two solutions to this situation. One solution has to be based on “charitable works.” How can you meet the immediate needs of individuals or families? The other solution needs to be based on “social justice.” How can we help to correct the problem in the community in the long term?

The residents of Louisiana face an environmental challenge. In an area known as “Cancer Alley,” refineries release toxic air emissions that are carried downwind to residential areas. These dangerous emissions contain cancer causing agents that are in excess of the state’s standards and are inhaled by residents of communities on a daily basis. While laws require emissions to be tested, the company tests the air 10-15 mile away and upwind from the refinery—not downwind— so residents have no way to prove that their community’s air is polluted. In addition, bi-weekly industrial accidents, which cause increased air pollution, are further threatening the health of community residents, with many residents suffering from respiratory illnesses.

What would you do to help address this situation?

Charitable Works:

Social Justice:

## Lesson 4 CCHD Funded Group Solutions

**Scenario A:** The **Brockton Interfaith Community (BIC)** looks past ethnicity and religion to bring together area pastors to respond to the needs of the most vulnerable families in the city of Brockton, MA. For example, at a 600 person meeting at St. Patrick's Church in downtown Brockton, BIC members asked Congressional Representatives and the Federal Reserve of Boston to secure new loans for unemployed homeowners and for a speedier loan modification process for troubled homeowners. This led to 4 billion dollars being distributed to help homeowners, with another billion dollars yet to come. As a result, at least 3000 families in Massachusetts will be able to keep their homes. More recently, in 2010, BIC worked for the passage of a bill that allows for those released from prison to have a better chance at finding a job and thus have a fresh start.

**Scenario B:** In fall 2010 the **Women's Action to Gain Economic Security (WAGES)** celebrated 15 years of empowerment of low-income women, especially those in the San Francisco Bay Area. Research has shown that women, especially minority women, tend to have a lower income than men, especially in positions that are considered "unskilled labor." Because of this, WAGES set out to train low-income women to launch environmentally friendly business cooperatives. These cooperatives give women the opportunity for safe working conditions, good pay, and a say in how the business is run. WAGES has given seminars in the Bay Area and around the country on their co-op model, thus empowering women on a national level. WAGES has helped increase the income of the women they train by 50%, provide access to health care, and, with its green cleaning services, protect the environment.

**Scenario C:** The Office of Catholic Social Ministry of the Diocese of Las Cruces, NM, became aware of the situation of the migrants and farmworkers and committed itself to work alongside them to improve conditions in the *colonias*, which are underdeveloped rural communities along the U.S. Mexican border where there are often poor sewage systems and a lack of safe and healthy housing. The diocese, together with the migrants and farmworkers, started the Farmworker Organizing Project, which in 1994 became the **Doña Ana County Colonias Development Council (CDC)**, an independent non-profit organization which currently receives funding from the Catholic Campaign for Human Development. Over the years, CDC has helped residents of the *colonias* to become civically engaged and to attain much-needed access to infrastructure and services in the *colonias*. CDC has also empowered residents to develop community-based solutions, most recently establishing a family development center, micro-lending projects and a community gardens project in which residents learn about gardening and community responsibility.

**Scenario D:** When a study conducted a few years ago revealed that the town of Lawrence, Kansas, did not have job training programs for hard-to-employ, low income, homeless individuals, the **Lawrence Community Shelter (LCS)** decided to expand its services. It now offers case management to form individual plans to help guests find jobs, seek benefits, find housing, and overcome substance abuse. LCS also realized the need for skills training and real-world experience for homeless persons, many of whom lacked experience working in a professional environment or holding a long-term job. To achieve this, LCS created the St. Joseph Project, a small business enterprise whose purpose is to provide income, meaningful employment, skills development, and work experience for individual workers as well as important economic development for the community. With the St. Joseph Project, homeless workers suggest and test mixes of ingredients for their product, "Good Dog! Biscuits and Treats," make and package the product, and distribute it through several local outlets. In three short years of initiating and growing the project, the dog biscuits have caught on as a local product in Lawrence. Even more importantly, homeless individuals have quickly moved into supervisory positions and now actively participate in planning meetings. Guests of the LCS are now involved with production, packaging, distribution, sales, marketing, and development of future products. Many have gained the skills and experience necessary to find and maintain other jobs, and ultimately, to overcome homelessness.

**Scenario E:** In the wake of Hurricane Katrina, chemicals from oil rigs and other industrial facilities leached into the soil and air, affecting the health of surrounding populations. In response the **Louisiana Bucket Brigade (LABB)** trained community members to use "buckets" approved by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to test air quality. This led to a discovery by community members of over 150 environmental infractions. This group has also organized community members to petition the state of Louisiana and the EPA as a way of encouraging increased protection of the state's natural habitats and most importantly those people living closest to environmental disasters. LABB has organized political action and was influential in the state installation of air monitors across from a major oil refinery near a residential community. In 2010 LABB implemented one of its largest projects, creating an Oil Spill Crisis Map in the wake of the BP Oil Spill. This Crisis Map was the first of its kind in the United States and proved instrumental in enabling LABB to measure the health and ecological impact of the spill on Louisiana towns.

## **Lesson 4: Walking with Christ**

### **Additional Resources**

- Two Feet of Social Action  
[www.usccb.org/about/justice-peace-and-human-development/upload/Two-Feet-of-Love-in-Action-2-page-handout.pdf](http://www.usccb.org/about/justice-peace-and-human-development/upload/Two-Feet-of-Love-in-Action-2-page-handout.pdf)

This downloadable handout illustrates the Two Feet of Love in Action and compares and contrasts Social Justice and Charitable Works.

- Charity and Justice  
[www.osjspm.org/page.aspx?pid=469](http://www.osjspm.org/page.aspx?pid=469)

The Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis offers several excellent resources that detail the distinctions between charitable works (called “charity” on this page) and social justice (called “justice” on this page).

- Catholic Campaign for Human Development Diocesan Directors  
[www.usccb.org/about/catholic-campaign-for-human-development/diocesan-coordinators-catholic-campaign-for-human-development.cfm](http://www.usccb.org/about/catholic-campaign-for-human-development/diocesan-coordinators-catholic-campaign-for-human-development.cfm)

This page lists the local CCHD Director in your (arch)diocese. The CCHD Diocesan Directors can provide insight into local issues and help connect you with groups of low-income persons in your area that receive funding from the Catholic Campaign for Human Development.

- Faithful Citizenship  
[www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/faithful-citizenship/](http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/faithful-citizenship/)

The *Faithful Citizenship* website offers a variety of resources to help young people recognize their role in advocating for human life and dignity. This site features lesson plans, videos, podcasts, activities, and more. The youth page includes ideas about how young Catholics can work for social justice in their communities and features a video that highlights what other young Catholics are doing.

- Resources and Tools to Educate Catholics  
[www.usccb.org/about/justice-peace-and-human-development/resources-and-tools.cfm](http://www.usccb.org/about/justice-peace-and-human-development/resources-and-tools.cfm)

Here you can find a wide range of resources and tools, provided by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, for Catholic youth, young adults, youth ministers, and teachers who are interested in social justice.

- Take Action Now  
[www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/take-action-now/](http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/take-action-now/)

This page includes web resources for anyone who wants to become an advocate for social justice.

- Tools for Effective Advocacy  
[www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/get-involved/get-more-information/index.cfm](http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/get-involved/get-more-information/index.cfm)

Charitable works can be transformed into a social justice project by helping students attempt to influence public policy. This can be accomplished through a letter, a phone call, or by personally meeting with an elected official. This page provides a variety of methods for becoming active in public policy.

**Ending Poverty In Community**  
A Toolkit for Young Advocates

**Lesson 5**  
**EPIC Action Project: Identifying Community Needs**

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**Overview**

Our Catholic faith compels us to respond to the needs of our neighbor. Yet, as revealed in the story of the Rich Man and Lazarus, it is sometimes difficult for us to “see” our neighbor in need. In Lesson 5, participants will begin the EPIC (Ending Poverty in Community) social action project by seeing their community through the lens of Catholic social teaching and identifying a need they can help to address. Lesson 6 challenges participants to reflect on how they will work together to respond to the community need they identified and guides them in developing an action plan to help make a difference in breaking the cycle of poverty.

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**Objectives**

- Participants will learn about Catholic social teaching as a lens through which to view their communities and community needs.
- Through an interactive group process, participants will identify what they believe to be the most important community needs that they can address.

**Materials Checklist**

On page 56 is a list of materials required for this lesson.

**Part I: Opening Prayer/Warm-up**

(Estimated Time: 10 minutes)

Before the session begins, place a lit candle, dark sunglasses, and a Bible opened to Luke 16:19-31 (The Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus) on a small table in the meeting room.

Ask a volunteer to proclaim the Gospel [Luke 16: 19-31](#). Challenge participants to put themselves in the shoes of one of the people in the Gospel story and to imagine how that person must have felt. After the Gospel is proclaimed, ask participants to consider the following questions for large group discussion or silent reflection:

- *Did you put yourself on the side of Lazarus or the rich man in this story? How did you feel?*
- *For whom is Jesus' message intended in this parable? The poor? The rich? Both?*
- *Why didn't the rich person see Lazarus at the gate?*
- *Was the rich man condemned because of his wealth?*
- *Who is Lazarus in my community?*
- *Why do you think we placed a pair of dark sunglasses on the table? What do they represent?*

**Part II: Activity – Identifying Community Needs**

(Estimated Times: 30 minutes)

The previous four lessons were designed to help participants understand the scope of poverty as a national issue and how our faith calls on each of us to respond. In the final two lessons of this curriculum, participants are challenged to work with their peers to put their faith into practice through a social action project called EPIC – Ending Poverty In Community.

In this activity, participants consider some of the basic elements of Catholic social teaching and use a set of questions to see their communities through new eyes. They are then encouraged to identify community needs they believe should be addressed – and to select one that they will commit to work on.

*Note: This lesson is best used in conjunction with Lesson 6, in which participants go the next step and design an action project that they can implement either individually or as a large group to address the need they identified in this lesson.*

Begin by distributing Handout 5A (page 57) and the [Identifying Community Needs](#) handout (page 58) so every participant receives a copy. Read the first page together. Then facilitate a large group discussion in which students begin to discuss the themes of Catholic social teaching. Allow no more than 10 minutes for this portion of the activity. The facilitator may ask questions for participants to reflect on and share, such as:

- What do you normally think of when you hear the phrase “injustice?”
- Are there injustices that you see in our community?
- What insights do the themes of Catholic social teaching add to our thinking about these community issues?
- Which of the seven themes of Catholic social teaching is the most challenging for you individually? For our community? Why?

Now divide participants into small groups of three or four. Ask each small group to read and discuss each of the questions in Part I (on page 58) of the “Identifying Community Needs” handout and to write their responses in the space provided. After they have completed this process, each group should respond to the Part II: Reflection Questions at the bottom of the handout and identify the greatest need they believe exists in the community. Tell participants that they will be sharing their responses with the large group later in this activity.

*Note: This lesson provides a wonderful opportunity to invite a CCHD director from your diocese or a representative from a local CCHD-funded organization to speak to your class/group after the participants complete this activity. If there is a time constraint, you can shorten the activity to give the speaker time to share with the group. The speaker can make a presentation to your group regarding the community needs they have identified and are addressing. In communication with the CCHD diocesan director, encourage the guest speaker to lift up any significant, local needs that may still remain invisible to your class following their brainstorming. Being able to do so would help to illustrate how we all overlook injustice in our communities just as the rich man overlooked Lazarus.*

### **Part III: Reflection**

(Estimated Time: 20 minutes with discussion)

Proclaim again the following Gospel passage:

“There was a rich man who dressed in purple garments and fine linen and dined sumptuously each day. And lying at his door was a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores, who would gladly have eaten his fill of the scraps that fell from the rich man’s table. Dogs even used to come and lick his sores.”

This lesson has challenged participants to ask, “Who is Lazarus among us?” Now ask a representative from each small group to present their answers to the “Part II: Reflection Questions” to the large group. The facilitator should record the responses for all to see on a white board or on poster paper. Combine similar responses to avoid repetition. Save participant responses written on this paper for Lesson 6.

### **Additional Resources**

[Additional resources](#) that will support this lesson can be found on page 59.

### **Faith in Action Extension Activities**

To most effectively use this lesson, proceed to Lesson 6 to complete the Ending Poverty in Community (EPIC) Social Action Project.

**Lesson 5**  
**EPIC Action Project: Identifying Community Needs**  
**Materials Checklist**

**Opening Prayer/ Warm-up**

- A Bible opened to [Luke 16:19-31](#) (The Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus)
- Candle and matches
- Dark sunglasses
- A small table

**Activity – Identifying Community Needs**

- Distribute Handout 5A and the Identifying Community Needs handout, one for each participant

*Note: This lesson provides a wonderful opportunity to invite a CCHD director from your diocese or a representative from a local CCHD-funded organization to speak to your class/group – either after the participants complete this activity or, if there is a time constraint, in lieu of it. The speaker can make a presentation to your group regarding the community needs they have identified and are addressing.*

**Reflection**

- White board or butcher paper  
(Responses will be recorded and saved for the next session.)
- Markers

## **Handout 5A** **Catholic Social Teaching**

Catholics have a unique way of seeing the world. It is a vision grounded in the teachings of Jesus, who began his ministry by telling us to love our neighbors as ourselves. That call means not only meeting the immediate needs in our communities but also working to create a more equitable society.

As Catholics, social justice means that all human beings have the right to enjoy the blessings of this world. That also means that each of us has the responsibility to create a society where those blessings are accessible to all.

For more than 100 years, our Church has provided principles for how such a society must be constructed. These principles can be summarized in seven basic teachings that give us a blueprint for structuring our lives and communities to respond to Christ's call to love one another.

1. **Life and Dignity of the Human Person.** All human life is sacred, made in the image and likeness of God. Society and its structures should aim to lift up the human person.
2. **Call to Family, Community, and Participation.** Humans are social and develop in community, starting with family. We should construct our society so all can flourish and participate in the decisions that affect them.
3. **Rights and Responsibilities.** Every human person has basic rights inherent in his or her very nature. We have a responsibility to organize our society so the rights of all can be fulfilled.
4. **Option for the Poor and Vulnerable.** Those who are weak, vulnerable, and most in need deserve preferential concern.
5. **The Dignity of Work and the Rights of Workers.** Through work, humans participate in God's ongoing process of creation. Work has dignity and the basic rights of workers must be respected.
6. **Solidarity.** We are one human family and are called to work for the common good—so that each individual can flourish and develop materially, spiritually, and in all ways.
7. **Care for God's Creation.** The earth has been entrusted to us, its stewards. All of creation is interdependent and its gifts are for all to share.

## Identifying Community Needs

### Part I: Catholic Social Teaching

Our Catholic Social Teaching guides people of faith in responding to Christ's call to Christian service and social action, which are requirements of our faith. Answer each of the following questions in your small groups.

- *Life and Dignity of the Human Person*  
Who is "Lazarus" in our community? Who are the poor?
- *Call to Family, Community and Participation*  
Does everyone have an equal voice in society? What voices have the most difficult time being heard? How do families experience pressure because of economic circumstances?
- *Rights and Responsibilities*  
Are there people in our community who are homeless? Without food? Without health care? Without adequate education? Whose responsibility is it to help provide for these needs?
- *Option for the Poor and Vulnerable*  
How does our community treat children? The elderly? The mentally, physically, or psychologically challenged? Recent immigrants?
- *Dignity of Work and the Rights of Workers*  
Are there people in our community who are unemployed? Are there people who aren't earning enough to meet their basic needs even though they have a job?
- *Solidarity*  
Does our community help people in other neighborhoods? Surrounding cities? Other parts of the state? Other parts of the country? Other parts of the world?
- *Care for God's Creation*  
What actions does our community take to protect and preserve the environment? What more could we be doing?

### Part II: Reflection Questions

- Who is Lazarus in your community?
- What is your community's biggest need? Why?

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**Lesson 5**  
**EPIC Action Project: Identifying Community Needs**  
**Additional Resources**

The first three sites on the below list can help you locate additional materials related to Catholic social teaching. The remaining sites can assist you in identifying community needs and contacting CCHD Directors and locally funded groups.

- United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) Department of Justice, Peace and Human Development  
[www.usccb.org/about/justice-peace-and-human-development/](http://www.usccb.org/about/justice-peace-and-human-development/)

This Department works to share and apply Catholic social teaching on domestic and international issues. The “Catholic Social Teaching” section of this page includes basic information, foundational documents, and educational resources. The “Domestic Issues” section includes more detailed background information on the Church’s position on many issues related to the root causes of poverty.

- Justice Peace and Human Development Resources and Tools  
[www.usccb.org/about/justice-peace-and-human-development/resources-and-tools.cfm](http://www.usccb.org/about/justice-peace-and-human-development/resources-and-tools.cfm)

This web page provides a large array of downloadable and outside resources for sharing Catholic social teaching with various audiences.

- Office for Social Justice, Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis  
[www.osjspm.org/page.aspx?pid=491](http://www.osjspm.org/page.aspx?pid=491)

This site includes an overview and the texts of major social documents of the Catholic Church, quotations by issue from these documents, and helpful handouts and PowerPoint presentations.

- Catholic Campaign for Human Development Current Grantees  
[www.usccb.org/about/catholic-campaign-for-human-development/cchd-funded-groups.cfm](http://www.usccb.org/about/catholic-campaign-for-human-development/cchd-funded-groups.cfm)

This site identifies current CCHD grantees. These organizations can provide insight into local issues and how they are able to respond. These organizations may be able to provide speakers for your group.

- Catholic Campaign for Human Development Diocesan Directors  
[www.usccb.org/about/catholic-campaign-for-human-development/diocesan-coordinators-catholic-campaign-for-human-development.cfm](http://www.usccb.org/about/catholic-campaign-for-human-development/diocesan-coordinators-catholic-campaign-for-human-development.cfm)

This site provides contact information for CCHD Directors for your (arch)diocese. The Directors can provide insight into local issues and provide additional information regarding current grantees.

- *Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship: A Call to Political Responsibility from the Catholic Bishops of the United States.*  
[www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/faithful-citizenship/](http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/faithful-citizenship/)

[www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/faithful-citizenship/upload/forming-consciences-for-faithful-citizenship.pdf](http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/faithful-citizenship/upload/forming-consciences-for-faithful-citizenship.pdf)

The *Faithful Citizenship* Web site contains resources, materials, and activities based on *Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship: A Call to Political Responsibility from the Catholic Bishops of the United States*, a statement that outlines the responsibility that all Catholics share to participate in the discussion of public policy issues. This statement challenges people of faith to advocate on behalf of the poor and vulnerable, human life and dignity, and to work to address the root causes of injustice.

**Ending Poverty In Community**  
A Toolkit for Young Advocates

**Lesson 6**  
**EPIC Action Project: Responding to Community Needs**

**Overview**

Our Catholic faith compels us to respond to the needs of our neighbor. In his Epistle, St. James reminds us that our faith calls us to action. This lesson represents the second part of the EPIC (Ending Poverty in Community) project. Continuing the work begun in Lesson 5, participants develop a social action plan as they consider how their faith calls them to respond with others to meet the community need they identified.



**Objectives**

- Participants will develop a personal response and design an action plan they can implement in working with others to meet a community need.
- Participants will reflect on their own faith journey and consider ways they can put their faith in action.

**Materials Checklist**

On page 64 is a list of materials required for this lesson.

**Part I: Opening Prayer/Warm-up**

(Estimated Time: 10-15 minutes)

Before the session, place a lit candle and a Bible opened to [James 2:14-24](#) (Faith and Works) on a small table in the meeting room. Have a stack of Bibles available to distribute to small groups. If Bibles are unavailable, print a copy of the reading for each group.

This Scripture reading challenges us to put our faith into action. In this opening prayer, everyone will participate by proclaiming a portion of the Scripture. Divide participants into small groups of three and distribute one Bible or copy of the reading to each group. Direct each group to read the Scripture aloud; ask each person to proclaim one small section so everyone has a turn reading. Then ask participants to consider the following questions for small group discussion:

- *What actions does my faith call me to take to help people in my community?*
- *Are there ways I need to simplify my life so that I can make more space for prayer and for the needs of others?*

Allow participants about 10 minutes to discuss the question. If time permits, ask volunteers to share their reflections with the large group.

**Part II: Activity — Responding to Community Needs**

(Estimated Time: 35-40 minutes)

*NOTE: You may require one additional session to complete this process depending on the size of your group and the complexity of the issues chosen.*

In Lesson 5, participants identified local needs. In this activity, participants will work in small groups to design an action plan that addresses this community need.

Divide participants into the same small groups that were used in Lesson 5. Post the list of community needs identified in Lesson 5 for everyone to see. Distribute the [Responding to Community Needs](#) handout (page 65) so each participant receives a copy. Ask each small group to choose one of the community needs and complete the worksheet, which will guide them through completing the EPIC Action Plan. The reflection questions in Part II help to reinforce the fact that both feet of social action need to be engaged or we're solving only part of the problem.

The Additional Resources page provides information on how to identify and contact local CCHD-funded groups. The local telephone book, internet, and community resource guides will also help participants to identify existing groups with whom they may partner to address their community need.

Ask a representative from each group to briefly share his or her small group's action plan with the large group. Time constraints may require you to complete this process in another session. Ask another member of each small group to record the highlights of his or her group's action plan on a white board or poster paper.

This process is intended to foster a sense of empowerment – both for the participants and the people with whom they work. Whether through charitable works or social justice, encourage participants to use their creativity to identify possible actions that they can implement given inevitable resource constraints. Some common and workable examples of actions for social justice include writing a letter to an elected official; visiting an elected official or inviting him/her to visit you; writing an editorial to the local newspaper; or educating a parish or school community about a particular need. You may conclude the process after each small group presents its action plan. Ideally, however, participants will implement the action plan. There are two ways this can occur:

- Each small group can independently implement its action project; or
- After hearing each small group presentation, ask the large group to select one action plan that everyone can implement. Make sure everyone in the large group will play a role. This process may require an additional session to complete.

If participants have a difficult time choosing between issues, use the [Selecting a Community Issue: Sample Issue Checklist](#) (page 67) as a method to select an appropriate choice.

### **Part III: Reflection**

(Estimated Time: 10 minutes with discussion)

Distribute a blank sheet of paper to each participant. Reread the following Scripture passage:

*"What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? If a brother or sister has nothing to wear and has no food for the day, and one of you says to them, 'Go in peace, keep warm, and eat well,' but you do not give him the necessities of the body, what good is it? So also faith of itself, if it does not have works, is dead."*

Give participants a moment to reflect silently on how they personally feel called to “have works.” Then invite them to write a personal covenant. Ask participants the following questions:

- What commitment are you willing to make to put your faith into action?
- What are you personally willing to do to implement some aspect of the social action project?
- How is this action rooted in your faith?

### **Additional Resources**

[Additional resources](#) that will support this lesson can be found on page 68).

**Lesson 6**  
**EPIC Action Project: Responding to Community Needs**  
**Materials Checklist**

**Opening Prayer/ Warm-up**

- A Bible opened to [James 2:14-24](#) (Faith and Works)
- Candle and matches
- A small table
- One bible for each small group of three or one copy of the Scripture reading for each group

**Activity – Responding to Community Needs**

- List of community needs identified by the class in the previous session
- “Responding to Community Needs” handout, one copy for each participant
- “Selecting a Community Issue: Sample Issue Checklist” handout, one copy for each participant
- Pens / Pencils for participant responses
- Telephone books, community resource guides, or access to the Internet to assist students in identifying existing services in their community
- Butcher paper
- Markers

**Reflection**

- Reflection questions can be found in the Facilitator’s Instructions.
- Additional blank sheets of paper for action or covenant statements

## Responding to Community Needs

“Faith of itself, if it does not have works, is dead.” (James 2:17)

Scripture and our faith tradition require that we put our faith into action. This worksheet will guide your group in developing a social action plan to address a community need. Select one of the issues brainstormed by your class. Then discuss the questions in each section and record your responses on a separate sheet of paper.

### Part I: Understanding the Need

1. What is the community issue you identified? In your own words, summarize the need you hope to address.
2. Who in your community is most affected by this need?
3. Are there organizations or individuals in the community that are already working to address this need? List them along with contact information for each.

### Part II: Brainstorming Responses: *The Two Feet of Social Action*

Catholic social teaching helps us to see the world through new eyes and to discover opportunities to live out our faith that we might otherwise overlook. According to our social tradition, there are two basic ways we must respond to human needs – charitable works and social justice. Through **charitable works**, we identify people who need assistance and then go out and help them. For example, if someone is hungry, we give them food. These are important works of charity that we are all called to do. Catholic social teaching also tells us there is a second necessary response to meet human needs – through **social justice**. Social justice means we work to change the structures of our community that give rise to these needs in the first place. For example, if someone is hungry, we might ask, “Why are people hungry?” We may then write a letter to an elected official, write an opinion piece to the local newspaper or organize a hunger banquet to raise awareness about the problem and advocate a way or ways to address it.

1. Identify at least two examples of *charitable works* you can do to help alleviate this need. Estimate the amount of time it would take for each.
2. Identify at least two examples of actions for *social justice* you can take to help alleviate the *causes* of this need. Estimate the amount of time it would take for each.
3. For each example listed above, what is accomplished by taking this action?
4. What remains undone?

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

EPIC Handout

### Responding to Community Needs

#### Part III: Called to Action

You have considered different ways to respond to your identified community need. Now, you will select one way to meet this need and develop an action plan. Be sure to select steps that are realistic and can be completed with the time and resources available to you.

What is the community need? \_\_\_\_\_

Generally, what will you do to meet this need? \_\_\_\_\_

Which foot of justice (*charitable works* or *social justice*) takes a step forward with this action? \_\_\_\_\_

<b>Action Steps</b> <i>What needs to be done?</i>	<b>Responsibility</b> <i>Who will complete this step?</i>	<b>Time Line</b> <i>When will this step be completed?</i>	<b>Resources</b> <i>Who else will you work with to complete this step? What additional resources are necessary? (money, materials, etc.)</i>
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			

Use additional sheets as necessary.

**Lesson 6**  
**EPIC Action Project: Responding to Community Needs**

Selecting a Community Issue  
Sample Issue Checklist

Recommended Issue: \_\_\_\_\_

The issue that we would like to recommend is (check all that apply):

- Clear                      Our objectives and outcomes are easily understood.
- Measurable                We know when we have achieved our objectives.  
The outcomes are easily defined.
- Doable                      We can work to address this issue given the amount of time,  
money and resources at our disposal.
- Important                 The people working on the project think it's important and  
worth their time and effort.
- Fun                         Addressing the causes of poverty is hard work. Choose an  
issue that generates enthusiasm for the long haul.
- Unifying                 Avoid issues that will inappropriately divide the community  
or unfairly pit one group against another. You may need to work  
with these groups again.
- Consistent                Ideally, the issue you select should flow from your  
understanding of Catholic Social Teaching and should be  
consistent with the mission of your school and/or parish. See the  
Social Action Project for specific recommendations.
- Inclusive                 Many people should be able to be involved in addressing  
this issue. Ideally, you will be able to partner with a CCHD-  
funded group or other community agency(ies) that are  
working on this issue.

**Lesson 6**  
**EPIC Action Project: Responding to Community Needs**  
**Additional Resources**

The following sites will help you to identify important community needs and illustrate how various organizations put their faith into action.

- Catholic Campaign for Human Development Current Grantees  
[www.usccb.org/about/catholic-campaign-for-human-development/cchd-funded-groups.cfm](http://www.usccb.org/about/catholic-campaign-for-human-development/cchd-funded-groups.cfm)

This webpage identifies current CCHD grantees. These organizations can provide insight into local issues and how they respond to community needs. These organizations may be able to provide speakers for your group.

- Catholic Campaign for Human Development Diocesan Directors List  
[www.usccb.org/about/catholic-campaign-for-human-development/diocesan-coordinators-catholic-campaign-for-human-development.cfm](http://www.usccb.org/about/catholic-campaign-for-human-development/diocesan-coordinators-catholic-campaign-for-human-development.cfm)

This webpage provides contact information for CCHD Directors for your (Arch)diocese. The Directors can provide insight into local issues and provide additional information regarding current grantees.

- National Association of State Catholic Conference Directors  
[www.nasccd.org/directory/index.html](http://www.nasccd.org/directory/index.html)

A state Catholic Conference is a Church institution that represents the bishops (and their dioceses) and allows for the coordination of the concerns of the Church in state public policymaking. The Directors can provide information regarding important local issues and the legislative agenda for your state.

- United States Conference of Catholic Bishops  
[www.usccb.org](http://www.usccb.org)

The USCCB site provides an index that highlights contemporary issues. For example, click on "Social Justice" and you will find a list of issues supported by additional documents and analysis.

- Department of Justice, Peace and Human Development  
[www.usccb.org/about/justice-peace-and-human-development/](http://www.usccb.org/about/justice-peace-and-human-development/)

The Department of Justice, Peace and Human Development works on behalf of the United States Catholic Bishops to share and apply Catholic social teaching on domestic and international issues.

# **Ending Poverty in Community (EPIC) Advocacy Appendix**

The Advocacy Appendix provides suggestions, strategies and templates to assist young advocates. This material is organized into three sections: 1) Educating for Justice; 2) Lobbying for Justice; and 3) Building Constituencies for Justice.

## **Educating for Justice**

[Community Service Day](#)

[Poverty Awareness Snacks](#)

[Food Fast or Hunger Banquet](#)

[EPIC \(Ending Poverty in Community\) Fair](#)

[Student Poverty Leadership Conference](#)

[Community Lobby Day](#)

[Pick a Charity: School Event](#)

[Pick a Charity: Athletic Events](#)

[Ribbon Week](#)

[Homecoming Activities](#)

[Talent Night / Dances](#)

[CCHD Multi-Media Youth Arts Contest / Art Festival](#)

[Community Mural / Garden](#)

[Days of Service](#)

[Cross-Age / Community Presentations](#)

## **Lobbying for Justice**

[Writing Letters to Elected Officials](#)

[Template](#)

[Sample Letter](#)

[Calling an Elected Official Checklist](#)

[Visiting an Elected Official Checklist](#)

[Writing a Press Release](#)

[Template](#)

[Sample Press Release](#)

[Writing a Letter to the Editor Sample](#)

## **Building Constituencies for Justice**

[Selecting a Community Issue Checklist](#)

[Getting People to Join Your Group Checklist](#)

[Organizing, Planning and Facilitating a Meeting](#)

[Identifying and Developing Leaders Checklist](#)

## **Educating for Justice**

Education is a prerequisite to action. The following is a list of suggestions to effectively educate others in a variety of settings. These projects can be completed as a class, across a grade level or may be applied to a parish or school-wide community.

### **Community Service Day**

Most community service is performed in isolation. Consider identifying issues or challenges in the community that could be addressed by an entire classroom, grade level or school. Also remember that service should ideally incorporate ample time for reflection on Catholic social teaching and the root causes of the issues being addressed in service. To implement a Community Service Day (or Weekend), students youth ministry program, grade level, or school. Students and staff first arrange to visit a CCHD-funded group or other community agency to learn more about their immediate needs. Students then spend a block of time (a few hours, a day, or even a service weekend) at school or at their parish responding to this community need. Reflection on Catholic social teaching and the root causes of the problem being addressed should be interwoven throughout the service day and should culminate in action to advance social justice or long-term change.

### **Poverty Awareness Snacks**

Whether at nutrition break or lunch, students are hungry for snacks. Your class or group can satisfy their hunger while simultaneously raising money and awareness. Choose products that are easy to prepare and likely to sell. If your opportunities to sell are relatively infrequent, consider selling homemade baked goods. Bagels and muffins are also a welcomed break from the usual candy, chips and donut fare. As you sell, use a poster backdrop or table signs to raise awareness of poverty in your community. Slips of paper highlighting an important statistic may also be included with each purchase. Donate the proceeds to programs that are committed to addressing the root causes of poverty in your community. Provide free snacks to the faculty and staff and tell them what you're doing. This publicity can go a long way to raise awareness.

## **EPIC (Ending Poverty in Community) Fair**

Organized through student government, individual classes, youth ministries, or Confirmation programs, the objective of this project is to increase student awareness of poverty in their community. Lunchtime events can include a "Take-a-bite out of poverty" Bake Sale, informational booths, and a 1 in every 6 poverty raffle. Students dress up as grim reapers to represent the number of people who die from the effects of poverty in the United States and around the world. CCHD Multi-Media Youth Arts Contest / Art Festival

A school or parish-wide art contest is a powerful way to involve members of the entire community. The theme of the contest should promote awareness and encourage social action. Artworks can include photographs, sculptures, drawings, and paintings. Invite local elementary schools, parents, community members and the media to enjoy the event.

## **Food Fast or Hunger Banquet**

A powerful way to increase student awareness of hunger – particularly hunger around the world – is to organize a Food Fast or a Hunger Banquet. Invite students, teachers, parents, community members and the media to this event. Donate proceeds to groups that address poverty in your community or your own student advocacy group. Find more information at Catholic Relief Services at [www.foodfast.org](http://www.foodfast.org).

Organized through student government, individual classes or Confirmation programs, the objective of this project is to increase student awareness of poverty in their community. Lunchtime events can include a "Take-a-bite out of poverty" bake sale, informational booths and a one in every 14 poverty raffle. Students dress in all-black to mourn the number of children in the world under the age of five who die each year from preventable causes, most of them related to poverty.<sup>1</sup> Balloons, buttons, banners, informational posters and kiosks made from old refrigerator boxes add to the environment.

## **Student Poverty Leadership Conference**

The Student Poverty Leadership Conference teaches leadership skills to students from your school and can be expanded to include students from other schools as well. The theme of the conference can be EPIC (Ending Poverty in Community) or another related theme.). Theme ideas suggested by CASC (California Association of Student Councils) include G.O.M.A.D. (Go Out and Make a Difference), S.T.A.R.T. (Students Taking Action and

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<sup>1</sup> UNICEF. *The State of the World's Children 2008 Report*. [www.unicef.org/sowc08/docs/sowc08.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/sowc08/docs/sowc08.pdf)

Responsibility Today), L.E.A.D. (Leaders Embracing A Dream), and F.L.Y. (Finding Leadership in Yourself). As much as possible, the conference should be organized and presented by students and community members.

### **Community Lobby Day**

Similar to the Community Service Day, the Community Lobby Day could be an outstanding cross-curricular activity that blends civics, current events and Catholic social teaching. Students spend time researching current public policy issues that affect their local community, state or even the nation. Students arrange to visit elected officials either in their home offices or, if possible, at the state building or member office buildings in Washington, D.C. If travel is impractical, consider inviting an elected official or a member of their staff to your classroom or parish. Inform the opportunity to raise the elected official's awareness of the issue and have students offer solutions and ideas for confronting the issue. Seek their support.

### **Pick a Charity: School or Parish Event**

Instead of devoting a day or weekend, students increase community awareness one event at a time. Based on a community needs analysis, students select a program or organization that they would like to highlight or support. Proper advertising will be essential. Use the PA system, bulletin announcements, flyers and posters. Canned food and money can be collected. Boxes and cans can be creatively decorated to draw attention to the important elements of the campaign. Also, be sure to help students discuss and reflect on the root causes of the community issue and to identify social justice responses in addition to charity responses.

### **Pick a Charity: Athletic Events**

Another variation of the above theme is to promote awareness through athletic events. Ask high-profile faculty, students, and parishioners to play basketball on a weeknight, as a double-header with a pre-scheduled game or during half-time. If the game is played during a regularly scheduled event, pass cans around during the event. If it's a stand-alone event, sell tickets in advance. Invite members / organizers of the charity to attend as event VIPs.

Another variation is to sell raffle tickets during the first half of a basketball game. Randomly draw five names. Participants will have a chance to make a basket from the free throw line and/or the half-court line. Some of the proceeds go to participants who make shots. The remainder is given to the charity highlighted at the event.

## **Ribbon Week**

Provide ribbons, design t-shirts and/or distribute pencils, stickers, etc. to raise awareness about poverty in your community and challenge people to take action. Information booths, lunch activities and special announcements can support the event.

## **Homecoming Activities**

Homecoming is a time for fun, games and tradition. It's also a time to raise awareness about those who don't have a home. In addition to the festivities, sponsor a poster or art contest that is designed to raise awareness of homelessness in your community. Partner with a CCHD-funded group – particularly one that works to promote fair housing in your area.

## **Talent Night / ASB Dances**

Talent Nights, dances or virtually any student government, class or parish event can help to educate others and raise awareness. The method can range from selecting justice-oriented event themes to donating a portion of the proceeds to support social justice causes. Posters, artwork and informational flyers provide a discreet but powerful message.

## **CCHD Multi-Media Youth Arts Contest / Art Festival**

The Multi-Media Youth Arts Contest is a school or parish-wide art program that engages young people grades 7-12 in learning about the root causes of poverty; Catholic social teaching; the two feet of social action (charitable works and social justice); and the Catholic Campaign for Human Development. After learning about these themes, youth create artwork, including paintings, videos, photographs, writings or other creative art, to educate their peers and community about what they have learned. After artwork has been created, students, parents, community members and the media can be invited to enjoy an educational display of the artwork. Visit [www.usccb.org/about/catholic-campaign-for-human-development/2011-12-multi-media-youth-arts-contest.cfm](http://www.usccb.org/about/catholic-campaign-for-human-development/2011-12-multi-media-youth-arts-contest.cfm) for more information.

## **Community Mural / Garden**

Devoting a wall or a portion of the school or parish to a mural or garden can serve as a symbol of the community's commitment to a particular theme or issue or as a more general statement about the community's mission regarding charitable works or social justice.

## **Days of Service**

Catholic Schools' Week, School-wide Service Fairs, Cinco de Mayo Fiestas or Martin Luther King Jr. Community Days of Service can be excellent opportunities to educate and to raise awareness. With charitable works as the organizing context, participants can also be encouraged to consider opportunities for social justice.

## **Cross-Age / Community Presentations**

High school students can educate elementary school students, community members or parishioners about issues facing their community and opportunities for social justice. Students can serve as remarkable emissaries and encourage people to look at issues in ways they may not have previously considered.

## **Lobbying for Justice**

In our democracy, elected officials represent their constituents – the people who live in their home district. The problem is that not everyone “back home” agrees on how an issue should be addressed. By communicating our opinions through letters, phone calls and personal visits, we can relay our thoughts and feelings about important community challenges.

When we communicate directly with elected officials, we play an important role in helping to create policies that are more just for everyone in our community.

The following handouts describe how students can do this by writing, calling or visiting their representatives.

# Writing Letters to Elected Officials

## Sample Letter Template

Date

The Honorable (Name of Elected Official)  
Address

Dear (Name with title),

- **First Paragraph**  
Explain who you are and the issue that you're interested in discussing.
- **Second Paragraph**  
Communicate what you think. Make it personal. Use personal experiences or stories to amplify your main points.
- **Third Paragraph**  
Closing. Include appreciation for their time. Restate your position. Request a response.

Sincerely,

Your Name  
Your Address  
Your Phone

# Sample Letter to an Elected Official

May 15, 2011

Sen. Jane Doe  
Capitol Building  
12345 Capitol St.  
Poverty, USA 90210

Dear Sen. Doe,

I am a student at St. Mary's High School and a member of our campus social action committee. I'm writing today to ask for your support in raising the federal minimum wage.

Over 46 million Americans today live in poverty. Increasing the minimum wage to a living wage is a step in the right direction in America's ongoing march against poverty. The minimum wage is currently \$7.25 per hour. Yet in today's world, the minimum wage for a mother who works full-time to support two small children translates to earnings of \$15,080 before any deductions or taxes. That falls \$2,488 below the federal poverty line for a family of three. Our parish has a large number of single mothers with children under 18 who could better provide for their family's basic needs of food, clothing, shelter, health care and education if they only had a slight increase in the minimum wage.

Please support our workforce by raising the minimum wage. I appreciate your leadership on this issue and I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

Ben Labre  
12345 Main St. Apt. B  
Poverty, USA 44147

# Calling an Elected Official

## Sample Checklist

An important social justice technique is to call elected officials at the local, state or national level. These calls are useful to gather information, to invite the official to speak, or to provide your opinion on how they should vote on an important issue. There are a number of steps that could help to make this a positive experience for everyone.

### **Before the Call**

- Identify your purpose. Know why you are calling.
- Write down your key points. Don't improvise on the phone.

### **Make the Call**

- State your name and affiliation. Who are you and whom are you representing?  
e.g. "Hi, my name is Max Kolbe. I'm calling from St. Mary's High School. I'm a constituent and live in (Name of Official)'s district."
- State the reason for your call.
  - To gather information: Ask for the staff member who handles this issue.
  - To invite the official to speak. Ask for the Office Scheduler.
  - To provide an opinion about an upcoming vote. Ask for the staff member who handles this issue.
- Thank the staff member for his/her time.

### **After the Call**

- Send information if you told someone you would.
- Optional: Follow-up with a letter.

# Visiting an Elected Official

## Sample Checklist

Elected officials decide on policies and make rules that affect our daily lives. Most of the time, these rules help people. Sometimes, they don't. Visiting elected officials is an excellent way to inform them of our positions, to help them create a fairer social structure, and to learn about our political system. There are a number of ways that you can visit with an elected representative or a member of their staff who may specialize in or handle poverty issues. First, you could invite them to your classroom or parish. Consult with their scheduler to find out when they are in their local office. Second, visit their local office if they have one. Finally, you can also visit their office downtown, in the state capital, or in Washington, D.C.

Whichever method you choose, students can meet with an elected representative individually or with other members of their class. If students are traveling, try to arrange meetings with multiple elected officials throughout the day in order to optimize the experience.

### Arrange for a Meeting

- Contact the Office Scheduler
  - Arrange for a classroom visit
  - Arrange for an office visit

### Preparation

- Prepare your position statement or "talking points." Write bullet points that outline your major positions.
- Prepare questions.
- Group visit:
  - Assign roles. Who will be responsible for introductions, stating positions, asking/answering questions, etc.?
  - Practice.

### Visit

- Be prepared. Clearly state your position and requests.
- Be courteous.
- Be professional.
- Leave materials as appropriate.

### After the Visit

- Write a thank you note that thanks the official or staff member and summarizes the meeting.
- Follow-up and maintain the relationship.

# Writing a Press Release Template

## Press Release Template

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:** (Place this at the top of the page, under your school's letterhead.

All letters are capitalized.)

**CONTACT:** (Include as much information as you can to make it easy for a reporter to contact you.  
Contact Person  
An administrator may be able to assist as a point of contact. Consider providing your cell phone or  
School Name  
Telephone Number home  
Fax Number contact information to make it easy for a  
E-mail Address reporter to gather information after  
normal  
Web site Address school hours.)

(Skip two lines)

### **Headline (should be in bold type)**

City, State, Date — (This will tell the reporter when you sent the release.)

First paragraph should include the answers to the basic questions like who? what? why? where? when?

The remainder of the text should briefly provide additional details. Include a brief discussion of the community need(s) to be addressed and the contributions of community agencies and experts. Quotes from students about their participation would be helpful.

# # #

(indicates the end of the press release)

# Writing a Press Release

## Sample

Contact: Teresa D'Avila  
Project Organizer  
Cell: 213 555 0191

St. Mary's High School  
12345 Main Street  
Poverty, USA 90210

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## Press Release

### **Homecoming Puts the Spotlight on the Homeless**

Students invite city officials to participate in this month's homecoming festivities – and work to end homelessness year-round.

**Poverty, USA, November 2, 2011:** Homecoming is a time for fun, football games and tradition for high school students and alumni. This year, it's also a time to remember those who don't have a home.

More than 100 students at St. Mary's High School are launching a campaign to end homelessness as their school celebrates its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary. "More than three million people in America – more than a third of them children – don't have a place to call home," said Teresa D'Avila, project organizer for the event. "As students called to work for social justice, we cannot turn away from our brothers and sisters in need."

Students are flooding City Hall with invitations to this year's football game, scheduled for Friday, November 18, at 7 p.m. The invitations also urge city council officials to provide more job training, transitional housing for battered women and children, and more affordable housing for the city's more than 1,400 people forced to sleep in crowded shelters or on the streets.

"We've been talking with the men, women and kids our age who are living this horror, and so many say they can't afford to get into an apartment," said Paula Martinez, a junior participating in the project.

The students partnered with the Main Street Homeless Action Center, a nonprofit advocacy group that provides education and training to the region's poorest of the poor. The Center was a 2011 recipient of funding from the Catholic Campaign for Human Development. "Too often, the homeless go unnoticed," said John Bosco, a senior at the school. "Raising community awareness is a big part of addressing the problem."

###

## Writing a Letter to the Editor Sample

To Whom It May Concern:

If we want to help families succeed, we need to raise the minimum wage in our city. The federal minimum wage and the minimum wage in our city are both currently set at \$7.25 an hour. Yet in today's world, the minimum wage for a mother who works full-time to support two small children translates to earnings of \$15,080/year before any deductions or taxes. That falls \$2,488 below the federal poverty line for a family of three.

Women and minorities stand to benefit the most from a raise. An estimated 3,100 single mothers with children under 18 in our city could better provide for their family's basic needs of food, clothing, shelter, health care and education.

Over 46 million Americans today live in poverty. Increasing our city's minimum wage to a living wage would mean that we are taking a step in the right direction in America's ongoing march against poverty by supporting families right at home.

Sincerely,

Chuck Borromeo  
12345 Main St. Apt. B  
Poverty, USA 44147

# **Building Constituencies for Justice**

Through community service, most students work individually to address social issues through some form of charitable works. Assisting in food pantries, homeless shelters or soup kitchens are examples of actions that can meet people's immediate needs.

Much less common are students who work for social justice. Students can be powerful agents of social change. Their ability is magnified through connections with Catholic Campaign for Human Development (CCHD)-funded groups or other community agencies involved in the work to address the local causes of poverty. These groups can provide important insights into community issues and are valuable resources for student efforts.

Selecting issues, recruiting members, organizing meetings and developing leadership are important ways to begin a long-term program of social justice. The focus of this section is on developing cooperation between groups of people who may be able to respond to community issues in a more sustainable way.

# Selecting a Community Issue

## Sample Issue Checklist

Recommended Issue: \_\_\_\_\_

The issue that we would like to recommend is (check all that apply):

- Clear understood. Our objectives and outcomes are easily understood.
- Measurable We know when we have achieved our objectives. The outcomes are easily defined.
- Doable time, We can work to address this issue given the amount of money and resources at our disposal.
- Important The people working on the project think it's important and worth their time and effort.
- Fun Addressing the causes of poverty is hard work. Choose an issue that generates enthusiasm for the long haul.
- Unifying community Avoid issues that will inappropriately divide the or unfairly pit one group against another. You may need to work with these groups again.
- Consistent Ideally, the issue you select should flow from your understanding of Catholic social teaching and should be consistent with the mission of your school and/or parish.
- Inclusive Many people should be able to be involved in addressing this issue. Ideally, you will be able to partner with a CCHD-funded group or other community agency(ies) that are working on this issue.

# Getting People to Join Your Group

## Recruitment, Involvement, and Action

### Sample Checklist

While work for social justice can be completed individually, its effectiveness is magnified as the size of the group expands. Getting people to join your group and keeping them interested is a challenge for any leader.

This section offers suggestions to encourage people to participate in your social justice campaign. Use this checklist to help you to get more people involved with your issue.

In order to attract people and organizations to our social action, we . . .

- Asked them to join.  
(If you want people to get involved, you have to ask. This also applies to other groups or organizations such as CCHD-funded groups or community agencies. Investigate how you can help each other.)
- Identified a personal benefit.  
The answer to the question, "What's in it for me?" for everyone involved should be clear. Check the benefits that may apply:
  - Personal helps - Involvement looks good on a resume or develop professional skills.
  - Social - This is a good way to meet people.
  - Greater Good - This issue is really interesting to me and to the community in which I live.
- Invited them to be involved but not necessarily attend (all) meetings.
- Listened to hear their needs and what they were willing to offer.
- Involved people in important, but basic activities that got them involved and encouraged their commitment.
- Keep members connected through regular activities or communications.
- Regularly recognize and thank members for their contributions and accomplishments.

# Organizing, Planning and Facilitating a Meeting

## Sample Checklist

Meetings are a necessary part of work for social justice. They provide opportunities to identify goals and encourage involvement. Well-planned meetings can create successful events and attract others to your cause. The following checklist will help you to plan effective meetings.

- Our meeting is well-planned.
- Meeting has clear goals and objectives.  
(A goal is a general statement of direction – e.g. ending poverty in our community. An objective is a specific and measurable action step to accomplish the goal.)
- Agenda is provided.
  - Everyone receives a printed agenda.
  - Agenda items are connected to the goals and objectives.
  - Agenda items have time limits if necessary.
  - Reminders are sent about the meeting time and location.
  - Small groups brainstorm specific solutions.
  - The large group selects from options and makes recommendations.
  - Leaders choose a convenient time for the group to meet.
  - Leaders choose a workable space.
  - A facilitator is selected to run the meeting.

### **Room Set-Up**

- Set-up depends on the meeting's goals, including:
  - Informal discussion – chairs are set up in circles and around tables.
  - Informational meeting – classroom set-up.
  - Refreshment table is set up opposite the entrance.
  - Sign-in Sheet / Name Tags near the entrance.

## **Roles and Responsibilities**

- We assigned as many roles as possible. Everyone has a job.
  - Leader / Facilitator
  - Record Keeper
  - Greeter / Welcomer
  - Timer
  - Committee Representative
- Everyone leaves the meeting with something to do for the next time.

## **Materials**

- Agenda is printed.
- Materials / handouts are provided.

## **Running the Meeting**

- Meeting starts on time.
- People are welcomed and introduced.
- Facilitator(s) stick to the agenda.
- Meeting plans for action and is always action-oriented.
- Everyone is involved.
- Everyone commits to something by the end of the meeting.
- Commitments and next steps are reviewed before the meeting ends.
- Meeting ends on time or before.

## **After the Meeting**

- Follow-up provided for all members.
- Reminders are sent to all regarding next steps.

# Leadership

## Identifying and Developing Leaders

### Sample Checklist

Changing the structures of society that give rise to community problems provides a challenging opportunity for student leadership. Two basic leadership styles are helpful: the organizer and the welcomer. The organizer has the ability to get things done. Goals, objectives, agendas and taking action are part of this person's basic nature. The welcomer is naturally gifted at welcoming, introducing, listening and thanking. Both styles are important. Most people tend to be better at one than the other. The goal is to help people develop both of these characteristics or to find people who have them who are able to work together.

Our group grows leaders by . . .

- Assessing the qualities of members who are willing to assume more responsibility.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Organized
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Goal Oriented
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Able to Recruit others
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Good Listener
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Positive
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Honest
  
- Giving everyone a job that that rotates and develops leadership skills.
  
- Encouraging younger students to lead projects to help develop their skills.
  
- Setting goals for leadership development.