



How Can We Respond To Growing Poverty And Increasing Homelessness?

Understanding, Vision and Action: Mission Education Opportunities for Adults and Teens

Resources Prepared and Presented by the
Worcester Area Mission Society, United Church of Christ (WAMS, UCC)

As people of faith we have a responsibility to serve our neighbors and care for them. But sometimes the needs are so overwhelming that it is difficult to see how any response will make a difference. The more we can know about our neighbor's struggles, the more effective we will be in assisting them. The more we understand the root causes of poverty, the more effective we will be in working and advocating for long-term, lasting change.
(1)

Using resources available locally and the rich resource of the *Just Neighbors* curriculum, published by *Family Promise*, WAMS, UCC offers a variety of educational programs on “poverty” and “homelessness”.

Consider an education, mission, youth or women’s group, an ecumenical gathering in your community, or an experience planned for several churches in your area.

- Please invite us to come and provide materials and experiences that will:
- ~ help you to understand some of the underlying issues,
 - ~ envision some ways your group could address root causes
 - ~ and begin to form action plans to help you move forward.

On the reverse side of this flier there are examples of topics and formats that we can tailor for your congregation.

(Most programs involve interactive, multi-media experiences, discussion and action plans.)

COST: Our suggested donation is \$50 for a two-hour session.
You may contact us to negotiate an appropriate fee for your group.
[A donation is not required for Congregations already financially supporting WAMS, UCC.]

**FOR MORE INFORMATION OR TO SET UP SESSIONS,
CONTACT WAMS,UCC:**
The Rev. Nancy Shantia Wright-Gray at 978-422-6256 or shantiawg@gmail.com
The Rev. Robert Bachelder at 508-832-3937 or wamsucc@bigplanet.com



~ **Basic Issues of Poverty and Homelessness:** (Prepared especially for groups that have had some involvement with homeless people and want to become more knowledgeable and do something to “make a difference”.)

Two, two-hour sessions or three, one and one-quarter-hour sessions

- addressing some of the root causes underlying homelessness and poverty
- and inviting your group to begin to explore avenues of action.

~ **Prejudice, Privilege and Poverty:** (Prepared for groups who have already hosted the basic course.)

1 session exploring the ways that racial discrimination affects education, employment, and economic opportunities. (1)

~ **Worship Resources:**

1 session, presenting some existing materials and helping your group to choose and to develop resources for a thematic worship service or series around *Understanding, Vision and Action*.

~ **Our Children, Our Future:**

1 session, drawn largely from *Just Neighbors*, using discussion, activities and a moving video made up of photographs children have taken of their lives, telling the harsh realities of growing up poor.

~ **Just Neighbors Curriculum:** (This is particularly recommended for groups who have had little or no involvement with poor or homeless people, but would like to learn, and begin to act for positive change.)

5, two-hour sessions or 9, one and one quarter-hour sessions of study and action on underlying issues of poverty and homelessness.

~ **Action Research and Planning:** After you have studied and gained some understanding of the issues at the roots of poverty, invite WAMS, UCC staff or volunteers to help you explore action for your group/congregation to address or advocate concerning issues within your local community or the state.

(1) Adapted from information in *Just Neighbors*, © 2003; a curriculum prepared by Family Promise. Family Promise is a national organization with a "broad range of programs to build communities and strengthen lives." It started as the Interfaith Hospitality Network (IHN) to shelter, feed and provide support services to homeless families; has now branched out to include training volunteers to act as advocates (Family Mentors) to at-risk families; the *Just Neighbors* curriculum - a multi-media, interactive program on poverty and homelessness; and a number of outgrowth programs of Local IHN groups - such as transitional housing, housing renovation, job training, healthcare services, childcare and literacy.