

Journeys of Faith

A Resource Guide for Orphan Care Ministries
Helping Children in Africa & Beyond



*A publication of the Faith to Action Initiative
~ and ~*

*A companion to "From Faith to Action:
Strengthening Family and Community Care
for Orphans and Vulnerable Children in Sub-Saharan Africa"*

Table of Contents

Dear Reader	1
How to Use This Guide	2
The Call to Respond to the Needs of Orphans & Vulnerable Children	4
Strategies for Churches Responding to the Needs of Orphans & Vulnerable Children	6
Engaging the Church.....	8
Small Group Study Questions: Engaging the Church.....	13
A Heart for Children & Families.....	14
Five Stories of Partnership	16
Rockland/Ngaramtoni (Tanzania)	18
Wheaton/Nakuru (Kenya).....	23
Mission Community Church/Visionledd/Somebody Cares (Malawi).....	28
Watermark/ALARM (Uganda)	34
Willow Creek/Bright Hope/Samfya (Zambia).....	40
Scriptural Inspiration.....	39
Principles of Partnership	46
Guiding Principles for Short-Term Mission Trips	50
Small Group Study Questions: Principles of Partnership & Short-Term Missions.....	52
Key Resources.....	53
Key Terms & Acronyms	56
Faith to Action Initiative: Mission & Members	58

Credits

Journeys of Faith was written and published by the **Faith to Action Initiative** with financial and in-kind support from **UNICEF**, the **Firelight Foundation**, the **Better Care Network** and additional Initiative member organizations.

Written and Edited by

Kerry Olson, Amanda Cox, Diana Millner, Kathleen Riordan, John Derrick

Copy Editor

Patricia Zylius

Graphic Designer

Marianne Wyllie

Field Visits/Interviews

Amanda Cox, Kathleen Riordan, Lucy Steinitz, John Derrick

Contributors

Joe Bridges, Steve Bowler, Nancy Clement, Mike Douris, Beau Fournet, Lynne Hybels, Dean Inserra, Dot Johnson, Tammy Johnson, Cindy Judge, Lynne Marian, Jodi McCall, Jedd Medefind, Karl Mueller, Elli Oswald, Mike Rutter, Zanele Sibanda, Michelle Timmons, Shel Virden

Photo Credits

Amanda Cox, Nancy Clement (Rockland), John Derrick (Willow Creek), Joel Even (World Vision photos), Dot Johnson (Burke Presbyterian Church), Joop Rubens, Michelle Timmons (One Family's Journey)

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the many organizations, churches, and individuals in Africa and in the U.S. that contributed to the content of this publication. We especially would like to express our gratitude and appreciation to the African communities that hosted our visits and shared their stories with us: the pastors, volunteers, church and community members, families, youth, and children to whom we dedicate this work.

To obtain additional copies of *Journeys of Faith* and its companion publication, *From Faith to Action*, please go to the Faith to Action Initiative website at:

www.faithbasedcarefororphans.org

Available in both downloadable pdf and hard copies by order.

Dear Reader,

Every day, another 15,000 children lose their mother or father to HIV/AIDS and other causes. In Sub-Saharan Africa and beyond, the safety and survival of millions of children is threatened by extreme poverty, disease, and lack of access to basic needs. The biblical mandate to care for the orphaned, the widowed, and all those living in poverty is a clear call to action. And people of faith are responding—ministering to the vulnerable in their own communities and reaching out globally to those in areas of greatest need.

In 2006, *From Faith to Action* was published to call attention to African churches, faith-based organizations, and community groups responding to the orphan crisis at their doorsteps. Endorsed by 32 organizations working internationally, *From Faith to Action* introduced readers to the impact of poverty and HIV/AIDS in Sub-Saharan Africa and provided concrete examples of “family- and community-based care” in action.

The response to *From Faith to Action* was overwhelming, with a second printing in 2008 and over 45,000 copies distributed to date. The message that strengthening families—rather than building orphanages—is the best way to meet the needs of orphans and vulnerable children is a message that resonates strongly with the Church, which recognizes and upholds the importance of family in the life of a child.

Throughout Africa and around the world, indigenous churches are ministering with great compassion and courage to the increasing numbers of children going hungry, unable to attend school, caring for ailing parents, and grieving the loss of loved ones. Most importantly, these locally led initiatives are helping to ensure that children remain in family care, where children grow best. *From Faith to Action* provided a glimpse into this life-sustaining work. *Journeys of Faith* tells the story of churches in the United States that are supporting these efforts through prayer, giving, service, and partnership.

Journeys of Faith is intended as a resource and guide for churches, pastors, lay persons, students, mission teams, and others seeking to respond to the call of James 1:27. It provides examples of orphan care ministries and long-standing partnerships grounded in faith, prayer, and experience. *Journeys of Faith* is offered as an introduction and a stepping-stone to encourage and help guide a path that is a unique and personal journey for every church and individual. Our hope is to both inspire and inform through the stories and the “lessons learned” shared within these pages.

On behalf of the Faith to Action Initiative,



Kerry Olson, Chair and Cofounder
The Faith to Action Initiative



Amanda Cox, Coordinator



Diana Millner, Cofounder



How to Use This Guide

There are many ways for churches to engage in orphan care in Africa and beyond. While there is never a “one size fits all” approach when it comes to initiating a new ministry, there are principles of better practice we can learn from. *Journeys of Faith* provides examples of orphan care ministries and long-standing partnerships that are grounded in faith, prayer, and experience. It is intended as a resource and a guide for churches, pastors, students, mission field personnel, and others seeking to respond to the call of James 1:27.

Journeys of Faith is a companion to *From Faith to Action: Strengthening Family and Community Care for Orphans and Vulnerable Children in Sub-Saharan Africa*. We recommend that the two publications be read alongside one another, but each can also stand on its own. *From Faith to Action* describes the strategies and activities of African churches, faith-based organizations, and community groups caring for children in need. *Journeys of Faith* tells the stories of churches in the United States that are supporting and engaging with these efforts through raising awareness, providing needed resources, and serving in partnership.

The goal of *Journeys of Faith* is to move readers from a basic understanding of the impact of poverty and HIV/AIDS on children and families in Africa to a better understanding of how the global church, particularly churches in the United States, can support the work of African churches and ministries responding to the needs of orphans and vulnerable children. While the examples shared here are focused on Africa, the principles and lessons learned can be applied much more broadly.

This resource is designed to be used as an introduction and a stepping-stone to guide a path that is a unique and personal journey for every church and individual. Accordingly, *Journeys of Faith* can be read and utilized in a variety of ways. It can serve as a guide for small groups, Sunday school classes, or missions teams. You may choose to read it all in one sitting or in a more measured way. For example, this guide can be used as a 10-week (or less) study series based on the key themes outlined here. Resources recommended for further learning are included (pages 53–55), as well as a guide to key terms and acronyms (pages 56 and 57) and scriptural inspiration (page 39). Suggested discussion questions are interspersed throughout the guide.

Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress...

~ James 1:27

Learning about Orphans & Vulnerable Children

Orphan statistics can be shocking. The worldwide orphan “crisis” has been the driving catalyst for many orphan care ministries. What is the definition of “orphan”? Who are orphans and vulnerable children? Where are they living and who is caring for them? Laying an appropriate groundwork for terminology, statistics, and definitions is essential for understanding the need for better care practices for orphans and vulnerable children in Africa and beyond.

Pages 4–5

Key Strategies for Strengthening Family & Community-Based Care

We are called not just to action but to our “utmost”—our best. How we engage in orphan care is just as important as the fact that we do engage. The strategies provided in this section are based on principles that have been agreed upon and endorsed by a broad constituency of community, church, and faith-based organizations, as well as foundations and international agencies serving children. They are based on the recognition that efforts to support orphans and vulnerable children should consider all aspects of children’s wellbeing, including the importance of family in the life of a child.

Pages 6–7

Engaging the Church: Getting Inspired, Raising Awareness & Taking Action

After learning, praying, and discerning, many readers may be ready for action. This section provides an overview of the continuum of orphan care engagement from awareness raising to direct church-to-church partnership. It includes examples of churches in the United States that have launched creative awareness and fundraising activities to support family and community-based ministries in Africa. Descriptions of three national campaigns provide special opportunities for engagement. An adoptive family shares the story of their journey in caring for children in Ethiopia. Discussion questions for this and the above two sections can be found on page 13.

Pages 8–15

Five Stories of Partnership & Lessons Learned

At the heart of this publication are five unique stories that fit within the overall theme of caring for orphans and vulnerable children and demonstrate many of the 12 strategies for strengthening family and community-based care in action. Each story highlights a particular journey of partnership between a U.S. church and an African ministry: how the partnership began, how it grew and has been sustained, and the activities that have been supported.

Overarching principles of partnership and family-based care are introduced throughout, and each story is followed by three key lessons and discussion questions that help define the “take away” and its particular meaning for both the example and for your group.

Pages 16–45

Key Principles of Partnership

There is a growing understanding in the global church that meeting the needs of orphans and vulnerable children in Africa and around the world is often best accomplished through partnership. Local churches, ministries, and community initiatives are in the best position to identify and respond to children and families in the greatest need. By praying for, giving to, and serving with these local ministries, churches in the United States and the global North can support these efforts.

Partnerships done right have great potential to transform lives and communities, creating sustainable change for children and families. However, partnership can also present many challenges and can sometimes result in unintentional harm. Whether working directly with an overseas ministry or through an international intermediary, there are overarching principles of partnership to help guide the journey. This section synthesizes lessons presented throughout *Journeys of Faith* and provides a guide for partnership that is based on respect for local leadership, cross-cultural understanding, and practices that are in line with the 12 strategies for supporting orphans and vulnerable children.

Pages 46–49



Guiding Principles for Short-Term Mission Trips

Each of the five partnership stories shared in *Journeys of Faith* includes a description of the featured U.S. church’s approach to short-term missions (pages 16 –45). Five churches, five different examples, yet all share common themes. These “side stories” help illustrate the specific and varied ways that churches engage with their partners’ ministries in Africa and also highlight several overarching principles of partnership.

In addition to these individual examples, a separate section is devoted to the overall topic of “best practice” in short-term missions. Drawing from several key Christian resources, topics covered include how to help without hurting, things to consider before you travel, and how to align short-term mission trips with the needs and priorities of local churches and ministries already serving children. Discussion questions for both Principles of Partnership and Short-Term Mission Trips can be found on page 52.

Pages 50–52

A Note on Resources

This publication highlights a range of resources—print, film, websites, and toolkits—for churches seeking to respond to the needs of orphans and vulnerable children. The Faith to Action Initiative’s website (www.faithbasedcarefororphans.org) offers links to key resources (including *From Faith to Action*), conferences, and events. The website also features additional stories, “lessons learned,” and updates from churches and ministries responding to the needs of orphans and vulnerable children around the world.

The Call to Respond to the Needs of Orphans

Orphans and Vulnerable Children

The term “orphan” refers to any child who has lost one or both parents from any cause. Nearly 90 percent of the children who are considered to be orphans have a surviving parent.

The term “vulnerable children” refers to children who have been determined to be in serious hardship, due to orphanhood or any other cause, such as poverty, illness, disability, or separation from family care.

Targeting support to “AIDS orphans” or only to children who have lost parents can create problems by both privileging and stigmatizing the children receiving services. It is important to help all children with serious hardships, including those caring for ailing parents, working in exploitive labor, or suffering from abuse. Local churches, community groups and social service organizations are often in the best position to identify, evaluate, and assist those children who are most in need of support.

Poverty and HIV/AIDS threaten the safety and survival of millions of children across Africa and around the world. In Sub-Saharan Africa alone, more than 56 million children have been orphaned (lost a mother, father, or both parents) due to illness, famine, armed conflict, and other causes. Nearly 15 million of these children have lost parents due to HIV/AIDS. For every orphaned child, countless more are made vulnerable as their parents become ill or are no longer able to provide for basic needs. Heartbreaking numbers of children are going hungry, are unable to attend school, and increasingly, are being separated from their families and deprived of the love, care, and protection that every child needs to survive and thrive.

The vast majority of orphans and vulnerable children continue to live with their surviving parents and extended family members. But many of these families are living in extreme poverty and face severe challenges. Families can provide children with the love and sense of belonging that no other setting can replace, but they need resources to be able to provide for basic material necessities such as shelter, clothing, food, and the cost of school. It is a heartbreaking reality that children are often placed in orphanages because of poverty, rather than due to orphanhood.

Children grow best in families.

Scripture, common sense, and years of academic research are all in agreement on this fundamental truth: children grow best in families. The family is the most important source of love, attention, emotional support, material sustenance, and spiritual guidance in the life of a child. The best and most important way for the Church to respond to the needs of orphans and vulnerable children is to strengthen families to provide for their care.



Children, Families, Poverty, and HIV/AIDS

- Over half of the population in Sub-Saharan Africa—and 30 percent of all children living in the global South—live in extreme poverty on less than \$1 per day.
- Globally, 153 million children have lost one or both parents. Over 56 million of these children live in Sub-Saharan Africa.
- Every day another 15,000 children lose their mother or father to HIV/AIDS or other causes.
- Nearly 90 percent of the children around the world who have been orphaned by HIV/AIDS live in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Sources:

Children and AIDS, Fifth Stocktaking Report, 2010.
Unite for Children/Unite Against AIDS, 2010.

Millennium Development Goals, www.unicef.org

& Vulnerable Children

Helping Families and Communities Meet the Needs of Children

The Church is called—and in many ways is uniquely equipped—to respond to the needs of the poor, the orphaned, and the vulnerable. Churches offer some of the most extensive, best organized, and viable networks of community organizations throughout Africa. Historically the African church has played a vital—though often under-recognized—role in meeting the health, education, and social welfare needs of children and families. Most importantly, the moral leadership, respect, and spiritual authority accorded to the Church places local pastors and church leadership in a tremendous position of responsibility and opportunity to inspire and mobilize communities to action.

In the face of poverty and HIV/AIDS, churches across Africa and around the world are stepping up to the challenge with great compassion and resourcefulness. In many regions, it is the local church and people of faith, together with their fellow community members, who are leading the response to provide care for orphans and vulnerable children. Central to this effort is the realization that to care for the child means to care for the family. Accordingly, churches and communities often take a holistic approach to ministry, helping to ensure that children remain in family care.

Like the families they serve, many African church and community initiatives are located in areas of limited material resources. Most local efforts are volunteer driven, fueled by the faith and the goodwill of caring individuals, many of whom are living in poverty themselves. While these community-driven initiatives succeed in bringing their own resources to bear, additional support is needed.

Local groups are in the best position to directly minister to the needs of children and families in their own communities. Churches in the United States and the global North also have a critical role to play. By learning about, praying for, giving to, and serving with these local efforts, we can help to bring life-sustaining support to children and families in need.

Orphanages Are Not the Answer

Orphanages are not the answer to the complex needs of orphans and vulnerable children. While residential care is sometimes needed for children who have no other means of support, living in an orphanage long term can be detrimental to the emotional, physical, and social development of a child. Most children in orphanages have parents. Of those who do not, many have extended family members or families within the local church and community who would step forward to take them in if they only had the means and the support to do so.

Studies in both Africa and Asia have found that poverty, not orphanhood, is the leading cause of placement in an orphanage. Families living in poverty often place children in orphanages as a way

for them to access food, shelter, and education. However, what is really needed is to bring these necessities within the reach of families.

The most promising solutions focus on strengthening family care and preventing the conditions that lead to the need for orphanages. Even when children have lost both parents, alternative family placement is preferable to institutional care. Every effort should be made to keep children in loving and supportive families, where children grow best. If residential care is needed because there are no other immediate alternatives, small group homes are preferable to large orphanages. If a child is placed in an orphanage of any kind, every effort should be made to find reliable family care through reunification, kinship care, foster family care, and adoption.



Throughout Africa and around the world, churches have a critical role to play in helping children and uplifting families.

The local church can offer direct spiritual, emotional, and material support, as well as helping families to access livelihoods, education, and basic services such as medical care.

The global church can pray for, give to, and serve with these efforts, providing needed resources, solidarity, and encouragement.

Working in partnership, these ministries can bring hope and life-sustaining change to orphans, vulnerable children, and families.

In this way, we can serve as Jesus' hands and feet, bringing hope and healing to a wounded world.



Strategies for Churches Responding



In places heavily impacted by poverty and HIV/AIDS, the Church is called to respond to the needs of orphans, vulnerable children, and families.

Local churches are often in the best position to identify and directly minister to those in their communities who are in greatest need. Pastors and church and community members can work together to motivate and lead the frontline response, offering their care and support, and mobilizing local resources to make a day-to-day difference in the lives of others.

The global church also has a critical role to play. Churches in the United States and other areas of relative prosperity can pray for, give to, and serve with those who are bringing their own God-given strengths and resources to bear amidst conditions of material poverty. In respectful partnership with local efforts, we can offer our resources and support.

As we seek ways to help without unintentionally hurting, it is important to remember that how we give and what we do matters. In addition to prayerful discernment, our actions should be guided by principles and strategies based on good practice. Seeking guidance from sources that offer an experienced and evidence-based perspective helps ensure that our responses will contribute to real and lasting change.

The strategies below are based on principles that have been agreed upon and endorsed by a broad constituency of community, church, and faith-based organizations, as well as foundations and international agencies serving children. They are based on the recognition that efforts to support orphans and vulnerable children should consider all aspects of children's wellbeing, including the importance of family in the life of a child.

These strategies, adapted here to speak directly to churches seeking to launch or support orphan care ministries (especially in regions heavily impacted by HIV/AIDS), are aimed at building up a holistic approach to meeting the needs of orphans and vulnerable children. The stories found in this publication illustrate many of these strategies in action in Africa and highlight the role that U.S. churches can play in support these efforts.

1 *Focus on the most vulnerable children, not only those orphaned by HIV/AIDS.*

When programs target "AIDS orphans" only, they can cause problems by both privileging and stigmatizing the children receiving services. Many causes, not just loss of a parent, can make a child vulnerable, including poverty, gender, disability, and illness. Community members and those who are involved in the day-to-day lives of children are often in the best position to identify who is in greatest need. When U.S. churches designate their support for "AIDS orphans" or even for orphans only, they may cause unintentional harm by contributing to the social isolation of the children being served or by failing to provide help for those in greatest need.

2 *Strengthen the capacity of families and communities to care for children.*

Most families and communities want to care for their own, but those living in poverty or other difficult circumstances often need additional support. Strategies that strengthen families' ability to care for children, such as the activities listed here, help ensure that fewer children will be abandoned or placed in orphanages. For children who no longer have parents who can care for them, churches and community groups can help support other family-based alternatives, such as kinship care, foster care, and domestic adoption.

3 *Reduce stigma and discrimination.*

When children and families face discrimination due to poverty, HIV status, ethnicity, disability, or any other cause, they become isolated and at greater risk for harm. Local churches and community organizations can play an essential role in promoting awareness and behavior change around common sources of discrimination. Pastors and other community leaders can use their voices and actions to change hearts and minds, putting an end to harmful social attitudes and increasing a sense of community and service to those in need.

4 *Support HIV prevention and awareness, particularly among youth.*

Despite positive trends in knowledge and awareness about HIV and AIDS among young people, many continue to be infected with HIV. There is a clear gap between knowledge of HIV risk and actual behavior change. The Church has a leadership role to play in inspiring and promoting healthy behavior change to ensure prevention and protection against HIV and AIDS. Churches can help youth and others access HIV-testing and counseling centers. Churches can offer family life and human sexuality education, peer support groups, and mentorship programs that foster faithful, healthy, and life-sustaining choices.

to the Needs of Orphans & Vulnerable Children



5 *Strengthen the ability of caregivers and youth to earn livelihoods.*

Poverty is a leading cause of family separation and placement of children in orphanages. Families need basic financial resources in order to send their children to school and provide them with adequate food, clothing, medical care, and shelter. Churches can help caregivers access the skills and resources to earn livelihoods. For example, microcredit loans, small business training, vocational education, and subsistence farming programs help youth and caregivers provide for themselves and their families.

6 *Provide material assistance to those who are too old or ill to work.*

Income-generating projects can be an effective way to help caregivers provide for children and themselves. However, for those who are too old or too ill to work, additional assistance is required. Cash transfers, food donations, home repairs, and other forms of material assistance lessen the burden on the ill and the elderly, such as grandparent caregivers.

7 *Ensure access to health care, life-saving medications, and home-based care.*

In addition to saving lives, access to health care and life-saving medications help prevent orphanhood and family breakdown. Churches can provide information and encouragement to support HIV testing and can help community members access vital treatment, health care, and medicines, such as antiretrovirals to treat HIV infection. Churches can initiate and lead home-based care programs in which trained volunteers visit the homes of the ill. The volunteers offer emotional, spiritual, and medical support, and also monitor the wellbeing of children within families living with HIV or other serious illness.

8 *Provide daycare and other support services that ease the burden on caregivers.*

Parents and caregivers, particularly women, are limited in their ability to earn livelihoods if they do not have access to daycare and other necessary support systems. Churches can offer daycare, giving children opportunities to grow and learn while freeing other family members to work or to attend school. Support groups give parents and caregivers space to gather in a community setting, experience a sense of solidarity around shared challenges, and offer one another spiritual and emotional care. Easing the burden on parents and caregivers strengthens the family care and protection of children.

For more examples of these strategies in action, please see *From Faith to Action: Strengthening Family and Community Care for Orphans and Vulnerable Children in Sub-Saharan Africa*.

To access a copy, go to: www.faithbasedcarefororphans.org

9 *Support schools and ensure access to education, for girls as well as boys.*

Too often, children are placed in orphanages so that they can access an education. Others remain in their families but are unable to attend school because their parents cannot pay for school fees, textbooks, and uniforms, or because children are needed to help care for ill parents or contribute to the family's livelihood. Churches can help children remain in school—and in families—by providing support for education costs and by helping to lift families out of poverty. Pastors and church members can encourage their fellow community members to make education for all boys and girls a priority and a means to end the cycle of poverty.

10 *Support the psychosocial and spiritual, as well as material, needs of children.*

Orphans and vulnerable children have emotional, spiritual, and social needs that can leave them at risk if left unmet. Children may need help coping with great challenges: the loss of a parent, separation from siblings, the emotional toll of illness in the family, or exposure to violence and conflict. The Church supports the healing process and helps build children's resilience through faith, prayer, and fellowship, and by demonstrating God's love and care. Bereavement counseling, peer support groups, and recreation and arts programs also provide children and youth with encouragement and support.

11 *Engage children and youth in the decisions that affect their lives.*

Children often bring valuable ideas, information, and viewpoints to the decisions affecting their lives. When children are invited to participate in ways that are appropriate to their age and maturity, they are less fearful and feel a greater sense of ownership. Local churches are often involved in decisions such as helping identify alternative care for orphans or supporting families in crisis due to abuse and neglect at home. Providing opportunities for children and youth to share their viewpoints and engage in meaningful ways in these and other important decisions helps to ensure their wellbeing.

12 *Protect children from abuse, gender discrimination, and labor exploitation.*

By supporting good parenting and family coping skills, the Church can help parents and caregivers better understand and meet children's needs. As leaders in the community, churches and particularly pastors can promote protection of children as a shared responsibility and concern among all those who interact with children: teachers, neighbors, church members, as well as those visiting the community. Children and youth can be taught how to recognize and to report abuse wherever it occurs. Through awareness-raising campaigns and community education on issues such as child abuse, early child marriage, gender-based violence, and child labor, churches can help ensure the care and protection of children.

Engaging the Church

Getting Inspired, Raising Awareness,
Taking Action

“When Willow Creek Community Church became intentional about getting involved with the AIDS pandemic in Africa, staff and volunteers attended a conference to explore various avenues of engagement. At the conference a Ugandan woman said, ‘I think it’s great that you leaders are so committed to learning, understanding, and doing the right thing. But all the time you’re talking and planning, our people are dying.’ Conference attendees needed that jolt of reality to move from talking to action.”

~ Lynne Hybels, Willow Creek Community Church

There are many ways for churches to support orphans and vulnerable children, both at home and abroad.

This publication focuses on how churches in the global North can best support the work of indigenous churches, ministries, and community initiatives serving children and families in Africa and beyond, particularly in places heavily impacted by poverty and HIV/AIDS. The goal of *Journeys of Faith* is to inspire and to inform action, while also showing through the stories shared that while there are important overarching principles of practice, “one size does not fit all.” Each church must consider its own goals, strengths, and resources as it navigates its own course of action.

For churches ready to begin, here are four approaches to engagement, ranging from raising awareness and hosting an annual fundraiser to building an ongoing, multiyear partnership over time. Each one of these approaches, when guided by best practice and brought to life by the church, can make a tremendous difference for orphans and children in need.


Raise Awareness and Raise Funds

A powerful first step to any orphan care ministry is to raise awareness within the church about the impact of poverty and HIV/AIDS, the needs of orphans and vulnerable children, and the importance of strengthening family-based care. In addition to *Journeys of Faith*, there are many excellent written resources, websites, and films that provide information and stories designed to help church members become informed and inspired.

Many churches devote a Sunday service or host an event to bring home the message, taking up a special collection or raising funds to put toward an orphan care ministry of their choice. Other churches create a thematic study or prayer series engaging small groups in a more focused course of learning, which may then serve as a springboard for further outreach and engagement on the part of the whole congregation.

Particular days and seasons in the calendar or church year — such as Mother’s Day, Thanksgiving, Advent, and Christmas — provide outstanding opportunities to learn about, pray for, and give to ministries serving orphans and vulnerable children. Many churches participate in national campaigns such as World AIDS Day or other special events that serve as catalysts for church learning and engagement. Most of these campaigns offer information, tools, and resources — easily accessible on the internet — to churches for raising awareness within their communities (see pages 12 and 13).





Several years ago a dozen churches in a small Michigan community decided to join together in a fundraising effort to support several organizations caring for widows and orphans in Africa. Throughout the fall each church used the same educational components, including videos and biblical teaching, and then they came together for a joint service to take a special offering. Together they raised hundreds of thousands of dollars to pour into life-saving action in Africa. This one-time fundraiser gave the churches an opportunity to raise awareness in their congregations and prepare for further investment and engagement.

Build on Existing Global Relationships

Most churches already have some type of global partnership through traditional missionary support or Christian charities or through causes supported by congregation members. Before pursuing a new partnership, it may be wise to explore the potential for expanding or reshaping these existing relationships to address the needs of orphans and vulnerable children.

In regions heavily impacted by poverty and HIV/AIDS, many local churches, charities, and community groups broaden their focus to respond to the growing numbers of children in need. Your church may find that a global partner it has previously worked with in another area (such as food relief or pastoral training) is a good potential partner in orphan care. Building on the trust and relationship that is already in place, your church can expand its engagement to support this work as well.

A small Canadian church had a long-term relationship with a Christian school in Uganda. When church leaders felt led to respond more aggressively to the HIV/AIDS pandemic, they met with trusted friends at the Ugandan school and discovered that school leaders had many ideas. In fact, they had already begun ministering to orphans in the community but they lacked the funding to expand their work. As the Canadian church and Ugandan school leaders began to work together, they were able to coalesce a broad network of local services for children and families. Because the Canadians built on a relationship they already had, where there was a high level of trust and communication, they were able to move forward far more quickly than if they had started out with a new partner.



Supporting the Work of the Global Church

Founded in 1983, **Walnut Hill Community Church** (serving Western Connecticut) has undergone a transformation in its approach to mission work. Originally focused only on sending American missionaries to work overseas, the church now emphasizes supporting the global church. For Walnut Hill, this means engaging the entire congregation, both young and old, as a “Church in Action” partnering with Christian organizations and indigenous churches around the world to minister to the needs of others.

A decision in 2004 to partner with the international relief and development organization **World Relief** provided both a turning point and an opportunity for Walnut Hill to make this vision a reality. Their plan was to work together to support church mobilization, poverty alleviation, AIDS care and prevention, and child survival. As the relationship developed, the commitment became increasingly focused on the needs of orphans and vulnerable children in Rwanda through the local church.

Walnut Hill supports a wide range of mission work through different funds and partnerships. One special initiative—the **Little White Box**—engages the entire congregation and is focused specifically on raising awareness and funds in support of at-risk children both in Connecticut and in Rwanda.

Little White Boxes are distributed during a Church in Action weekend, held the beginning of each December and launched with a sermon drawing on global stories and experiences. Throughout the month, church members are challenged to think of ways to save and raise money to place in their boxes, which are decorated by the youngest members of the congregation. For the Advent season, people give up their daily lattes or meat. Some ask coworkers and neighbors for donations. Youth donate their babysitting money, and children raid their piggy banks. Parents are encouraged to take time for “teaching moments” with their children, as one mother writes in the church magazine:

“Do it together, as a family. Decorate the box, pray for the children who will receive support, sit at the dinner table and talk about it. If the money is going to a country overseas, then find it on a map. For us, it was really neat as a family to be part of it together!”

On Christmas Eve, children place the boxes at the foot of the church Christmas tree. Funds raised in the past have provided counseling for families in greater Danbury as well as school fees, school supplies, and medical care through the African churches partnered with World Relief in Rwanda.

The Little White Boxes are not just a Christmas project. The initiative is a culmination of a year-long response to the needs of children locally and around the world. From the distribution of the boxes through the following Thanksgiving, when a video is shown demonstrating what the initiative funds have accomplished, members are brought along for an awareness-raising journey that fits the natural rhythm of the church.

Engaging the Church

Getting Inspired, Raising Awareness,
Taking Action

Partnering to Make a Difference for Children in Ethiopia

Both demographically and chronologically, **The Well** is a young church. Founded in 2007 and based in Tallahassee, Florida, the church's membership is made up mostly of students and young professionals. The Well's passion for outreach "in an ever-changing culture" is reflected in its meeting places, beginning with the high school auditorium where services were first held, to its current home in a warehouse and the local nightclub where Easter and Christmas services meet each year. In addition to drawing in large numbers of young people—including many guests who are not regular churchgoers—these two special services have become a way for the church to act on its commitment to social justice, raising both awareness and funds in support of children in Ethiopia.

During each of the two services, between worship and the Word, the nightclub stage becomes the setting for a "talk-show" style interview between a church member and a guest speaker from **Bethany Christian Services**. Those listening learn about the work that Bethany is doing with orphans, families, and churches in Ethiopia and are invited to become a part of it through pledging their support. In its first year of hosting this event, The Well raised pledges of over \$12,000—a significant amount for a church where many of its members are on tight budgets. Many of the men and women making pledges did so in lieu of Christmas gifts to one another, choosing to give the gift of giving rather than exchanging material goods.

"Participating in this fundraiser left me with a thirst to do more... I remember hearing that children 'need homes not orphanages' and stopping in my tracks. I'm thankful to have had the opportunity to help children in Ethiopia remain in family care, with love and all of the intangible joys that go along with that."

~ Sarah Cowart, student and church member, The Well

For The Well, finding and working in partnership with an experienced intermediary organization provided an informed and focused opportunity to respond as Christians to the call to care for orphans and vulnerable children.

"We must be proactive in our approach and not just responsive. Man has made orphanages for children, but God made the family for children. How then do we place as many children in families as possible?"

Bethany Christian Services has started bringing together churches in the United States with churches in Ethiopia into long term foster care projects. These are one-on-one relationships; essentially, the U.S. church provides the necessary financing for foster care and the Ethiopian partner inspires its members to help find families and develop loving, local communities."

~Johnny Carr, National Director of Church Partnerships,
Bethany Christian Services

"I am a believer in partnering with a specific, already existing, and active ministry you trust, rather than being spread thin by starting something you know nothing about, or five or six different causes. We believe that narrowing the focus will make you more effective."

~ Pastor Dean Inserra, The Well

Partnership with a Trusted Intermediary

Many churches engage in orphan care by working with a trusted intermediary that is experienced in supporting churches, ministries, and community initiatives serving children. An international intermediary can build a bridge between the U.S. church and the life-changing work it seeks to support overseas. Partnering directly with a church or ministry overseas can be logistically challenging and can require a big investment of time and resources. An intermediary can ease the burden on both sides of the partnership, providing financial oversight, cultural translation, and logistical support, and helping to ensure that resources go where they are most needed.

As a result of a meeting with the international organization World Vision, a pastor of a large church on the East Coast began teaching his congregation about God's heart for vulnerable children. He challenged congregants to become the hands and feet of Christ. Today this congregation sponsors thousands of children in one African community. As part of their long-term investment in this community, church staff and lay leaders periodically participate in trips organized by World Vision to visit the village and offer friendship, prayer, and practical help. World Vision administers the sponsorship funds and keeps the church apprised of developments within the sponsored community.

Develop a Direct Church-to-Church Partnership

Throughout much of Africa and around the world, the local church and community is at the forefront of responding to the needs of children orphaned and made vulnerable by poverty and HIV/AIDS. By partnering directly with these local efforts, churches abroad can provide needed prayer, resources, and service. Many churches in the global North work through their own church networks or denominational bodies to connect with churches in the global South to support their ministries. These partnerships are most successful when they are part of a long-term relationship based on mutual respect and trust, with a clear appreciation for the leadership role of the local church in overseeing and determining the course of the ministry.

After traveling to Kibwezi, Kenya, as a young adult, a pastor retained the relationships she had made over a period of decades and through two major job relocations. When she brought the connection to Kibwezi with her to a new post at a church in Virginia, the relationships forged in her youth became the basis for a 20+ year church-to-church partnership. The strong communication and trust built over time laid the foundation for the U.S. partner to assist the church in Kibwezi as they expanded their programming to meet the growing needs of orphans in their community.



Staying Engaged Throughout the Year

Burke Presbyterian Church is a 600-member church located in Burke, Virginia, within commuting distance of Washington, DC. In 1988, Burke began a partnership with the churches near the rural village of Kibwezi, Kenya, to minister to those in greatest need. This relationship, now spanning over two decades, has become integral to Burke's identity.

Everyone at Burke Presbyterian Church knows the word Kibwezi!

Over the years, Burke's engagement, coupled with resources mobilized by Kibwezi area churches, has supported a range of locally led initiatives helping hundreds of children and families. These initiatives have included the building and staffing of a primary school, a vocational school, and a health clinic. In 2004, in response to the rising impact of HIV/AIDS, Burke and Kibwezi formed orphan care committees that work together to address the increased vulnerability of children in the community. The goal of the partnership is to keep children in families whenever possible.

Burke Presbyterian Church honors its long-standing commitment and keeps its congregation engaged through a wide range of activities throughout the year:

Creating an inspirational book. Given as a gift to church and community members, *What Hope Means* was created as a way to celebrate and call attention to the many blessings that have come out of years of partnership with Kibwezi. The book is designed as a devotional with short reflections from individuals who have participated in mission trips.

Holding an annual silent auction. Church members donate personal auction items like dog-walking services, home-baked cakes, stays in vacation homes, and handmade sweaters. The items are listed in the church hall and bids are collected over three weeks.

Hosting a craft sale. Every Christmas season, the church holds a crafts sale with items donated by Burke area artists and purchased from Kenyan craftspeople.

Alternative gift giving. A Christmas newsletter describes "gifts" that can be purchased for the Kibwezi partnership. Members purchase these "gifts" on behalf of one another (for example, the gift of a scholarship for a youth in Kibwezi).

Mother's Day offering. Church members hand out flowers and ask for freewill donations, with a special message to remember the Kenyan children who no longer have mothers or whose mothers must struggle to provide for their care.

Collecting change. Throughout the year, members of three participating churches are encouraged to take an "uji cereal" cup home in which they collect change for a coin jar at church.

Sunday school offerings. All of the funds collected during Sunday school are sent to buy food for the preschool children in Kibwezi.

Hosting a summer produce sale. Each summer church members with gardens collect extra produce to display and be sold for a goodwill offering in the church foyer.



Engaging the Church

Getting Inspired, Raising Awareness,
Taking Action

From Church to Child, Church and Community

The Journey Church, a 175-member church in San Jose, California, is a small church making a big difference for orphans and vulnerable children in Zimbabwe. It all began when The Journey's pastor Jeff Wenke joined a fellow church member on a trip led by **World Vision** to the rural community of Limpopo. Returning to their home church, the men shared what they had seen: heartbreaking loss due to poverty and HIV/AIDS, as well as life-saving work being done to address the issue. The Journey was inspired to take action and begin raising both awareness and support.

The Journey decided to partner with World Vision's "Church to Child, Church and Community" initiative. Working with an experienced international organization has provided their church with the resources and tools to scale up their efforts, while fostering their ongoing connection to the community of Limpopo through vision trips, field reports, and child sponsorship. Most of The Journey's members, including the Children's Ministry as a group, sponsor children. Their monthly contributions provide ongoing support to orphans, vulnerable children, and their families, and the community group that supports them.

Every year, The Journey Church holds an event called **Celebrate Hope**. On a Sunday morning church and community members come together to raise awareness about the needs of children in Limpopo, raise money, and build kits that contain supplies for caregivers ministering to people who are living with AIDS and other illnesses. Youth seeking community service hours from nearby schools are invited, as well as local politicians and other members of the community. The church band provides entertainment as volunteers put together caregiver kits. Then everyone gathers to watch a video and hear a guest speaker.

Celebrate Hope has grown with each year, attracting more participants and drawing community members to the church. The first year, 200 caregiver kits were assembled. The next year this number rose to 400, and by the fifth year over \$70,000 was raised, supporting 1,000 kits and providing the funds to finish a school building.

Every other year, a new team from The Journey accompanies World Vision on a vision trip to Limpopo. The church members go as ambassadors, rather than to do a project. They meet local World Vision staff and community volunteers, visit the families of the sponsored children, and share their stories back in San Jose.

Shel Virden, one of the current leaders of The Journey's partnership with World Vision, remembers the tremendous sense of family he felt while visiting Limpopo in 2010:

"While many of the children we visited had lost one or both parents, they were surrounded by their families who were caring for them. We witnessed a spirit of hope. Sponsorship does not just impact one child, it provides hope to a whole family and opportunity for a child to be educated and break the cycle of poverty."

Special Days and Seasons to Engage the Church

Many churches set aside special days, seasons, or events to raise awareness and inspire action on behalf of orphans and vulnerable children. Here are three examples of national campaigns:

World AIDS Day (www.worldaidsday.org), held annually on December 1, is the day when individuals, churches, and organizations come together to publicly acknowledge the impact of HIV and AIDS. It is a campaign designed to reduce stigma and raise awareness and funds for HIV- and AIDS-related causes. World AIDS Day is an important reminder that HIV has not been eradicated. It continues to affect not only the 33.3 million people living with the virus (including 2.5 million children), but all of us. The red ribbon worn on December 1 is an international symbol of awareness that is worn to demonstrate care and concern about HIV and AIDS, and reminds others of the need for their support and commitment.

Churches across the globe, including many who partner to support orphan care in HIV- and AIDS-affected communities, participate in World AIDS Day through special prayer services and activities such as candlelight vigils.

Many denominational and coordinating church bodies have information and resources available on their websites to support individual churches in hosting World AIDS Day events. These resources are usually updated each year and include downloadable sermon guides, liturgies, special prayers, bulletin inserts, and other worship materials. Please see the Faith to Action website for direct links (www.faithbasedcarefororphans.org).





Orphan Sunday (www.orphansunday.org) calls Christians to put their faith into action and provides an annual opportunity to raise awareness and engage churches in praying for and giving to their preferred Christian ministries and charities that support orphans and vulnerable children both in the United States and overseas.

The idea for Orphan Sunday was first sparked in Africa. While visiting a church service in rural Zambia, Gary Schneider (founder of Every Child's Hope) was struck by the pastor's passionate call to care for orphans in the local community. Members of the church faced deep needs themselves, but as the service ended, one after another stepped forward with food, money, and even their own shoes to put in the offering for orphans. Gary began working with pastors across Zambia to coordinate annual Orphan Sunday events. These efforts spread to the United States in 2003. **Christian Alliance for Orphans** now supports Orphan Sunday and hundreds of churches participate each year.

Advent Conspiracy (www.adventconspiracy.org) is a movement to engage churches in authentic worship and giving at Christmas. Started in 2006 by a group of five pastors, the concept behind Advent Conspiracy is fourfold: worship fully, spend less, give more, and love all.

Americans spend an average of \$450 billion a year every Christmas. Advent Conspiracy is a fundraising initiative challenging Christians across the United States to purchase at least one less Christmas gift each year, using the funds instead toward charitable giving. Participating churches use the season of Advent (the weeks leading up to Christmas) to raise funds for the charity of their choice by encouraging congregants to explore the true meaning of Advent and Christmas with their families. Thousands of churches participate in Advent Conspiracy each year. While the movement asks participating churches to give at least 25 percent of their offering to a water project, many churches include fundraising for orphan care partnerships.

Small Group Study Questions

1. Best practice encourages focusing on all vulnerable children, not just those orphaned by HIV/AIDS. When you reflect on your community, who are the most vulnerable children? What does this kind of reflection teach us about the needs of marginalized people in our community and other communities throughout the world?
2. After reading about the scope and scale of poverty and the HIV pandemic, identify the major needs of children and their families. In what ways might local indigenous churches working to address these needs be supported by churches in the global North?
3. Think about your ministry. Are there areas or partnerships in which you are currently involved that need some adjustment based on the 12 strategies?
4. What is an action step that your ministry can take as a result of learning about responding to the needs of orphans and vulnerable children? If your church or organization were to decide to begin ministering to orphans and vulnerable children, what are some of the first steps you would need to take for this to become a reality?
5. What assets and resources exist within your congregation or group? Who are the child advocates in your midst?
6. Of the four approaches described in the continuum of engagement (pages 8–11), which approach is the best match for your church's goals, assets, and resources? Take some time to brainstorm some specific ideas for engagement.
7. Why is it important, particularly for faith-based groups and church congregations, to think beyond simply "writing a check" to help orphans and vulnerable children?

A Heart for Children & Families

One Family's Journey

Chad and Michelle Timmons are adoptive parents with a passion for orphans and vulnerable children and a desire to see children cared for in families, not in institutions. The Timmonses (parents of four children, the youngest two adopted) have turned their personal passion into a mission to raise awareness about the importance of supporting family-based care programs in their youngest son's country of origin, Ethiopia.

In 2009, the Timmonses participated in a vision trip to Ethiopia that radically altered their worldview. They learned that the majority of orphans in Africa are living with a surviving parent or relative and are greatly in need of basic support within the family.

When Michelle Timmons first began dreaming of adopting a child from Ethiopia, she thought, "It all seems so simple: a child needs a family, and we are a loving family with room in our hearts and home..." Many families embark on the journey of adoption with a similar tug on their heartstrings.

Michelle speaks of the "call" she felt during the vision trip to Ethiopia:

"Initially I assumed that God was leading us to adopt again. But, the more I learned, the more I became convinced that adoption was not the total answer. When my husband and I committed to go on a mission trip to Ethiopia I had no idea how God would strengthen both my heart for adoption and my conviction that we had to do more."

Michelle and Chad were heartbroken by the needs of so many orphaned and vulnerable children in Addis Ababa (Ethiopia's capital city). On the first night of the trip, they prayed for God's guidance. Throughout the following week, they visited programs that work to strengthen families, prevent abandonment, and help ensure that fewer children end up living on the streets or are placed in orphanages. It became clear to

The church has a biblical mandate to care for the poor, the orphaned, and the widowed. In a world where so many children and women are affected by poverty, disease, injustice, violence, and natural disasters, Christians rightly feel compelled to take compassionate action.

Intercountry adoption, as a first course of compassionate action, is a complex issue. Adoption can provide a child with the loving, supportive, permanent family care that every child needs to thrive. However, not all families are equipped to provide a lifetime of care for a child who has experienced trauma. And not all children who need alternative family care are able to transition well into a foreign family environment. Many countries do not allow children to be adopted into families outside their own countries.

Between the call to care for orphans and the response of intercountry adoption, there exist a range of options for supporting the care and protection of orphans and vulnerable children. This "continuum of care" includes domestic interventions like family strengthening, reunification with a surviving parent or relatives, kinship care, foster care, and domestic adoption.

For the 153 million children around the world who have lost one or both parents, the vast majority will be cared for within the homes of surviving parents, extended family, and families in their communities. In regions where poverty is the biggest factor behind both orphaning and placement into orphanages, the first response must always be to seek ways to strengthen local families and communities to care for children.

After thorough due diligence has been done to connect children to loving families in their community of origin, intercountry adoption can provide a loving, safe, and permanent option for orphaned children. While a discussion of "best practice" in adoption is beyond the scope of this publication, we encourage all those who are considering this journey to seek a wide range of educational resources, identify experienced agencies involved not only in adoption but also in in-country family



continued in sidebar, page 15

“Seventy five percent of the work I do as a pediatrician at our international adoption clinic is to address the traumatic effects of orphanage life on children. I often work with families who feel overwhelmed by how they can best meet the needs of their adopted child. For a family who after prayerful discernment has decided to pursue international adoption, I cannot stress enough the importance of personal preparation, development of a support network, and adherence to the international and specific country guidelines put in place to protect the wellbeing of the child. Whether a Christian is called to pursue the blessing of adoption or direct their efforts towards sustaining local families and communities, the desire is to see every child grow up with a supportive, loving family.”

~ Jennifer Chambers, adoptive parent, M.D. & Director, International Adoption Clinic, University of Alabama at Birmingham

preservation, and to pray for guidance and discernment when deciding when, from where, and how to pursue the path of adoption.

Guidelines that provide minimum standards for intercountry adoption are set forth in The Hague Convention on Intercountry Adoption, which was ratified by the United States in 2007. These guidelines, as well as procedures established by countries open for adoption, should be followed as they are designed to protect children, birth parents, and adoptive parents.

There is no one solution that can provide for all orphans and vulnerable children. Each child's needs should be assessed on an individual basis and a decision made in his or her best interest. However, no child should be left to grow up in an orphanage. Children grow best in families.

What if the world were upsidedown? What if an orphan crisis were sweeping—not Africa—but North America? What if our own precious sons and daughters lost us, their moms and dads? What would we wish for them? If the only new parents offering to adopt our children were located in southern Africa or East Asia or Siberia, we'd want that for our kids: new loving parents, a second chance at a family. But...what if our children had still-living grandparents, or aunts and uncles, or young adult siblings, or kind neighbors or concerned teachers or religious leaders who said: If only I could afford to raise those dear children, I would...I'm next-of-kin, or I'm practically family.

What if, with help from abroad, our own orphaned children could stay in America, in their own homes, neighborhoods, scout troops, churches, synagogues, and schools? Wouldn't that be our top choice for them, rather than see them uprooted and sent 8,000 miles away?

International adoption is a marvelous life-changing event for parents and children. (Five of my own nine children were adopted.) But adoption only touches a tiny fraction of orphans and vulnerable children. To reach millions upon millions more, let us reach out to the children's home communities, enabling these little ones to grow up among friends and relatives who knew their parents, speak their language, know their history, and already love them. Isn't this what we would wish for our own children?

~ Melissa Fay Greene,

author of *There Is No Me Without You* and *No Biking in the House Without A Helmet*

continued from page 14

the Timmonses that while international adoption could meet the needs of a small number of children, supporting local efforts to care for children in families could meet the needs of many more. They believed God could use their family to do both.

Shortly after Michelle and Chad returned from the mission trip, they began the process of adoption and took steps to form a nonprofit organization, Hope for His Children, Inc. Launched in early 2009 Hope for His Children hosts an annual HopeFest to support the work of the organization. To date, over \$42,000 has been raised in support of several programs serving the needs of orphans and vulnerable children within their communities.

A primary partner is Compassion Family International (CFI), a locally led ministry in Ethiopia. CFI encourages family preservation through home-based counseling and assistance with basic needs such as medical support, school fees, and food supplements. Michelle and Chad feel strongly that through supporting family-based care organizations like CFI they can give back to their son's community of origin and honor his birth family.

Family Preservation in Emergencies

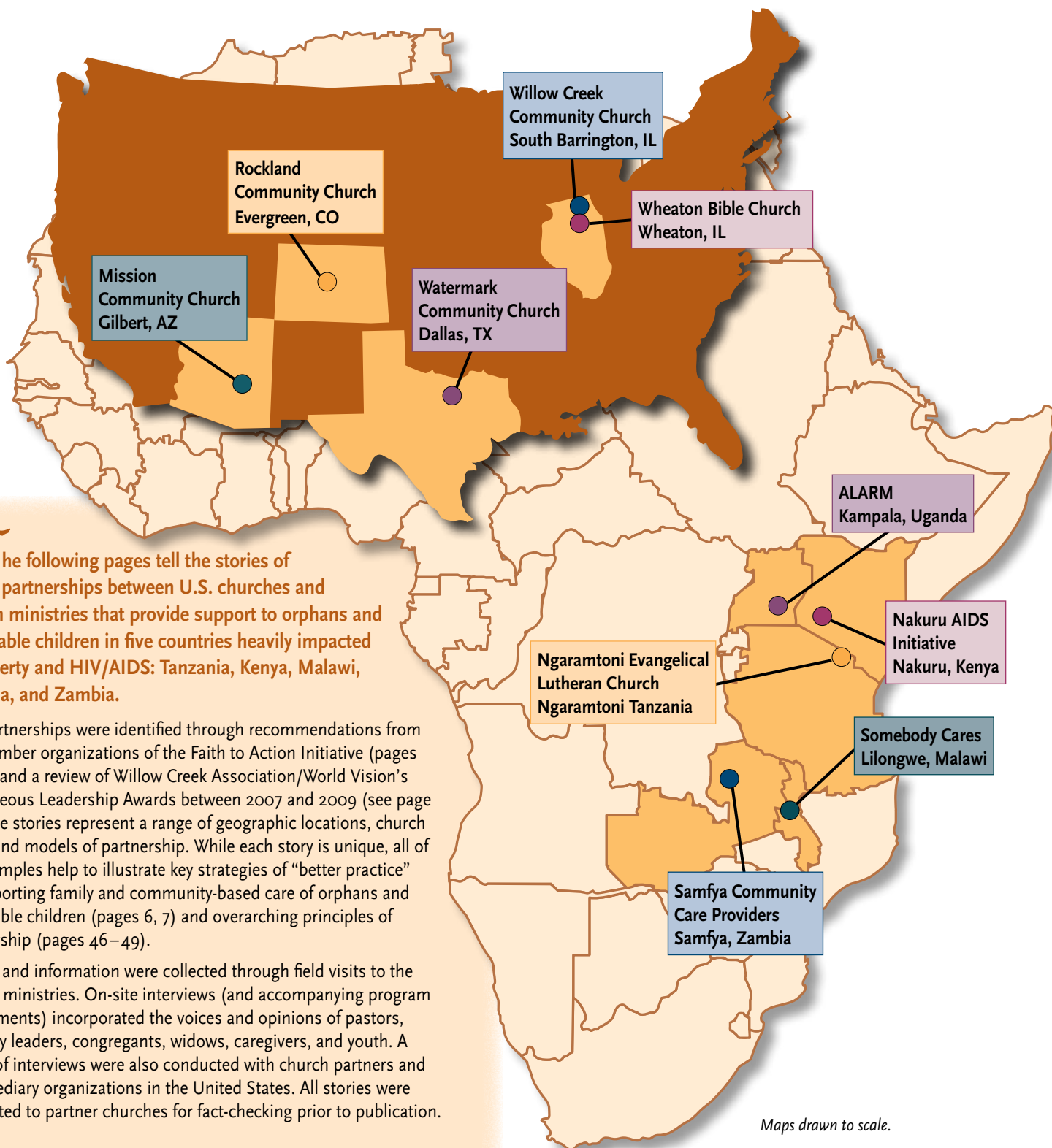
In a time of crises and chaos, children are at high risk of being separated from their families and placed in orphanages or with strangers far from their home communities. During global tragedies such as the 2004 tsunami or the earthquake in Haiti in 2010, many feel called to respond with offers of immediate assistance. Support for orphanages and intercountry adoption often increases during times of conflict and disaster. However, these responses can unintentionally result in unnecessary permanent separation for children and their families.

Following natural disasters, child welfare/humanitarian agencies and local churches and ministries work to provide vulnerable communities with food, shelter, medical assistance, a source of income, schooling, safe areas for children to play, and legal services. The primary goal

(after ensuring safety and protection) is to help families reunite, support their children, and stay together.

Programs that keep children within their families and communities, and help to rebuild lives after the emergency is over, are pivotal to the way humanitarian organizations and national governments develop systems of care for children in their emergency response plans. This support has led to significant transformation, including the development of adoption and care legislation designed to protect vulnerable children and keep families together after an emergency. Additionally, it translates to communities better equipped to respond to children's needs in times of disaster and the protection of vulnerable girls and boys who are rebuilding their lives with their families after the emergency is over.

Five Stories of Partnership



The following pages tell the stories of partnerships between U.S. churches and African ministries that provide support to orphans and vulnerable children in five countries heavily impacted by poverty and HIV/AIDS: Tanzania, Kenya, Malawi, Uganda, and Zambia.

The partnerships were identified through recommendations from the member organizations of the Faith to Action Initiative (pages 58, 59) and a review of Willow Creek Association/World Vision's Courageous Leadership Awards between 2007 and 2009 (see page 20). The stories represent a range of geographic locations, church sizes, and models of partnership. While each story is unique, all of the examples help to illustrate key strategies of "better practice" in supporting family and community-based care of orphans and vulnerable children (pages 6, 7) and overarching principles of partnership (pages 46–49).

Stories and information were collected through field visits to the African ministries. On-site interviews (and accompanying program assessments) incorporated the voices and opinions of pastors, ministry leaders, congregants, widows, caregivers, and youth. A series of interviews were also conducted with church partners and intermediary organizations in the United States. All stories were submitted to partner churches for fact-checking prior to publication.

Maps drawn to scale.

► **Rockland Community Church, in Evergreen Colorado**, partners with churches in **Ngaramtoni Parish, Tanzania**, to support a children's center, a secondary school, and community-based programs serving the needs of children and their families.

Pictured here: Rockland Community Church; Pastor Ken Williams, Ngaramtoni Pastor Abel Godson; Pastoral gathering in Tanzania.



▲ **Wheaton Bible Church, in suburban Chicago Illinois**, partners with **Nakuru AIDS Initiative in Kenya** to improve the lives of children and families displaced by conflict, impacted by HIV/AIDS, and struggling with malnutrition and hunger.

Pictured here: Wheaton Bible Church; church interior; Hope for Life founder Josephine Kiarri, Missionary Barb Harbert in Kenya.



◀ **Mission Community Church, in Gilbert Arizona**, partners with **Visionledd and Somebody Cares Malawi** to provide clean water, feeding programs, home-based care, and other support for families impacted by drought, hunger, and HIV/AIDS in the community of Chikudzilire, Malawi.

Pictured here: Mission Community Church Easter service; Debbie Mueller (Visionledd) with Theresa Malila (Somebody Cares) and local family in Malawi; Karl Mueller (Visionledd) with group in Malawi.



► **Willow Creek Community Church, in suburban Illinois**, partners with **Bright Hope and Samfya Community Care Providers**, a network of 24 churches in rural Zambia, to support education, deliver home-based care, and offer microloans to help families provide for their children.

Pictured here: Willow Creek Community Church; Mark Brubacher, Bright Hope field staff working with local team in Zambia; Willow Creek mission team members at training in Zambia.



◀ **Watermark Community Church, in Dallas, Texas**, partners with **ALARM (African Leadership and Reconciliation Ministries) Uganda** to improve the lives of vulnerable children, including those living in youth-headed households, and to prevent child labor through strengthening livelihoods and providing access to education.

Pictured here: Watermark Community Church; Watermark baptism service; Watermark mission team in Uganda.



Photo Credits

Rockland: Nancy Clement, Kathy Mullin, Dave Clement; **Wheaton:** Cindy Judge, Jim Judge; **Mission Community Church:** Renee Bergmen, Karl Mueller; **Watermark:** Mo Sadjapour; **Willow Creek:** Willow Creek Community Church, John Derrick

Partnership

“Uzima” (Caring for the Whole Child): Rockland Community Church & Ngaramtoni Church-Parish

Rockland Community Church and Mission Trips

For Rockland Community Church, short-term mission trips to Tanzania build relationships. These annual trips are opportunities to learn, build understanding, and enhance communication while fostering an ongoing sense of connection. By sharing what they have seen and heard firsthand, the mission teams bring the vision of the partnership to life for others, which in turn keeps church members more actively engaged.

Made up primarily of Rockland congregants, the group is rooted in prayer that those whom God calls to go will be the ones who answer. Leadership at Rockland emphasize that the mission team experience is not a vacation, but a mission and an opportunity for spiritual growth in service. Mission team participants pay their own expenses, which deepens their level of investment.

continued in sidebar, page 19



Rockland Community Church, a 1,000-member church in Colorado, and Ngaramtoni Parish in Tanzania were led into an unexpected partnership in 2004. What began as a small group from Rockland attending Ngaramtoni Sunday services blossomed into a long-term relationship built on mutual trust and service. With strong leadership from the Ngaramtoni community and a committed corps from Rockland, the two ministries partnered in building a church, a children's center, a secondary school, and community-based programs serving the needs of children and families.

Meeting at Ngaramtoni—An Unexpected Path to Joint Ministry

Since 1984, **Rockland Community Church** had contributed to the development of Selian, a hospital for the poor in Arusha, Tanzania. In 2003 a small group from Rockland church traveled to Africa to join the local Rotary Club in its Climb for Children to benefit the hospital. Following the climb, Selian's director invited the group to join him at Sunday services at the **Ngaramtoni Evangelical Lutheran Church** nearby.

Ngaramtoni is a bustling village in northern Tanzania 16 kilometers west of Arusha. Off the main road is a collection of buildings that make up the Ngaramtoni Parish. There Rockland's pastor and church members met pastor Abel Godson and were introduced to the needs of the church and community. They learned that parish leaders had been working for over seven years to build a new church. Rockland offered to help complete the church.

Back in Colorado, money was raised to pay for windows, painting, and doors. In 2004, a team of 22 lay people was formed to work side-by-side with Ngaramtoni to help complete the church. Their experience fueled a commitment to continue in partnership to address the needs of children and families living in difficult circumstances. One member of the mission team reflects, “We returned with stories of healing and death, of accomplishment and desperation. Most of all we returned with hope and a zeal for helping people with whom we are clearly united in Christ.”

The engagement of Rockland's congregation with Ngaramtoni is nurtured and guided by the **Tanzania Action Committee** and church pastor Ken Williams. All those serving on the committee have participated on a mission trip or have previous experience in Tanzania. The Tanzania Action Committee is an active link to Ngaramtoni able to sustain and grow the relationship while raising awareness and support within Rockland. The congregation is kept involved and informed through frequent articles in the monthly newsletter and church website, DVD reports, fundraising, and annual mission trips.

“Uzima” is a Swahili word meaning “wholeness,” but the meaning is broader than our word for “wholeness.” “Uzima” includes physical health, spiritual health and relational health.... It has a sense that most of us in the West are not familiar with—[as we] segment our lives between work, home, and church.

~ Dr. Ken Williams, Senior Pastor, Rockland Community Church



continued from page 18

Rockland recognizes that mission trips require precious time and resources, both on the part of those going and for those who are hosting the visit. Accordingly, they limit trips to one per year, and they carefully consider the needs and priorities of their African partner when choosing the date. This usually means traveling in May, after African students have completed their midyear exams. Rockland's mission team organizers do not want to disrupt classes to accommodate the group's schedule.

In general, the Rockland teams do not engage in construction for a project because "[our African partners] are good builders and that is their part to do." They prefer to focus on areas where team members can be most useful, such as drawing on the expertise of group members to offer training in transferable skills such as computer or science lab skills.

However, there is always a hands-on work project, usually the unskilled task of painting or installing doors or windows. The painting is saved for the group, and the work project fosters fellowship. For Rockland, this active service is a vital part of serving their partners.

"Each person can pray, give and go and all at Rockland are encouraged to do at least one."

Building the Children's Center and Community-Based Ministry

With growing numbers of children orphaned by AIDS in their midst, Ngaramtoni church leaders and community members wanted to provide ongoing, consistent care to the most vulnerable children but lacked an adequate facility for the programs. A vacant building was purchased with funds raised by the local church, and community members assisted with renovations and served as volunteers. Rockland committed to raising additional funds to complete the project and returned with a team to help sand and paint the building, which was completed in 2005.

The building now houses Ngaramtoni's nonresidential **Children's Center**, the foundation from which all the Ngaramtoni-sponsored programs benefiting children and families are run. On weekdays, the building houses a daycare program. A Children's Center program meets on Saturdays, and the church uses the building on Sundays.

The center provides hot and hearty meals, clothing, Christian education, and counseling to the most vulnerable children in the community. Irrespective of religious affiliation, the children and youth also benefit from educational support, subsidized health care, and vocational training. Virtually all the children are orphaned by the loss of one or both parents and are cared for by a single parent, extended family member, or guardian family. The support provided by the center helps to ensure that all the children remain in families in the community. Rockland Church is a steady partner, funding student uniforms, school supplies, and materials for vocational programs. The churches of Ngaramtoni Parish provide ongoing support to the center's programs with monthly offerings. The program is self-sustaining, relying on the local community (church members and volunteers) to meet the children's needs.





“Uzima” (Caring for the Whole Child): Rockland Community Church & Ngaramtoni Church-Parish

A Roadmap from Poverty: The Ebenezer Girl's Secondary School

Many of the young people served by the Children's Center lacked access to quality education, particularly girls. While primary school in Tanzania is “free,” school fees often still apply. In addition, girls often spend their primary school years burdened by household chores at the expense of their studies. Even fewer are able to attend secondary school, which is generally more costly. Recognizing the barriers to education for girls, the **Ebenezer Girl's Lutheran Secondary School** opened in 2007 to provide opportunities for girls served at the Children's Center and other marginalized girls in the community. The philosophy of the school is to also welcome girls from families who can afford full tuition, which helps defray the cost for families who cannot pay and makes the school available to the wider community.

The Ebenezer Girl's Lutheran Secondary School is another example of strong visionary leadership by the local church in Ngaramtoni, which began mobilizing its own resources to build the school. It is also a testimony to the power of partnership — Rockland raised funds to build classrooms (funding was also provided by AfricaAid), provide scholarships, and donate textbooks, science equipment, and computers. Annual Rockland mission teams have helped to complete additional classrooms, offices, and science/computer labs. The school is sustained by support from both the local community and Rockland.

Co-laborers in Christ — Trusting Ngaramtoni's Local Leadership

The Children's Center and Girl's Secondary School are important symbols of trust, respect, and collaboration between the Rockland Church and Ngaramtoni. When members of the Rockland community were led to Ngaramtoni, they responded first with prayer to discern God's call to minister to the most vulnerable in Africa. Their approach was to listen, learn, and bring their resources to bear in response to their African partner's needs.

As a recipient of the **Courageous Leadership Award** in 2007 (see sidebar page 21), Rockland asked the Ngaramtoni community how the award could best be used in the battle against HIV/AIDS. The response was the **Milky Cow Program**, which provides dairy animals to families in need. The program, operated by church volunteers, has grown through the distribution of young animals and additional funding from Rockland, and animals have also been distributed to the guardian families and marginalized families in neighboring parishes.

The leadership at Ngaramtoni and the will of the community to address its own needs created a foundation for partnership. Pastor Abel, whom Rockland members describe as a diligent, trustworthy, and dynamic leader, has led the broadening of the church's social mission and outreach. The Ngaramtoni church leaders have built the capacity to plan and oversee all community-based outreach efforts. According to Pastor Abel, “The big decisions are always ours...[but]... Rockland Church...helped us to do things eight times faster.” It is the ideas and initiative of Ngaramtoni that have informed the fundraising efforts of the Rockland Community Church and other supporters.

*Programs to keep girls
in school recognize that
the more education
young women have,
the more likely they are
to avoid HIV infection,
marry later, send their
own children to school,
and earn an income,
enabling them to break
the cycle of poverty.*

~ From Faith to Action

“The girls have gained confidence. They understand that there are people behind them who are supporting and encouraging them and help them dream of their future.”

~ Lucy Wilfred, Headmistress
Ebenezer Girl's Secondary School

Striving toward Wholeness

The church is a formidable presence in the Ngaramtoni community—educating children, strengthening families, and caring for the sick. Central to these efforts is a commitment to addressing the needs of the whole child within a family environment. Strengthening the family builds the community. Educating children, particularly girls, ensures the future. The overall outlook is holistic—all the programs work together to address the spiritual, psychosocial, physical, economic, and material needs of children and families. The partnership between Ngaramtoni and Rockland results in multiple overlapping programs that strive toward wholeness in service to Christ.



The Courageous Leadership Award

The Courageous Leadership Award was presented annually (2007–2009) to churches demonstrating leadership in addressing the global HIV/AIDS pandemic. Rockland Community Church was a 2007 recipient, winning a cash prize of \$40,000 to invest further in their partnership with Ngaramtoni Parish in Arusha, Tanzania.

Bill Hybels (pastor of Willow Creek Community Church) and Rich Stearns (President of World Vision) conceived the idea of the award with the intent to honor “resourcing” churches—churches that commit resources to organizations or partner churches working on the front lines of the HIV/AIDS pandemic. Their desire was not only to recognize and further these efforts, but also to “inspire other local churches to strategically, intentionally, and creatively leverage their unique God-given vision, gifts and resources to offer hope to a broken world” (Rich Stearns).

Upon receipt of the award, the Rockland Committee asked their partners in Ngaramtoni to “think big” about a new project that would best benefit those affected by AIDS in the community. Rockland donated half of the award to the Selian Hospital in Arusha. The other half established the Milky Cow Project, a household-based income-generating project providing animals and training local caregivers in animal husbandry.

“Seeing how God has used Courageous Leadership Award to extend His reach through local churches has been incredibly rewarding. This is not about handing out awards for the sake of lifting up a church or a leader. It is about creating awareness, inspiring engagement, and moving resources to the places that are most devastated by AIDS. It’s about being the Church.”

~ Lisa Hartman,
former Executive Director of
Courageous Leadership Award

Learning from the Rockland Community Church & the Ngaramtoni Church-Parish Partnership

Prayerfully consider your “first response.”

The first response lays the groundwork for the partnership. When Rockland Community Church members learned about the orphans in Ngaramtoni, building an orphanage was not their first response. While they immediately began raising funds to help finish the construction of a church, they also listened to Ngaramtoni leadership’s request for support in building a Children’s Center, which became a vital resource in the community for helping children remain in family care. Rockland’s response also drew on their strength as a congregation to mobilize resources that could support the efforts already underway in Ngaramtoni.

Prioritize relationship building.

Rockland prioritized relationship building. Establishing the Tanzania Action Committee in their church in Colorado guided their involvement and ensured that the partnership with Ngaramtoni was a ministry priority. Keeping congregation members informed, sending annual missions teams, and their willingness to work collaboratively with African leadership to plan and implement the programs helped to strengthen the partnership.



Trust in local leadership.

Ownership, recognition, or a donor “imprint” should not be the driving force. Rockland has donated a considerable amount of financial, material, and human resources to the development of Ngaramtoni’s programs. However, the local church in Africa maintains its autonomy and its own governing structures. The efficacy of local leadership is enhanced, not undermined, by the partnership. But this also requires choosing your partner carefully. Active engagement allowed Rockland Community Church to see the local leadership in action and to see progress in the community as a result of the partnership.

Small Group Study Questions

1. How do you see both partners in this story experiencing and providing “uzima” (see quote bottom of page 18) through serving and leading with one another? What changes might need to happen at either a personal or congregational level for your faith community to experience “uzima”?
2. Referring to the description of the Courageous Leadership Award (see sidebar page 21), what are some possible ways you can “inspire other local churches to strategically, intentionally, and creatively leverage their unique God-given vision, gifts and resources”?
3. What can a congregation do to minimize the “donor imprint” on the local leadership?

Programming Question: Discuss how the investment in the education of girls is an investment in the strengthening of families and care of children.

Partnership

Fighting Goliath: Wheaton Bible Church & Nakuru AIDS Initiative

Wheaton Bible Church, a 1,700-member church in suburban Chicago, knew that God was calling them to the fight against HIV/AIDS in Africa. Their search for answers led them to Nakuru, Kenya, where local churches and community members were responding to growing numbers of hungry and parentless children. But more resources were needed. With the help of their missionary friends, Wheaton Bible Church joined with church partners in Nakuru to create a safety net for the most vulnerable children and families.

The Path to Nakuru: Following the Call to Serve

In 2004, confronted with the horrifying statistics surrounding the global HIV/AIDS pandemic, members of **Wheaton Bible Church** (WBC) began to think, learn, and pray about responding to the growing crisis. Their hearts were drawn to Africa, where 14 million children have lost one or both parents to AIDS. WBC's journey led them to Kenya—a country greatly affected by high rates of poverty and HIV/AIDS—and to the Nakuru region in particular, one of Kenya's largest urban centers. WBC launched the **Heart for AIDS Ministry** to organize their activities, raising nearly \$60,000 in one month. With funds in place, the ministry sent a team to Kenya in 2005 to assess the needs of the community and lay the groundwork for partnership.

From the outset, one of the most important decisions made was to seek the help of missionaries Barb and Scott Harbert, who had worked in Kenya for many years with support from WBC. As members of the Nakuru community, the Harberts had established strong relationships with churches and organizations that were active in responding to the HIV/AIDS crisis at the local level. They knew that good work was being done by church and community leaders, and also saw that these initiatives were often under-resourced and operating in isolation, struggling to keep pace with the need.

Wheaton Bible Church's 2005 trip gave church members an opportunity to serve and learn firsthand. Following the trip, with encouragement and support from WBC and the Harberts, six local African churches and ministries came together to form the **Nakuru AIDS Initiative**. Building on the strengths of the local church and community, the Initiative provides a joint platform for planning, coordination, and funding. The Initiative includes feeding and home-based care programs, community clinics, a girls' shelter, and outreach to families who have been displaced due to conflict. Training

Wheaton Bible Church & Mission Trips

Wheaton Bible Church has a "by invitation only" approach to its short-term mission trips. That is, the expressed needs of their African partner inform the timing and purpose of mission trips, which take place every other year. While grateful for the partnership with WBC, the Nakuru AIDS Initiative is cautious about the potential negative impact of frequent visits from mission teams. Building a strong sense of community ownership is essential to sustainability. They do not want community members to perceive their ministry as being driven or overseen by outside forces, which in turn can undermine the efforts of local leadership. According to a WBC member, "The biggest lesson is that we are invited. We don't think up reasons why we should go somewhere."

Before the development of the Nakuru AIDS Initiative, WBC's first mission trip in 2005 gave congregation members an opportunity to serve and learn firsthand. They painted the walls of a new hospital located three hours from Nakuru, visited orphans and their caregivers, and ministered to the AIDS-

continued in sidebar, page 24

"After six years, more ministry is happening than we ever dreamed. In 2004 Wheaton Bible Church asked, 'What can one church do to fight the AIDS pandemic?' The answer was to form a partnership with trustworthy leaders, willing to work on a grassroots level, committed to seeing dignity restored to marginalized people."

~ Cindy Judge, Wheaton Bible Church Member, Global Outreach staff





Fighting Goliath: Wheaton Bible Church & Nakuru AIDS Initiative

continued from page 23

affected, while listening to what community members said about their most urgent priorities and needs. Guided by what they learned directly from individuals working at the grassroots, they laid the groundwork for a more sustained response, tailored to the needs of the local community. They supported local ministries and groups to come together to form the Nakuru AIDS Initiative.

There is no set formula for what takes place during the biannual trips, as the substance of the work is informed by the current needs set forth by the Initiative. However, there is a concerted effort not to foster unhealthy perceptions that can feed dependency and even border on unintended paternalism from the American church.

In 2009, a WBC mission team helped to complete Hope for Life's new building. The team worked alongside young men in the community, teaching them carpentry skills. They joined community members in the dedication ceremony for the center. The team also supported a leadership training seminar among a regional group of 50 pastors, visited families served by Hope for Life, and taught HIV prevention in two schools.

With infrequent, yet strategic mission teams, keeping the U.S. congregation engaged can become challenging. Wheaton Bible Church uses a range of creative activities to foster continued interest and support. For instance, interviews and dramatizations convey mission teams' experiences. The congregation also incorporates learning from the partnership into their adult Sunday school classes and develops videos with footage from the trips to screen at the church.

programs for community members include HIV/AIDS counseling and testing, agricultural programs, life skills, and microfinance. By working together, the participating groups are able to avoid duplication, while also ministering in a more comprehensive way to those in greatest need.

The Nakuru AIDS Initiative and Heart for AIDS Ministry chart the course of the partnership between the Nakuru community and WBC. The Initiative provides the Heart for AIDS Ministry with regular updates on funding needs and on the activities supported by WBC. The Heart for AIDS Ministry responds to the priorities set by their African partners, making decisions about WBC's level of support and investment, and keeping the wider congregation informed and engaged.



Building Partnerships: Joining Hands with Nakuru Leaders

"When God gave me a vision to give hope to the hopeless, I had a problem expressing this to other people. Wheaton Bible Church took it whole-heartedly...and made it possible to have our own [land]. Now many [other Kenyans] come and see and they do it in their places."

~ Josephine, Founder, Hope for Life

When Wheaton Bible Church members first visited Nakuru, they found community members devoting their lives to vulnerable children. Many were simply responding to what they felt was God's call.

Take Josephine Kiarii, who started the **Hope for Life** ministry, now one of the Nakuru AIDS Initiative programs. She began by feeding hungry children in her Sunday school class after learning of the death of several of her children's peers. These were children of persistent famine, common in the Nakuru district, which also has one of the higher HIV/AIDS rates in Kenya. Increasingly, the children were not just hungry, but also orphaned by AIDS. A weekly meal of tea and bread for 25 soon expanded to a daily feeding program for over 100 children. And the need continued to grow.

Wheaton Bible Church's support of Hope for Life through the Nakuru AIDS Initiative built on the important work already underway. Proceeds from WBC's Student Ministry rummage sale enabled Josephine to purchase land and build a **Hope for Life Center** and compound. It now houses the organization's core programs, including feeding, tutoring, Bible study, vocational training, adult education, home-based care, and counseling classes. The compound hosts *barazas* (community meetings) led by Josephine and others to address pressing issues related to children in the community.

Josephine, though a dynamic force, relies on volunteers to support the different programs. A group of Hope for Life caregivers, many of whom are widows, serve as outreach workers to vulnerable families. Josephine works in close collaboration with African Inland Churches (AIC), also key members of the Nakuru AIDS Initiative.

Located in a slum heavily impacted by HIV/AIDS, AIC Parkview Church oversees a children's outreach program, a clinic, and home-based care groups, where trained volunteers serve AIDS-affected families with palliative care, food donations, and overall care and support. The AIC also runs a girls' shelter, which began with a group of Kenyan women reaching out to girls living in the town dump. While WBC is a partner and has funded some infrastructure development, the women of the AIC Nakuru region manage the shelter and find funding for its day-to-day operation.



Hope for the Homeless

"We cry out when we had to leave to come here [the camp]. But [God] carries our burden."

~ Caregiver in displaced persons camp

Less than two miles from Hope for Life, a camp for internally displaced persons (IDP) teems with over 6,000 people. The camp is home to those who fled the violence fueled by ethnic tensions after the contested national elections in 2007.

Hope for Life began visiting the camp, building relationships, and investing the time needed to fully understand the struggles of those living there. Working with other providers, in particular a missionary who conducted a mapping of camp services, Hope for Life targeted three groups in greatest need for support: persons living with HIV/AIDS, youth, and children with disabilities.

With help from volunteers in the IDP camp, Josephine set up a group tent to provide care for disabled children—a critical intervention for families with special needs. Mothers formed a childcare cooperative to rotate care duties to free each other up to pursue jobs. Hope for Life facilitated a skills building and support group for people in the camp living with HIV/AIDS. Camp outreach also targets youth and young adults, who are isolated and face limited access to education and employment activities.

Hope for Life serves an important role as an outlet for reconciliation; women from various tribes come together in orphan caregiver groups and livelihood classes. Leaders from the IDP camp are learning to solve their differences and help their community rebuild without relying on outside donations. Slowly, the ethnic tensions have subsided as people work together to address the needs of vulnerable children.





Five Stones : Battling the “Goliath” of Global AIDS

“Then he took his staff in his hand, chose five smooth stones from the stream, put them in the pouch of his shepherd’s bag and, with his sling in his hand, approached the Philistine.”

~ 1 Samuel 17:40 (NIV)

Wheaton Bible Church’s Five Stones strategy asserts that God has called the global church to be His weapons in the fight against global AIDS:

“The global AIDS crisis has been described like Goliath, taunting the church and cursing God. A David is needed to fight this Goliath, and the church is playing that role—armed, like David, with God’s power and five stones.”

Practically, the five stones at work include

- 1 HIV/AIDS prevention.
- 2 Care for children orphaned by AIDS, widows, and people living with HIV.
- 3 Support for those living with HIV.
- 4 HIV testing and quality medical care for AIDS patients.
- 5 Building skills and community development within affected communities.

The Way Forward

The challenge of effective partnership is to balance the urgency of care for those infected or affected by HIV/AIDS with the longer view of fostering local leadership and sustainable community development. Rather than focusing on “adopting” one project or ministry, Wheaton Bible Church invested in a community-wide integrated approach through the Nakuru AIDS Initiative. A good partnership at the community level can tackle multiple, interrelated problems. The success of the Nakuru AIDS Initiative and WBC’s Heart for AIDS Ministry has inspired other churches in Kenya and in the United States to replicate their programs.

Both sides of the partnership agree that if the U.S. church could no longer provide resources, the work of Nakuru AIDS Initiative would continue, just more slowly. With guidance from the Initiative, sometimes the decision is made to scale back after providing the needed initial funding as a strategy to encourage sustainability. For example, WBC recently invested in an agricultural training program focused on increasing yield with the plan to reduce its support after the harvest. Both partners recognize that real sustainability means honoring the dignity and strength that community members themselves bring as stewards of what God has given them.



Learning from Wheaton Bible Church & Nakuru AIDS Initiative Partnership



Bring your congregation along.

While a core committee is essential to driving and overseeing the church's involvement in the partnership, think of creative ways to involve the wider congregation on a regular basis. Wheaton Bible Church not only educated church members on the HIV/AIDS epidemic but also hosted cultural events and fundraisers to engage people. They provide regular updates for their congregation on their work and offer a "catalogue" of opportunities to financially support the ministry. The Wheaton website boasts prayer requests, testimonies, heart-felt reflections, and videos that document their journey in Kenya and keep the ministry alive.

Strengthen local capacity and coordination.

Wheaton Bible Church played an instrumental role in expanding and scaling up an existing program (AIC goals and the Hope for Life project) and bringing key groups together around one purpose (Nakuru AIDS Initiative). Wheaton Bible Church supported the community's response, ensuring the local partner remains in the driver's seat, but also offered critical resources to train their local partners. In turn, the Nakuru-based partners emphasize building capacity within the community, using local labor for construction of their

facilities, and fostering leadership within their programs.

WBC works to strike a balance between building capacity and grassroots ownership, aware that providing more funding can result in "empire building" of the American church rather than equipping their African partner.

Be strategic about mission trips.

Wheaton Bible Church used mission trips sparingly, sending only two mission teams (in addition to an annual relationship building/planning team) in their first five years of partnership with Nakuru. While essential in building relationships and creating hands-on learning experiences, mission trips can consume time and resources best spent supporting the ongoing work of the partner on the ground. However, WBC was motivated less by the need to minimize costs and more on limiting their presence in Nakuru so as not to undermine the work of the local community. WBC sought out local and reliable expertise (missionaries Barb and Scott Harbert and other experts) to advise them on the initial partnership and serve as facilitators. Team members should realize the focus of the trip is not to "do" but rather to build relationships and encourage what people are already doing.

Small Group Study Questions

1. What inspires you about this partnership story?
2. How are the principles of partnership (and the 12 strategies listed on pages 6–7) being modeled by Wheaton Bible Church's Heart for AIDS Ministry and the Nakuru AIDS Initiative?
3. What do you understand "empire building" to mean? Why and how does Wheaton Bible Church guard against activities that would result in "empire building"?
4. What are your thoughts regarding the metaphor of Goliath compared to the AIDS Pandemic in Africa (see sidebar page 26)? And the church compared to David and his 5 stones?

Programming Question: What appreciations do you have for Josephine and Hope for Life? How do the Hope for Life activities promote family-based care for orphans and vulnerable children?

Partnership

Redefining Mission: Mission Community Church, Visionledd & Somebody Cares

Mission Community Church, Visionledd, and Mission Trips

Up to four mission teams from Mission Community Church are built, equipped, and sent to Malawi each year. Mission Community Church has a careful selection and planning process for their short-term trips, seeking guidance from both Visionledd and Somebody Cares. As intermediary, Visionledd handles the logistics and provides the orientation and training for all trips, which eases the burden on both visitor and host.

Mission works to ensure that teams are well prepared. Each team member goes through an application process that involves a written application, references, background check, and possible interview. Each team member raises his or her own financial support and the prayer support of five individuals. Team leaders are carefully selected from a pool of church members who have previously been to Malawi and who have leadership experience. Each selected leader is assigned responsibility for five team members.

Once the team is formed, the members commit to a comprehensive training program. Pretrip sessions cover logistics and practical preparation, team building, cultural issues, and preparation for ministry. Once in Malawi, the group receives two additional days of orientation conducted by Visionledd and Somebody Cares, with a focus on appropriate engagement and service. Debriefing among team members is central to the learning process. While in Malawi, the teams debrief daily to process the day's events and prepare for the next day. A post-trip debriefing occurs within two weeks of the team's return.

Drawing on principles of best practice, Mission, Visionledd, and Somebody Cares have developed policies designed to protect children and honor the leadership of the

Mission Community Church is a 4,000 member church in Gilbert, Arizona, inspired to live out the vision of Micah 6:8 to “do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly before God.” As the church and its resources matured, so did the vision. In 2007, Mission began a journey to address AIDS in Africa. The church prayerfully sought the guidance of an experienced intermediary, Visionledd, and was introduced to the work of Somebody Cares, a ministry in Malawi that works with churches and communities to address HIV/AIDS. The partnership has helped to restore a community ravaged by drought, hunger, and disease.

From Hunger to Hope: Equipping Pastors to Defend the Cause of Orphans

In 2006, families living in the 48 villages of Chikudzulire, Malawi, were recovering from a devastating drought that led to low crop yields and widespread hunger. The rains did eventually come, but what remained were deeper poverty levels, climbing HIV infection rates, and children suffering from hunger and malnutrition.

When one of Chikudzulire's respected leaders biked 50 kilometers in the mud and rain to Malawi's capital to ask **Somebody Cares** for assistance, the ministry was ready to help. Since 2000, Somebody Cares has worked to empower churches to reach out to the poor and those affected by HIV/AIDS. Operating from the principle that low-cost, sustainable change emerges from the community itself, Somebody Cares partners with communities like Chikudzulire, helping pastors, churches, and community members to unite for the cause of the orphaned, the widowed.



continued in sidebar, page 29

In Malawi, where approximately 80 percent of the population attends local Christian churches, the church is often a focal point for community mobilization, and pastors are trusted and respected community leaders. Working with traditional leaders is also essential, as ministry initiatives cannot happen, or will not be as successful, without their approval. In partnership with **Visionledd**, an international organization focused on empowering churches to serve those in greatest need, Somebody Cares began providing training and support in Chikudzulire. The training equips pastors and traditional leaders to increase their community's support to vulnerable children and families and to decrease stigma and mobilize care for those living with HIV/AIDS.

Mission Community Church was introduced to the work in Chikudzulire through Visionledd, whose core mission includes supporting partnerships between North American churches and Africa-led ministries. With a U.S. office in Mesa, Arizona, and with staff on the ground in Malawi, Visionledd was well poised to foster the relationship between Mission and Somebody Cares.

From Training to Action: Building a Community Child Care Center

In 2007, Mission Community Church joined a pastors' learning trip to Malawi to see the work of Somebody Cares in Chikudzulire and other communities. Mission knew they wanted to come alongside in partnership, but were unsure about the specific direction this should take. They looked to Theresa Malila, founder of Somebody Cares, and the Visionledd staff for guidance.

"We were committed not to force our own agenda," said Mark Connelly, Mission's lead pastor. Together the three groups determined that Chikudzulire, where Visionledd and Somebody Cares had been working to mobilize pastors and the community for the past year, was the best match for partnership.

As churches and community members in Chikudzulire stepped up their outreach to the poor and the HIV/AIDS-affected, they were in a good position to utilize additional external support from Mission Community Church in a way that built on, rather than discouraged, community initiative. The pastoral training and development of home-based care programs for the ill had strengthened the community's capacity to address its own needs, while also providing a solid foundation for partnership.

With support from Somebody Cares, Chikudzulire had also begun to mobilize local resources to build a **Community Child Care Center** to serve a wide range of needs. Traditional leaders and the community donated land, and Chikudzulire's women's and youth groups made the bricks. In 2007, Mission Community Church became an active partner, funding the drilling of the borehole next to the center site in order to provide clean water to 5,000 people. The next year they raised funds and returned with church volunteers to help finish the center's construction.



continued from page 28

local church and community. For example, mission team members do not go on random excursions to play with children or to pass out materials in the community. Team members do interact with children and community members, but only in the context of work that has already been started by the community, preapproved by village councils, and organized by Somebody Cares. Teams are not allowed to take photographs or pose with villagers unless preapproved. All this is to uphold the notion among team members that the mission trip must honor the will of its host and that a mission trip is not a project, but a tool to empower and encourage their African partners.

Mission Community Church has truly embraced the watchwords of "serve" and "learn." By setting this expectation at the onset and taking the time to prayerfully and carefully prepare, mission teams are able to adapt to the needs that arise in a more flexible and responsive way.

Visionledd Executive Director Karl Mueller states, "You may have thought you were going to do A, but things have changed and B is the more urgent need — so we're going to do B. We are here to serve and to learn."

"There is not only infrastructure like the community center and boreholes and feeding shelter but there are support groups, children and women's ministries, home-based caregivers...All of this is being run by the community. It is their initiative. It is their heart. It is their desire. It's their energy."

~ Karl Mueller, Visionledd



Redefining Mission: Mission Community Church, Visionledd & Somebody Cares

About Somebody Cares

**Somebody C (cares) A (advocates)
R (resources) E (empowers) S (supports)**

In 2000 Theresa Malila, a tribal chief, began Somebody Cares from her home in Lilongwe, Malawi. With just a Bible and some cooking oil to share, Theresa entered the slums to pray with the sick for healing. Touched by the vast needs of HIV-affected communities near her home, Theresa felt God calling her to leave the secular world of international development to work in ministry with orphans and widows.

Somebody Cares has grown from a small organization with three volunteers to a large nonprofit organization impacting the lives of 500,000 individuals across Malawi. Along with pastoral and community leadership training, home-based care for families affected by HIV/AIDS is the backbone of Somebody Cares's programming.

With permission from traditional authority (including tribal chiefs), and the support of local pastors, Somebody Cares approaches orphan and widow care by mobilizing community members to form home-based care (HBC) groups, widows' groups, youth clubs, pastors' groups, peer-mentoring and women's skills groups. As a result, solidarity is fostered; orphans, vulnerable children, and the ill are ministered to; and family livelihoods are improved. These groups form the base for community transformation that is independent of outside resources and is sustainable from

continued in sidebar, page 31

Multiple Programs to Meet Multiple Needs

The Community Child Care Center serves as a hub for the community. A variety of programs operate from the center providing services that meet the needs of the most vulnerable including children, youth, widows, and HIV-affected families. Programs include early childhood development (daycare) and orphan feeding programs, widows' support and skill training groups, and home-based care.

Women for Orphans and Widows (WOW), a ministry of Visionledd, works with Somebody Cares to take advantage of the central location and meeting space provided by the Community Child Care Center. Each morning, while their children attend the early childhood development program, orphan caregivers and widows meet in the center to offer each other mutual support and encouragement. Through locally led song, dance, and trainings the WOW group functions as a peer support group as well as a training group offering women income-generating ideas and the skills necessary to produce a livelihood (soap making, bead making, etc.).

The center provides support to women like Sarah, abandoned by her husband and raising her three young children alone with very few resources. Sarah had struggled with despair and the fear of not being able to provide for her family. The center has provided early childhood education and meals for Sarah's two oldest



*"Seeing widows that can survive, learn skills,
and take care of their kids...gives me hope
for myself."*

~ Sarah, mother and
participant in support group

children, preparing them for primary school and allowing Sarah time to work in the fields in the mornings. Once a week Sarah volunteers at the center and also joins other volunteers every week to share stories, sing, and counsel one another. Sarah also attends the weekly widows' group, receiving emotional and spiritual support, and participating in the skills group to make beads and other locally sold products.

The Community Child Care Center provides a central location for home-based care training and HIV/AIDS support groups that form a network of community volunteers trained to visit the homes of families living with AIDS. The volunteers are often former patients themselves who have received training on the importance of food and medication and who are willing to fight the stigma surrounding HIV in order to encourage others, provide information on prevention and treatment, and share their compassion by providing small acts of service like cooking or cleaning. In addition to the feeding program, home-based care is almost always identified by the community as one of their top priorities or needs—despite the fact that HIV is rarely discussed publicly. Home-based care acts as an additional layer of support to orphans and vulnerable children who benefit from regular visits from caring HBC volunteers.

Beyond helping to build the center and install its clean water borehole, Mission Community Church provides ongoing support to the center's programs. For example, they have provided funds to expand the children's feeding program and have launched a home-based care sponsorship program in which church members individually pledge \$35 a month to help cover the cost of home-based caregiver packets that include medicines, food parcels, and other supplies.



continued from page 30

within as group members are encouraged to pool their own resources.

Somebody Cares, in partnership with others, also helps direct external resources to where they can be most useful. For example, support has been provided for building community centers, drilling boreholes, installing latrines, and providing irrigation pumps and ox carts or bicycles for community trainers and home-based care workers. These kinds of capital investments from partners like Mission Community Church make a lasting difference for communities that may be rich in social solidarity and initiative but lacking in material resources. Investments made in response to locally owned and driven initiatives are much more likely to succeed.

“We are the radical voices of our community. Now people are not ashamed to identify themselves as HIV positive, they have come out of hiding...We were taken care of and are able now to give back and take care of those who are sick and dying.”

~ Home-based care volunteer



About Visionledd

Since 1999 Visionledd has focused on empowering African churches and ministries working among orphans and vulnerable children, widows, families, and communities affected by extreme poverty and HIV/AIDS. With offices in Canada, the United States, and Africa, Visionledd helps build partnerships between North American churches and African churches and ministries that transform communities.

Currently active in nine African nations with high HIV prevalence rates, Visionledd seeks to identify African churches and Christian initiatives already engaged in effective community-based HIV/AIDS ministries and supports their work through providing resources, capacity building, training, and opportunities to serve in partnership.

In North America, Visionledd catalyzes churches for partnerships with African churches and ministries and then supports those partnerships through coaching, mentoring and networking. Visionledd works to increase the effectiveness of ministry initiatives—locally and globally—and to create a climate for building relationships, solving problems, and engaging in new opportunities that will improve the lives of children, families, and communities.

“Before going ahead I ask myself, is this effort putting focus on me? If so, it is the wrong focus. We prepare teams from Mission Community Church to come humbly and not put too much focus on themselves by taking photos and being obvious. Teams come and go but the community is there throughout.”

~ Steve Bowler, Visionledd Malawi

Sustaining the Mission: A Long-Term Commitment

Mission Community Church remains active in Chikudzulire, supporting the work of the community center, sponsoring income-generating activities, funding pastoral training, and organizing medical clinics and distribution of Bible resources. Theresa Malila visits the Arizona church once each year to share updates, build relationships, and inspire the congregation. Visionledd plays a key role in supporting and guiding Mission in their partnership and works closely with Somebody Cares to ensure that activities and support are in alignment with the priorities on the ground in Chikudzulire.

For its part, Mission Community Church has committed to “serve” and “learn” over the long term. “We weave the partnership into the fabric of the church,” said Pastor Mark Connelly. After learning from Theresa that many American partners and mission teams come and go, Mission felt that a public proclamation of their commitment as a church body was important. On one of Theresa’s visits to Arizona, the entire congregation stood up and announced in Malawi’s national language, “We’re here to stay” to demonstrate their solidarity and ongoing support.



Learning from the Mission Community Church, Visionledd & Somebody Cares Partnership

Consider working with a trusted intermediary.

A trusted local intermediary is key to many successful partnerships. An intermediary partner such as Visionledd, which had worked extensively in Malawi, is especially beneficial to churches with limited experience and relationships on the ground in Africa. While mission trips will help your congregation understand the realities in the communities you may be called to serve, working with an intermediary organization with strong roots in the community will help support your process of discernment. A trusted local intermediary can also serve as a cultural interpreter and provide the tools for engagement so that the U.S. church partner is better equipped to support local leadership.

Be flexible and responsive.

Mission Community Church originally wanted to partner only with one community in Malawi—Chikudzulire—through Somebody Cares. Concerned that sending a team four times in a year to the same community would foster jealousy among community leaders and dependency in the community, Somebody Cares encouraged Mission Community Church to visit other communities in need as well. Now, team members may spend several days operating a vision clinic in Chikudzulire and then spend the rest of the week in a more remote village



operating another vision clinic. This willingness to serve where needed helps to ensure that resources are more equitably distributed among communities served by their African partners.

Target your investments and commitment to make a sustainable difference.

Your partner will appreciate understanding your long-term intent. Can the congregation continue to sponsor children in school for many years to come, or will there be a need to scale back support after a specific time period? Having open conversations about a realistic time frame for ongoing support of programs will help the African partners plan more effectively for sustainability. This conversation may also inform decisions about what kinds of programs the community undertakes and prioritizes. For instance, there may be greater emphasis on programs that build self-sufficiency, such as supporting small businesses, rather than one-off projects.

Small Group Study Questions

1. Discuss your understanding of the Somebody Cares principle that low-cost, sustainable change emerges from the community itself.
2. How does the use of an intermediary partner (Visionledd) benefit both Mission Community Church and their partner, Somebody Cares and the Chikudzulire community?
3. Consider the statements “A mission trip must honor the will of its host” and “A mission trip is not a project, but a tool to empower and encourage their African partners.” How has the partnership embraced this philosophy and used it to shape missions policies? How is this similar to or different from mission trips you have experienced?

Programming Question: How has this partnership strengthened Chikudzulire’s capacity to address the needs of orphans and vulnerable children within its own community? Discuss the impact on children of programming for pastors, for youth, and for widows.

Partnership

Watermark Community Church & African Leadership & Reconciliation Ministries

Watermark & Mission Trips

At Watermark Church, short-term mission trips are referred to as “discipleship trips,” placing more emphasis on the ways in which mission is expressed in everyday life. Each trip is a discipleship tool, part of a broader commitment to care for one’s neighbor, both at home and in Africa.

Watermark teams are sent at least four times annually to Africa to collaborate with ALARM in leadership training and in Uganda, to support ALARM’s ministry to children in need.

Trip participants are carefully selected by church leadership. Members of the mission team must already be active in the church, serve in a small group, and have a track record of sustained involvement in the ministry of the church. All team members are required to have successfully completed Watermark’s 8- to 12-week discipleship training program before participating in a trip.

ALARM Uganda plays a key role in coordinating logistics, providing training and discipleship trip debriefing. With ALARM’s guidance, Watermark discipleship teams focus their work on three-day

continued in sidebar, page 35

Watermark Community Church, a 2,000-member church in Dallas, Texas, began partnering with ALARM (African Leadership and Reconciliation Ministries) in 2006 to support pastoral leadership training in conflict-affected areas in Africa. It was through this work that Watermark came face-to-face with the needs of orphans and vulnerable children in Uganda. Together with ALARM, the church has expanded its engagement to serve children in need. With Watermark’s support, ALARM Uganda has been able to grow its orphan care ministry and increase support to children laboring in rock quarries and living in youth-headed households.

From Pastoral Training to Supporting Ministries to Children

Watermark Community Church’s journey to Africa began with a focus on building up pastors. In 2006, Watermark approached **ALARM (African Leadership and Reconciliation Ministries)** to see if they could collaborate in pastoral leadership training. The church had become interested in ALARM after hearing about their work from a number of African pastors who had visited Watermark. After establishing a relationship with ALARM’s staff in Dallas, Watermark members began traveling with ALARM to assist with pastors’ conferences in East and Central Africa. In addition to leadership development, these conferences offered training on issues such as conflict resolution, health and HIV/AIDS, and the needs of women. By 2007, Watermark Community Church was sending teams regularly to support ALARM’s work in Burundi, Congo, and Uganda.

Watermark broadened its focus after learning about **ALARM Uganda’s** support of orphaned children and youth-headed households. ALARM’s leadership in Uganda had come to understand that the stability and viability of the communities they were trying to reach with the gospel of reconciliation were directly linked to the wellbeing of families and children. Accordingly, they had initiated ministries to meet the needs of children living in desperate situations, and in Watermark they found a partner who could join them in their efforts.

Watermark was introduced to a small orphan outreach program initiated by local ALARM leadership. At the time, the program was serving fewer than 20 children. Seeing the extent of the need and the potential to reach many more, Watermark provided needed resources, enabling ALARM Uganda to establish a paid staff position and to train and mobilize a cadre of volunteers. With the help of Watermark’s ongoing support, ALARM’s orphan outreach now touches the lives of over 600 children with a range of community-based programs including educational support, mentoring, support for youth-headed households, and skills training.



Ministering to Children and Families in Greatest Need

Watermark and ALARM were drawn together by a deep sense of compassion for children and families struggling against enormous odds. Prior to the partnership, ALARM Uganda was already ministering on the margins of Ugandan society. The resources and encouragement offered by Watermark built on this foundation.

ALARM volunteers began reaching out to families living near the rock quarry in Kampala when they found out that children were working alongside their mothers to produce a yield of rocks worth roughly \$1 a day. An initial response led by the wife of the ALARM Uganda country director was to reach out to the mothers and offer training in bead making—one of few livelihood options for women living near a stone quarry. In addition to skills training, the program offered a compulsory savings program and assisted the women, many of whom were widows, in selling in the local markets. The program, though small, helped to improve the families' livelihoods.

Partnering with Watermark, ALARM Uganda expanded its outreach to the children of these women with a feeding program, school sponsorship, and mentoring. Because of the support provided, mothers no longer felt compelled to have their children work in the quarries in order to avoid starvation. Hundreds of local children have been brought out of child labor and many are now attending school.

In Gulu (five hours north of Kampala) ALARM was moved to action by the difficult circumstances many children and families were experiencing as a result of a long-running armed conflict. ALARM began helping several youth-headed households living in and around the internally displaced persons (IDP) camps by providing food, spiritual support, and help accessing education. The camps were established to house and protect nearly 2 million displaced children and families. Thousands of children were born in these camps, and an estimated 25,000 youth were kidnapped or recruited to serve in rebel armies between 1989 and 2007. Despite the fact that the Ugandan government had been reallocating land and helping families leave the camps to resettle into nearby communities, life in the IDP camps was isolated, left families dependent on food aid, and produced a generation of youth ill-equipped to provide for themselves.



continued from page 34

conferences for pastors, women leaders, and government and civic leaders. During these conferences, Watermark and ALARM Uganda train local churches to address the needs of the most vulnerable in their communities. Watermark teams sometimes include specific expertise. For example, the church has sent individuals to offer livelihood training for widows supporting orphans and attorneys to train local judges and law enforcement in mediation, women's rights, and child protection.

A six-person leadership team from Watermark works closely with ALARM's Dallas office to coordinate the Africa partnership. The discipleship teams drawn from Watermark Church have helped to grow and cement this partnership. Watermark's congregation in Dallas designates two Sundays each year to focus their hearts and minds on the work in Africa. On these two special Sundays participants from the discipleship teams share their stories, and Watermark's pastor uses the pulpit to encourage the congregation and mobilize ongoing support for the partnership with ALARM.

"If we put kids in school they need water so they don't have to walk for water and skip school. If you drill wells and provide education, more kids stay in the community and more families can provide them with food and support."

~ Beau Fournet, Watermark Church member

Partnership

Watermark Community Church
& African Leadership &
Reconciliation Ministries

Robert's Story

To better understand youth-headed households in Uganda, consider young Robert. Robert is 15 years old and cares for his three younger siblings. After both parents died of AIDS in an IDP camp, the four children came to live on their father's land at the urging of their uncle. Already fostering children, their uncle could not take in four additional children, so he placed them in a home on the family land where he could look out for them. This allowed them to stay together and to live with and among family. Now living near extended family, Robert and his siblings still needed additional support, encouragement, and goodwill from the community.

At the suggestion of ALARM, Watermark donated the funds needed to build Robert and his siblings a new home on their family property. With support from ALARM, the children received the deed for the home, ensuring their rights as owners of the property. All four children, sponsored by Watermark and ALARM, are enrolled in school full time. Despite early hardships, Robert and his siblings remain a family like many of the families in their community—weathering trials together but remaining intact and with a hope for the future.

Meeting the Needs of Youth-Headed Households

At the heart of ALARM Uganda's work with children is family strengthening. The various activities are all rooted in an effort to keep the families together, to address the poverty that causes separation, and to provide support so that children's needs are met while they remain in their own homes. According to one of ALARM Uganda's leaders, Jessica Okello, "Staying as a family [with extended family and siblings], you are stronger, you share the same pains. There is a bond. Staying in an orphanage, you're just another orphan...Who is there to give 500 children love?"

In the face of orphanhood due to HIV/AIDS, conflict, and other causes, keeping loved ones together often means embracing different types of families, each with its own needs. This includes children who are cared for by their grandparents, extended family members, foster families, and even their older siblings.

Youth-headed households are some of the most vulnerable families, requiring extra protection and support. In Gulu, ALARM identified an extremely large percentage of youth-headed households in comparison to other parts of the country. While many of the households were located in the community or near extended families, these children were in need of help. With support from Watermark, ALARM Uganda has been able to sponsor over 50 children living in youth-headed households. Youth are given educational opportunities and vocational training to earn livelihoods as well as emotional and spiritual support to cope with the added responsibilities of caring for younger siblings. Without this support, the children would most likely be split apart, live in extreme poverty, or be vulnerable to recruitment into gangs and rebel activities.

*"Because we are not divided
we are able to love one another
and be there for each other."*



Growing Together in Service

Future plans for the partnership include even more support for youth-headed households, expanding income-generating activities to promote livelihoods for widows and a vocational school for youth.

ALARM Uganda ministers directly to children and families in need and also continues to equip pastors to lead their communities to do the same. ALARM's pastoral training places emphasis on fostering the protection and care of children. Pastors are trained to serve as counselors, report child victims of violence, and connect children who are suffering from loss with mentors through the local church. In the absence of social workers and mental health professionals, churches are a source of comfort to children in the healing process. ALARM trains pastors to identify and refer the most vulnerable children to their programs wherever possible.

Just as ALARM Uganda's advocacy and outreach has broadened the ministries of local churches to address the needs of children, Watermark's vision and ministry has also grown. For the Watermark Church, the journey of caring for orphans and vulnerable children in Africa has been a path of discipleship.



About ALARM

Reverend Dr. Celestin Musekura and his wife Bernadette started ALARM in the wake of the 1994 Rwanda genocide in which more than 70 percent of pastors were killed or forced into exile. By then, finishing his seminary education in Kenya, Celestin determined that God's call on his life was like an alarm requiring that he equip indigenous Africans with the skills needed to rebuild Africa.

ALARM's vision is one of a strong biblical church transforming and reconciling African communities. This is accomplished by focusing on three areas: leadership training, peace building and reconciliation, and community transformation. To fill the pastoral and leadership gap left by Rwanda's genocide and armed conflict in other African countries, ALARM provides culturally sensitive and relevant pastoral leadership training by organizing conferences, workshops, and seminars on theology, Bible study methods, discipleship, evangelism, church planting, servant leadership, conflict resolution, forgiveness, and reconciliation.

ALARM has offices in Burundi, Congo, Kenya, Rwanda, Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda, and Zambia with an African staff of 48, as well as a Dallas office. ALARM is supported by approximately 30 church partners in the United States, Africa, and the United Kingdom that provide part of the funding for ALARM's work. The majority of ALARM's work encompasses church leadership training, which formed the basis for the original partnership with Watermark Community Church. ALARM's expansion into the care and protection of orphans and vulnerable children was made possible through the specific interest and efforts of ALARM Uganda staff and the financial commitment and support of Watermark members.



Learning from the Watermark & ALARM Partnership

Empower and equip the local church.

Pastors equipped with the right tools and training can better lead their congregations in responding to the needs of orphans and vulnerable children. ALARM Uganda and Watermark were able to use an existing framework (pastoral training, leadership, and peace building) and adapt it to respond to the growing numbers of orphans and vulnerable children in Uganda. Because they ministered in areas of conflict, this also included a peace-building curriculum to promote healing, restoration, and reconciliation in communities.

Be willing to expand your understanding of ministry.

Watermark Church began their journey with an interest in church leadership development and training. When confronted with the realities on the ground in Uganda, they allowed themselves to see beyond this original vision. This meant adjusting their involvement in a well-established training program to support ALARM Uganda's efforts on behalf of vulnerable children.



Preserve and support families.

Even in the most volatile, life-threatening, and traumatic context for children, such as a conflict zone, preserving the family can still be a priority. Rather than removing children from their families and communities, ALARM Uganda and Watermark are working together to rebuild communities ravaged by HIV/AIDS and civil war. The focus on support to youth-headed households demonstrates a willingness to draw from the resources of local churches to keep families intact.

*"If we are going to have a changed generation,
it's if children are educated and with family.
The church is willing to come along."*

~ Jessica Okello
ALARM, Uganda

Small Group Study Questions

1. What are your thoughts on the concept of "discipleship trips" (see sidebar pages 34–35)? What does it mean to express mission in everyday life?
2. How do you imagine Watermark Church's journey of caring for orphans and vulnerable children has been an experience of discipleship for this congregation?
3. Discuss ALARM Uganda's expansion of their work from church leadership training to care and protection of orphans and vulnerable children. How was this a natural extension of their ministry? In what ways are we called to expand ministry?

Programming Question: How were you affected by the story of Robert and his siblings (see sidebar page 36)? How does this story of support to a youth-headed household stretch your definition of family and programming that supports family-based care?

Scriptural Inspiration

*I know that the LORD secures justice for the poor and upholds the cause of the needy.*³ Psalms 140:12

*But you do see! Indeed you note trouble and grief, that you may take it into your hands; the helpless commit themselves to you; you have been the helper of the orphan.*⁵ Psalms 10:14

*Learn to do good; seek justice, rescue the oppressed, defend the orphan, plead for the widow.*⁵ Isaiah 1:17

*Speak out for justice! Stand up for the poor and destitute!”*¹ Proverbs 31:9

*Do not take advantage of widows. Do not take advantage of children whose fathers have died.*² Exodus 22:22

*...because I rescued the poor who cried for help, and the fatherless who had none to assist him.*³ Job 29:12

*Have I not wept for him who was in trouble? Has not my soul grieved for the poor?”*⁴ Job 30:25

*Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.*³ James 1:27

*“Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes not me but the one who sent me.”*⁵ Mark 9:37

*“...for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.” Then the righteous will answer him, “Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?” And the king will answer them, “Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.”*⁵

Matthew 25: 35–40



*A father to the fatherless,
a defender of widows
is God in his holy dwelling.
God sets the lonely in families.*³
Psalm 68:5–6

*He has told you, O mortal,
what is good; and what does
the Lord require of you but to
do justice, and to love kindness,
and to walk humbly with your
God?*⁵ Micah 6:8

Partnership

Local Churches Seeding Hope: Willow Creek, Bright Hope & the Samfya Community of Care Providers

Willow Creek Community Church, Bright Hope, and Mission Trips

While Willow Creek uses several support structures in Africa, including field staff and contract employees, they chose to work through an intermediary in Zambia. Bright Hope serves as a facilitator and connector between the U.S. church and the local church, using their in-country personnel to assist the churches in navigating the partnership.

Bright Hope's approach to short-term mission trips is to guide churches through several stages of relationship building over time. The first trip engages churches in conversations and fellowship between a small U.S. team and leaders in the community where the partnership will take place. This includes home visits, observation of ministry activities, and a lot of discussion about the local church's vision. Bright Hope provides cross-cultural expertise and facilitates the exploration of how the partnership can move forward in a way that is mutually beneficial and culturally appropriate. In subsequent trips, Bright Hope helps facilitate an opportunity for the mission team to serve, making sure there is a balance between the strengths

continued in sidebar, page 41

Willow Creek Community Church is a 22,000-member church based in South Barrington, Illinois. Through its international ministry Global Connections, Willow Creek partners with churches in Latin America and Africa to minister to the poor and the AIDS-affected. In 2004, Willow Creek's journey led them to Zambia and the Samfya Community of Care Providers (SCCP)—a network of 24 churches in a rural lake district working together to meet the needs of children and families. With the help of Bright Hope, an international mission organization, the partnership supports a community-wide movement that helps children stay in school, delivers home-based care to the ill, and offers microloans enabling families to provide for children.

Laying the Groundwork for Partnership

"We said, we want to get into the battle and we want to engage with congregations in African churches, so direct us to the churches that are serving on the front lines."

~ Warren Beach, Director of Willow Creek's Global Connections Ministry

The **Willow Creek Community Church** was not new to missions. For decades, the church partnered with churches in Latin America to respond to the needs of those on the margins. Its **Global Connections** ministry was the vehicle for this work—and the home that incubated Willow Creek's outreach to local churches in Africa. Lynne Hybels, the wife of Willow Creek's senior pastor Bill Hybels, was determined to find more

"It is reality that there are too many kids without parents here, so the burden on the Christian community is great. The partnership of Bright Hope and Willow Creek with the community helps provide the resources to ease the burden and make family care possible."

~ Bright Hope Field Representative
in Zambia





effective ways for North American churches to connect with African churches in the fight against AIDS.

Willow Creek first began working directly with churches in South Africa. In 2004, guided by **Bright Hope**, a mission organization also based in Illinois, Willow Creek was introduced to the **Samfya Community Care Providers (SCCP)** in Zambia. Bright Hope supports indigenous churches to respond to the needs of vulnerable children and families and helps U.S. churches connect and engage with these efforts. With field staff in Zambia, Bright Hope was already working with SCCP and saw in Willow Creek a potentially well-matched partner for the good work already underway.

Bright Hope led a small group from Willow Creek on an initial assessment trip to Zambia. They met with SCCP and learned about the hundreds of orphans who had been taken in by foster families through the local churches. Many of these families needed help with the cost of school fees and uniforms so that the children could access an education. Willow Creek responded quickly to these and other immediate needs, raising \$600,000 following a World AIDS Day service that called attention to the situation in Africa. The funds were used to support Samfya as well as other African partners.

Willow Creek contemplated ways to forge a deeper partnership with the Samfya congregations that would build the capacity of local churches to deepen their impact at the community level. Supported by Bright Hope and their own past experience, Willow Creek understood the importance of providing resources in ways that would build on, rather than displace or erode, community assets and initiative.

From the beginning, SCCP's approach was to ensure that children remained in family care. "Samfya already had a great model," said Warren Beach, director of Willow Creek's Global Connections. "If a child was orphaned but family could be located, the child was placed in their extended family. If a child has no surviving family the church did not place them in an orphanage. A foster family would be identified from the congregation and asked to take in the child. We didn't change their model, we asked, what can we do?"

In response to SCCP's priorities, Willow Creek provided resources for school scholarships and food supplements for those living with HIV/AIDS. At the request of the Samfya school district, Willow Creek puts together "Hope Packs" for children, which include toiletries, school supplies, T-shirts, bibles, and mosquito nets. In addition, the partnership moved toward more sustainable approaches, such as kitchen garden and microloan programs enabling families to provide for children into the longer term.

The Samfya Community of Care Providers—a network of local churches—leads the work. Willow Creek's responsive approach provides encouragement, prayer, and needed resources.

continued from page 40

and skills the U.S. church has to offer and the expressed needs of the indigenous leadership. The final and ongoing phase involves sending teams equipped to minister in very specific ways that build local capacity, such as pastoral and teacher training, income-generating activities, and medical teams.

Up to 30 Willow Creek Community Church members compose the four to six teams that travel to Samfya each year. With support from Bright Hope, serving teams train pastors in church mobilization and growth. The teams train local teachers in creative teaching methodologies and child advocates in social work principles. Medical teams provide care in the local clinic and train home-based care volunteers. The Willow Creek teams use a "training of trainers" approach, so that SCCP church leaders can continue to build the capacity of their own church and community leaders.

At home, Willow Creek finds creative ways to deepen its congregation's commitment to its ministry in Zambia and other communities abroad. Willow Creek's annual Celebration of Hope raises awareness of the most pressing issues affecting its global partners and engages members in local service projects, acts of solidarity (such as subsisting on a diet of only rice, beans, and water for a week), and hands-on learning.

All these activities feed into Willow Creek's primary goal of building up the local church to develop sustainable communities. In this regard, the microloan program is a beacon of hope. More than 80 percent of loan recipients in Samfya report that they are giving more money back to their local churches—increasing the likelihood that down the road, Willow Creek can begin to withdraw its support, including its short-term mission trips, as the community is better able to sustain its own programs.



Local Churches Seeding Hope: Willow Creek, Bright Hope & the Samfya Community of Care Providers

Local Churches Working Together

The Samfya Community Care Providers did a remarkable thing—they brought together a group of churches in the community, across denominations, to fight the scourge of AIDS, promote education, and foster orphans. Church leaders shared their burdens and pooled their limited resources. They established a **Child Crisis Center** that ran a feeding program and trained volunteers to provide psychosocial counseling. In 2003, SCCP joined with Bright Hope to pay school fees and buy uniforms for orphaned children. They launched a home-based care program, with support from another partner, that trained scores of volunteers, furnished bicycles so care providers could reach more families, and distributed medicines and supplements to people living with HIV.

These activities are similar to many of the responses to HIV/AIDS and poverty in communities throughout Sub-Saharan Africa. An added strength is that the work is held together by strong commitment to a common purpose—a recognition that it is collective action that can transform their community. A local church leader states, “SCCP has brought churches together over common ground. There is no dissension among the churches or different denominations, because we have come together for a common passion—to help the widows and orphans.”

A Bright Hope field representative confirmed this sentiment: “We give a lot of credit to the church leadership for handling any problems. Evangelical, Catholic, Pentecostal, Anglican—they have put aside their differences to work together, yet they have kept their individual identities.” Moving beyond any denominational barriers, the SCCP leadership encourages and equips its member congregations to play an active role in the lives of the children and families they serve—tracking a child’s educational outcomes through trained child advocates, visiting vulnerable families regularly, fostering children, and finding ways to help families build self-sufficiency.

Willow Creek and Bright Hope support church leadership training, which is implemented through SCCP member churches. They organize teams to train teaching and medical staff, help sustain the home-based care program, and send regular mission teams and volunteers to lend a hand. One of the most valuable and successful aspects of the collaboration, however, is the growth of the SCCP microloan program, supported jointly by Willow Creek and Bright Hope.

Willow Creek Global Connections

We believe Jesus intends for his followers to care holistically about all the dimensions of a person’s life—physical, social, economic, and spiritual.

Global Connections fights global poverty and AIDS in Africa and in Latin American. Global Connections is Willow Creek’s response to the pressing needs of under-resourced communities. Through relationships with local churches, organizations, and global servants committed to holistic transformation of their communities, the church is able to serve on a global level.

*“What has being involved with SCCP meant for our church?
It means that now our priorities are to be looking after the
sick, looking after the vulnerable children, looking after
widows, and improving food security in the homes.”*

~ Pastor Alex Mulenga, SCCP Partner Church

Microloans as Ministry: A Movement to Build Self-Sufficiency

“There is still great poverty, but many families who were struggling to even get one meal a day now say they are feeding the family at least twice a day, and are able to pay the fees required for children to go to school. This has encouraged them and motivated them to take in orphaned nieces and nephews.”

~ Prisca Mwela, SCCP Coordinator of Microloans

In 2006, Bright Hope convened the SCCP churches to discuss the development of a microloan program that would be administered through SCCP. An effective microloan program would anchor the work of SCCP, Willow Creek, and Bright Hope by helping more families meet their own needs. In many cases, families were taking orphans into their homes, their school fees being provided through outside support. However, the parents sometimes did not earn enough to send their own children to school. The microloan program allows for the whole family to be lifted up.

Since its inception, with funding support from Willow Creek, the microloan program has provided loans to 850 members of the Samfya community and trained nearly 50 loan officers. The loan officers are trusted members of SCCP partner churches who coach and counsel recipients. They also receive specialized training from skilled Bright Hope staff in administering loans. A dedicated SCCP staff person oversees the microloan program, ensuring that churches running these programs have adequate support. While only modest resources are needed to start and maintain microloan programs, the programs require training of staff and sufficient experienced oversight to yield results.



Prisca Mwela, the microloans program coordinator for SCCP, states, “We teach that the church should be the solution to community problems. Church leaders are mandated to address poverty.” The impact on participating families has been transformative, with many families increasing the number of meals they provide daily, investing in small businesses, and contributing to their children’s education. Microloans have also enabled more families to welcome foster children whom they would have otherwise turned away because of lack of resources.



“People used to think ‘without outside assistance we can do nothing’—now there is a sense of ‘I can take care of my family—I can take care of orphans.’...You often hear, ‘This is something I can do for the Lord.’ The community now has vision.”

~ Carmen Brubacher, Bright Hope, Zambia

Mirrium’s Story

Mirrium is a mother of nine children, with four adopted children among them. For years she tried to feed her family by growing and selling tomatoes and onions. She barely scraped by.

In 2008, she signed up at church to become a microloan client. She started out small and received her first loan of 200,000 ZMK (\$45). While it wasn’t much, it was an amount she could handle, and with the money she traveled to the swamps to buy fish. She bargained hard and brought her goods back to the local market. Fish is a favorite in Samfya, and she quickly made enough profit to repay her loan and buy more fish. The cycle continued as she always used a portion of her profits to buy more fish to sell in the market.

Now with a steadier income she is able to better take care of her family. She can feed them a more balanced diet with meat and vegetables instead of just maize meal. She even purchased blankets so her children could sleep more soundly at night.

Mirrium was accepted to receive a loan of 600,000 ZMK (about \$135) to expand business. She will then be able to send all her children to school. She is hopeful that by investing in her children’s education, one day they will be able to get good jobs that pay well, and they won’t have to live such a difficult life.

(Adapted from the Bright Hope website)



About Bright Hope

Bright Hope is a Christian relief and development organization committed to serving those living in extreme poverty (less than \$1 a day). Bright Hope was founded in 1969 with the primary goal of providing immediate help to those in crisis situations, especially in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. Currently, Bright Hope has established projects in Sub-Saharan Africa, Asia, South America, and the Caribbean/Central America region. By working through the local indigenous church, Bright Hope assists some of the world's poorest families in a variety of ways:

- Meeting immediate crisis needs such as food, clothing, shelter, and medicine;
- Creating financial opportunity through education, microloans, and job training;
- Providing support to begin churches in poverty-stricken areas.

By linking North American churches with local indigenous churches, Bright Hope facilitates relationship building and cultural understanding, resulting in productive partnership. The expectation is that congregations on both sides of the partnership experience challenge and spiritual growth. The practical outcomes are projects designed for the encouragement of the individual, empowerment of the church, and sustainability of the community, providing hope for children and their families.

From Relief to Sustainable Solutions: The Growth of the Samfya Model

The programs in Samfya supported by Willow Creek and Bright Hope continue to thrive. The number of families participating in the microloan program is growing. Through the efforts and initiatives of local churches, this program has expanded to two other communities in Zambia. The partners continue to evaluate and improve the effectiveness of the ministries to children and families. For example, the home-based care program, which relies on trained volunteers to reach out to vulnerable families, is placing more emphasis on monitoring the wellbeing of children as well as adults living with HIV. The SCCP created another layer of support—community members who are designated as “child advocates.” When the advocates visit homes, they focus exclusively on how to improve the welfare of the children.

When life-saving antiretroviral medicine became available through large development organizations for people living with AIDS in the Samfya district, the local home-based care program helped to ensure the success of treatment through its ongoing ministry of emotional, spiritual, and nutritional support (all critical to good outcomes). Willow Creek's support complemented and strengthened the effectiveness of these international and local efforts. For example, Willow Creek provided support for antibiotics to treat secondary infections, and conducted “training of trainers” programs for home-based care workers. They also made it possible for SCCP to purchase a CD4 count machine (used to indicate the stage of HIV or AIDS in patients) for the district health clinic, which allows patients to receive same-day testing results to monitor their treatment progress.

The partnership in Samfya has progressed from providing relief to supporting development and more sustainable solutions. It serves as a compelling example of churches breaking through denominational barriers to care for the needs of their community. With help from Willow Creek and Bright Hope, SCCP and its network of churches continue to grow, with nearby communities seeking to replicate the model.

Viewing the local church as a source of hope, the ultimate goal of the partnership is to holistically support the health and wellbeing of families.

Learning from the Willow Creek, Bright Hope & SCCP Partnership

Invest in and empower families.

The family is the bedrock of the community. An investment in empowering families (through advocacy, training, and microlending) resulted in more community members being sensitive to the needs of children and willing to foster orphans. The lives of thousands of children have been transformed by the dynamic collaboration of Willow Creek, Bright Hope, and SCCP. There are also many “testimonies” from caregivers and heads of households who have received support, training, loans, and counseling and are now better able to care for children in the long term. The SCCP approach has helped to build resiliency in the community, rather than dependency.

Build trust and take responsible, well-informed risks.

The collaboration between Willow Creek, Bright Hope, and Samfya is rooted in trust, based on relationship. This trust allows Willow Creek to take responsible risks, such as investing in a new microloan program that is fully administered by SCCP. With hundreds of thousands of dollars raised by their global ministry, Willow Creek could easily have established their own programs. Instead, they invested resources in an existing viable community structure. It is also important to balance trust with information and experience that help guide “better practice.” Microlending can be a powerful tool for empowering families, but like many programs to strengthen livelihoods, it requires



sound technical expertise and training in order to be successful. Bright Hope was able to provide this level of support to SCCP, enabling them to build their capacity to implement and manage the microlending program. Working together, the three partners each brought particular strengths, resulting in a program that strengthened the ability of families to provide for their children.

Seek to fill gaps and complement resources.

In this partnership, Willow Creek was responsive to filling in critical “gaps” identified by their local partners, and often provided needed resources to complement the support that was already in place. For example, while access to antiretroviral medicine to treat patients living with HIV or AIDS was made possible through large international agencies, Willow Creek supported additional medical supplies and home-based care and nutritional programs that are also essential to successful treatment. Leveraging and complementing resources helps to enhance the work on the ground that may already be funded by other programs—it invites more partners to the table and ensures a more holistic approach to care.

Small Group Study Questions

1. What lessons can we learn from the 24 churches from different denominations coming together for a common passion? Discuss the potential challenges and the keys to making this work. What inspiration do you take from this example? How do you think they are able to avoid dissension?
2. In what ways are churches mandated to address poverty? What impact can a church have on the systemic issues of poverty?
3. Do you believe the church should be a solution to community problems? If so, what role should the church play?

Programming Question: Discuss your impression (or understanding) of microlending. How do microloans support family-based care? What cautions and priorities would a church need to exercise to maintain the granting of microloans as a ministry?

Principles of Partnership

Serving Together to Meet the Needs of Orphans, Vulnerable Children & Families

Serving in Partnership

Karl Mueller and Steve Bowler, *Visionledd*

Partnership is a biblically based principle best understood through New Testament descriptions of *Koinonia*, a term used to encompass several concepts of relationship. Koinonia is often defined as joining together for a common purpose in a way that seeks to overcome division and which encourages trust, humility, and love. Koinonia partnership fosters a spirit of sharing and giving. Koinonia is *doing* together, not just being together.

Healthy biblical partnerships share a common vision, are based on genuine respect, concern and trust, and celebrate together what God is doing in and through them. They are based on a conviction that God has called the members of the partnership to work together to see “His kingdom come and His will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.” The paradigm of a healthy, biblically based koinonia partnership should be *mission with*, not *mission to*.



The impact of poverty and HIV/AIDS on children and families is both heartbreaking and overwhelming. The need is great and there is no single solution or effort that can by itself address the vast scope and scale of this complex issue. Many different groups have key roles to play, from national and local governments to large international organizations to small but powerful grassroots initiatives. The situation calls for partnership and broad-based collaboration, between groups, across borders, and around the world.

Across Africa and globally, the Church is stepping up to the challenge of responding to the needs of orphans and vulnerable children. Thousands of local churches in impoverished communities in the global South are ministering directly to children and families, providing transformative and holistic support, mobilizing local resources, and ensuring that children remain in family care. Churches in the United States and the global North also have unique gifts and strengths to offer. By partnering in prayer, giving, and service with those who are leading the day-to-day response, the global church can encourage and help to equip the local church in its life-sustaining work.

Long-term partnerships, like those explored in *Journeys of Faith*, demonstrate that successful programming for orphans and vulnerable children grows from partners who are committed to learning, relationship building, honoring the integrity of the local community, building up and standing in solidarity with local leaders, and engaging with humility. The principles of partnership that follow are drawn from the experience of a wide variety of long-term church partnerships and key resources.

Seek the Right Match for Your Church

Prayerful and informed discernment is an important part of the process when seeking a partner. Partnership is a long-term process best built on mutual trust and strong communication. Consider your existing relationships and whether any of these might be a platform on which to build. Many churches do not have the experience or the resources to start from scratch. Keep in mind that working with a trusted and experienced intermediary can provide logistical support and essential guidance in targeting your efforts to do the most good.

If your church seeks to engage in a direct partnership with a church or community overseas with whom you are not already familiar, start slow. Take time to get to know the context, as well as the goals and the vision of your potential partner. Select a partner that is a good match spiritually, shares similar goals for the partnership, and with whom you share a common vision. Identify a partner whose leadership and decisions you trust. Look for a partner that welcomes your involvement, but is willing and able to maintain the leadership role in determining ministry priorities and activities.

A church, ministry, or community-based organization that is already organized but needs additional support can provide a good opportunity for partnership. Accordingly, seek partners that have already mobilized local resources and volunteers, have a clear plan of action, understand the needs of children and families, and are working collaboratively with other local efforts. Choose a partner that demonstrates good stewardship of resources and has gained the trust of the surrounding community.

Partner in the Best Interests of Children

Not every child-focused ministry operates according to the best interests of orphans and vulnerable children. During the process of prayer, learning, and discernment, make sure that you are incorporating best practice principles that will guide your choice of partner. Partnership in the best interests of children should focus on strengthening families and helping churches and communities provide support that helps children remain in families. Commitment must be demonstrated to culturally appropriate forms of care. U.S. partners should be cautious and carefully consider partnering with any community requesting assistance to build an orphanage—particularly in Africa where orphanages have never been the traditional first response and are sometimes built in response to a presumed interest on the part of an American donor or partner church. There may be a real need for residential care when no other form of support is available; however, even in these circumstances the goal should always be to transition children into reliable family care. Whether partnering with an intermediary or a local church, always seek partners who support “better care” practice for children (such as the 12 strategies listed on pages 6 and 7).

Prioritize Relationship Building and Listening

While not true of all Americans, the American culture in general values individualism, speed, efficiency, and obvious results. While not true everywhere, many communities in the global South (particularly in Africa) place a higher value on building relationship and addressing issues through collective and community-driven approaches. These cross-cultural differences may or may not be obvious to both sides of the partnership. The U.S. partner, entering partnership with an attitude of humility and serving, must place a heightened emphasis on listening, learning, and building relationship.

Gather key resources, spend time researching, reading, and learning about the context in which you wish to partner, and listen to stories (absorbing lessons learned) from other U.S. churches who have engaged in cross-cultural partnership. Seek out stories and lessons from partners in the global South as well as the global North. It is essential to recognize and learn from both sides of a partnership. Enter partnership slowly and as you begin to work together, first and foremost take time to grow in relationship and remember to *listen, listen, listen*.



Learning Through Partnership

Mike Douris, Orphan Outreach

As more and more churches take the step of faith to develop orphan ministries, an important issue arises in regard to with whom and how churches develop partnerships. Most churches do not have the resources or the expertise to begin a program independently, and even if they do it is important to have good partners both at home and in-country to have a successful and effective program.

The Lord desires the church to be a light and to glorify His name in all we do. We are to do all we do with excellence and love. The church is also to function as a body in unity and with dependency on one another to accomplish His will. These principals are also applicable in the orphan care ministry. Caring for orphans and vulnerable children is a mandate but also a huge responsibility, and to do it well requires knowledge and a specific skill set.

I spoke at a conference recently where a young couple was planning to go to a country to start an orphanage. I asked them if they had ever been to the country before and they said they had not. I asked them if they spoke the language and they said they did not. I asked them if they had any experience running an orphanage and they said they never had been in an orphanage. Yet they were in the process of buying land and moving their young family to a remote area to begin caring for orphan children. They explained that the Lord had called them and would provide all their needs. The Lord’s wisdom would be all that they needed to accomplish His will. When I suggested that they might benefit from some training, they responded that the Bible would be the only childcare manual they needed.

While I applaud their great faith and courage, I also question why they would not take the time and effort to be equipped to care for children who have very complex needs. There is a difference between faith and presumption. The Lord equipped the church with spiritual gifts—elders and deacons had requirements before they were eligible to serve. Should we expect less when considering the magnitude and responsibility of being responsible for a life of a child?

Good intentions and a real heart for children are important, but are not enough to run a safe effective ministry to orphans and vulnerable children. It is critical to develop strategic partnerships, bringing compassion and service together with knowledge and experience.

Principles of Partnership

Serving Together to Meet the Needs
of Orphans, Vulnerable Children & Families

Partnerships Should Be God LED

~ Adapted from Visionledd

Seek God

- Spend time praying, listening, learning, and discerning.
- Gather buy-in from your church and congregation.

As you enter into partnership:

Listen

- Put your partner first.
- Treat partners with dignity and respect.
- Do not over demand of the partner's time.
- Gather key resources, read, ask questions and learn the context.
- Listen to stories and lessons learned.
- Travel on a vision trip to learn instead of "do."

Empower

- Don't bring imported solutions and quick fixes.
- Respect and honor the partner's leadership.
- Glorify God, not yourself.
- Partner with long-term sustainable support.
- Don't take over the partner's ministry.
- Help build capacity, don't throw money at problems or projects.

Decide to Trust

- If needed, trust an intermediary organization to provide linkages.
- Be willing to forgive and ask for forgiveness and practice good communication.
- Lay ground rules but come with servant hearts.
- Be committed to working through miscommunications.

Bringing the spirit of Koinonia to the creation of a partnership requires an emphasis on long-term relationship and transformation, neither of which can be accomplished quickly.

Respect and Honor Local Leadership

Effective partnerships honor and support the capacity of local pastors and church and community leaders to meet the needs of their communities with resources and solutions that are context specific, culturally appropriate, and available. Not all partnerships last forever. When support from an external partner subsidizes, programs that are locally initiated and owned are most likely to be sustained. Imported solutions and "quick fixes" are often more harmful than helpful. Local pastors and leaders are in a better position to direct resources to where they are most needed. Additionally, local leaders speak the local language, understand the complexities and dynamics of the community and their congregations, and will be able to identify where the need for partnership and support is greatest. It is essential for U.S. partners to respect local leadership and community ownership if communities are to develop the capacity to address their own needs.

Protect Local Ownership and Build on the Assets of the Community

A fine balance must be struck between incorporating a partner's ministry into your own and not overcoming or taking over the partner's ministry. The greatest asset any community has is the local initiative and sense of ownership that are essential to sustainable and transformative change. By identifying local resources and building upon the identified activities, networks, and infrastructure already in place, the U.S. partner's support will leverage a larger and longer-lasting impact for children. Good examples of building on what is already there are included in the *Journeys of Faith* partnership stories.

Start Small, Build Over Time

Nothing can derail a partnership faster than a large influx of funds to a small ministry without the capacity to manage or disburse those funds. While it may be very tempting to pour money into what appears to be a deserving child-focused ministry, partnerships are built on an investment in relationship, which takes time. Be sensitive to absorptive capacity and match funding amounts to actual identified needs and management capabilities of the partner. By offering too much too fast an external partner can undermine relationship building as well as impede local efforts to organize the community and create a more sustainable approach to change. As a general rule, it is best not to do those things that local communities and churches can do for themselves.





Practice Good Communication and Build Trust

Strong partnerships are built on mutual trust and respect. Both partners will view the relationship through the lens of their own culture and values, which can sometimes lead to misunderstanding. When you see that things are being done differently than you may have expected, be aware that local churches have a better understanding of the complex dynamics of the communities in which they live and work. This does not mean that you cannot respectfully engage around issues where you may have different perspectives, but it does require careful listening, learning, and walking in humility.

Be committed to working through financial or programmatic miscommunications and keep open a clear channel of communication. If you are not working through an intermediary organization that provides regular funding reports, designate someone in your church who can track spending and communicate with the partner about reporting needs.

Partner for the Long Term and Invest in Sustainable Solutions

The most effective partnerships prioritize long-term relationship building over short-term or one-off mission trips. Addressing the needs of orphans and vulnerable children, as well as the root causes of orphaning, requires transformation that cannot easily be accomplished within strict time restraints. As the stories in *Journeys of Faith* demonstrate, long-term partnership has the greatest potential for long-term impact.

In order to honor the principle of respecting the local partner within a long-term partnership, it is essential that the U.S. church promote the local ministry as a hero within its own community. This commitment to long-term support combined with a respect for local ownership and initiative is the best approach for building up sustainable solutions that are not dependent on external resources in order to thrive well into the future.

Connect to Broader Responses

While most church partnerships are focused at the level of the individual community, it is important to be aware of and informed by district and national responses and to work whenever possible in concert with these broader efforts:

- Many countries have a National Plan of Action for Orphans and Vulnerable Children or other strategies for the most vulnerable children that help to identify the areas of greatest need and where there are gaps in the response. Strategies can help inform practice, and the information on gaps in services can help partners determine where their contributions are most needed.
- Find out what coordination structures there are at a national and district level around the needs of vulnerable children and children in need of care. In many countries there are good mechanisms to share information on who is doing what and where, as well as lessons on how best to support children. Encouraging and supporting the local churches to be part of these structures where appropriate can help ensure more effective and sustainable responses.
- Ensure sharing of information on the numbers of children supported through partner organizations with district and national reporting structures to enable national authorities to measure overall coverage of children in need and where there are critical gaps.



True participatory and sustainable development takes time. Invest in long-term partnership that contributes to lasting change. Respect and protect the roles that local leadership and community initiative play in building up local churches and communities.

Guiding Principles for Short-Term Mission Trips



Entering into partnership with a church in the global South can be an exciting and mobilizing experience for a North American congregation. As the bond grows between global neighbors, their concerns become ours.

Short-term mission trips have the potential to powerfully change hearts and impact the lives of those who go on them. Inspiring trips have the potential to become the starting point for a lifelong commitment to making a difference in the lives of orphans and vulnerable children. Short-term mission teams can play an important role in relationship building and community transformation on both sides of a partnership provided there is “eyes wide open” awareness of how our actions can impact the community we hope to serve. In order to “help without hurting,” it is important to be mindful of the ways that our involvement can produce unintentionally negative consequences. Drawing on the previous principles of partnership and key resources, here are some guidelines and considerations for churches engaging in short-term missions.

Consider Where Your Resources Can Make the Greatest Difference

Churches in the United States spend approximately \$1.6 billion each year on short-term mission trips. The best mission trips take place within the context of building long-term relationships that contribute to sustainable and transformative change. But not every partnership is dependent on short-term missions. Be prayerfully and sincerely open to what makes the most sense for your church and the partner with whom you are engaged. Once a strong relationship with your partner has been established, you may consider providing funds directly to support the local ministry, rather than sending church members on another short-term mission trip.

Examine Your Motivation

Why do you want to go on a short-term mission trip? Your answer may vary greatly from the motivation of the partner ministry serving as host. The most successful mission trips emphasize giving and serving rather than gaining. When participating in a mission trip focused on children, this may mean that your team provides services that support local caregivers (for example providing training in child development or medical needs) rather than playing with children.

Do Not Go Unless Invited

Make sure the local church or community has requested the team as part of their plan to improve their ministry. Engage only in those activities that have been requested. The goal is for the work to be done primarily by community members with the team in the helping role. Remember you are there to “learn” and to “serve,” and be respectful of the role that local leadership and community initiative play in sustainable solutions.

Keep Numbers Small

Remember that your partner is welcoming you and will feel responsible for hospitality, for cultural translation, and for coordinating your visit. Do not overwhelm your host so greatly with your numbers and your needs that they are unable to continue with the activities of the ministry. Working with an intermediary (an organization that has field staff in the community) that can handle the logistics of your visit can greatly reduce the burden on your partner.

Don't Overstay Your Welcome

Make an effort to consider the appropriate length and frequency of short-term trips. Communicate with your partner ministry and discover what their actual needs are. Foster relationships that are open and honest in order to avoid overstaying your welcome without realizing it.

Avoid Project Hopping

Send teams to work with one organization, therefore allowing time to build a relationship with its leaders and to be of value to the staff and programming. Commit to be impactful for your partner ministry. Send teams to respond to support a specific goal based on planning between partners rather than spreading your time and resources thin or engaging in “poverty tourism.”

Prepare Properly for Mission Trips and Debrief Afterward

Balance the inevitable strain on your partner community by preparing teams to bring transferable skills, knowledge, and resources. Provide proper cross-cultural training and preparation so that team members will not overwhelm the partner with their needs. Pre-field trainings help team members know what to expect and how to behave when visiting in overseas communities. Debrief during and afterward to reflect on and absorb the lessons learned.

Invest throughout the Year

Partners in the global South desire a long-term supportive relationship that requires more than an annual quick trip visit. Support your partner through prayer, encouragement, and regular communication. Consider giving a financial contribution toward the work of your partner that in the very least matches the cost of your team members to go on the mission trip. Do not depend only on mission trips to maintain communication and express your support.

Help Your Partner Create Visitor Guidelines

Some ministries may not have visitor guidelines or child protection policies in place. It is important to create such guides for short-term teams. Issues such as gift giving, taking and using pictures, and expectations regarding post-field communication with individual children are important concepts to think through with your partner before sending teams out. Communicate policies to your team!

The Local Partner Should Be the “Hero”

Short-term teams need to be seen as an extension of the local ministry rather than as independent, outside agents. The local partner has the community ties and will be the one conducting ministry long after the short-term team is gone. Make the local ministry the hero and do not undermine their efforts. This may mean avoiding directly distributing clothing, toys, and candy as sometimes these “handout” activities lead locals to participate only when (exciting) mission teams are involved. If you do bring material gifts, consider giving these to the local church to distribute.

Emphasize the Assets of the Community

Short-term mission teams are often in “needs based” mode, bringing their knowledge, skills, and material resources to materially impoverished communities in order to accomplish a task as fast as possible. This paradigm does not allow enough time to identify existing resources in the host community. By trying to accomplish too much too fast, local assets can be undermined. Recognizing the strengths of the community means not doing things that communities can do for themselves. This may mean that instead of bringing in a short-term team to construct or paint a new building, funds are provided so that local teens and others in need of work can be hired to do the job. Consider ways that local youth can be actively engaged in projects and help ensure that the activities that you take on are not displacing the opportunity for strengthening livelihoods or building skills within the local community.



“Stay away from the ‘go-help-and-save-them’ message and use a ‘go as a learner’ message. We need no more short-term mission brochure covers with sad, dirty faces of children and the words ‘Will you die to self and go and serve?’ Such a message places too much focus on the sacrifice the mission team is making to change people’s lives—a level of change that is simply not realistic in two weeks—and on how helpless the poor people are without the team’s help.”

~ Corbett & Fikkert, *When Helping Hurts*, 2009

Consider Your Impact on Children

While your greatest desire may be to have a positive impact on the lives of orphans and vulnerable children, your short-term visit may actually result in negative consequences for children. Connection and attachment are crucial to the healthy emotional development of every child. Short-term attachments (as are often illustrated by a week of hand-holding and hugging between visiting teams and children in orphanages) and the subsequent loss for the child (occurring at the point of goodbye) can be incredibly difficult. If repeated often over time, this pattern can result in a lifelong struggle with forming relationships that are trusting and long-lasting.

Do not support a revolving door of mission team “caregivers.” While visiting team members can show compassion to children, it is best to encourage local caregivers and church and community members to offer the love and affection that their children need in the long term. Participate in activities that support local caregivers and provide them with training and tools (if needed) that will continue to strengthen their care for children long after you have left. By offering skills training in child development and abuse prevention, or by working alongside community members to build a children’s center, for example, your church can build up the local circle of support that protects and nurtures children day to day.

Principles of Partnership & Short-Term Missions

Small Group Study Questions

The Elephant and the Mouse

An African Christian shared the following story:

Elephant and Mouse were best friends. One day Elephant said, "Mouse, let's have a party!" Animals gathered from far and near. They ate. They drank. They sang. And they danced. And nobody celebrated more and danced harder than Elephant. After the party was over, Elephant exclaimed, "Mouse, did you ever go to a better party? What a blast!" But Mouse did not answer. "Mouse, where are you?" Elephant called. He looked around for his friend, and then shrank back in horror. There at Elephant's feet lay Mouse. His little body was ground into the dirt. He had been smashed by the big feet of his exuberant friend, Elephant. "Sometimes, that is what it is like to do mission with you Americans," the African storyteller commented. "It is like dancing with an Elephant."

~ Corbett & Fikkert, *When Helping Hurts*, 2009

Frequent Visitations

"Living in Ethiopia and working directly with a local organization, Onesimus, for over a year opened my eyes to many of the challenges African organizations to children at risk face. One such challenge I watched the Onesimus staff wrestle with was the frequent visitation by foreign groups. The extremely hospitable element of African culture almost always dictated the staff's response to visitation requests. Over and over guests were welcomed while Onesimus' manpower, financial, and facility resources were strained."

~ Joe Bridges, *The Forsaken Children*

A Complex Situation

A U.S. church with a long-standing and well-established orphan care partnership with an African church recently learned that an overseas donor plans to build a large orphanage in their African partner's community. The African church has been asked to participate with the donor and to recommend children for orphanage care. They have come to the U.S. church asking for its support of this endeavor. This partnership has always been based on shared values and a mutual agreement that its resources support family-based services.

1. How can money benefit or hinder a relationship/partnership? Taking into consideration financial and relational resources, what does a mutually beneficial partnership look like?
2. Discuss how the principles of partnership fit with/can be integrated into your church's mission/philosophy/identity. Do any of these require a shift in thinking for you or your church?
2. Discuss your understanding of *koinonia* (see page 46). Have you witnessed a time when *koinonia* was foundational to relationship building? What were the outcomes? What does it mean to you to embrace "mission with, not mission to"?
4. Discuss how your church's leadership would react if a partner came to your community and took over a project. Now think about that in the context of the North American church partnering in communities in the global South.
5. Identifying and appreciating the assets of a community can take time and intentionality. Discuss ways to ensure the integrity of this process is maintained.
6. "Why can't God's people be challenged—from the pulpit and beyond—to exercise better stewardship of kingdom resources with their mission's giving? While higher impact strategies may provide less satisfaction than short-term missions for the giver in terms of 'personal involvement and connection' isn't it a great modeling of the gospel to die to self so that others might benefit?" (From Corbett & Fikkert, *When Helping Hurts*, 2009)

Reflect on the above statement. Some churches have chosen to utilize financial resources to hire local staff rather than send a short-term team. Others have donated as much money to the organizations pursuing sound community development in the host community as they do on sending a team. What stewardship options are you challenged to consider?
7. Some feel that short-term missions can be life-changing events, resulting in participants becoming further engaged in missions through increased giving. Others feel that there is no real change, and that any positive impact noticed right after the experience soon erodes away. What steps could you take as a church to ensure that true transformation occurs and commitment remains?
8. Read the story **The Elephant and the Mouse** at left. Discuss how you can guard against being the "Elephant" in the context of partnership and/or short-term missions.
9. Reflect on **Frequent Visitations** at left. When planning a mission trip, how can you work to reduce the burden on your host?
10. Read the story **A Complex Situation** at left. Given that a key principle of partnership is respecting local leadership and allowing the partner to lead programming, how would you handle this complex situation?
11. Think about the short-term mission trips that your church is planning on taking in the future. List three or four specific things you can do to improve these trips. How will you accomplish these changes in your church?

Key Resources



Many of the following resources can be accessed on the internet. For website addresses and direct links, as well as additional and updated resources, please go to: www.faithbasedcarefororphans.org

Best Practice Strategies in Family- & Community-Based Care

The resources in this section can serve as a guide for how those on the ground can transfer the knowledge and principles around care and protection for children into strong programs and approaches in actual practice. The resources below explore best practices for models of care for orphans and vulnerable children, including strengthening families and communities, empowering children, supporting caregivers, and developing professional practices.

From Faith to Action: Strengthening Family and Community Care Options for Orphans and Vulnerable Children in Sub-Saharan Africa. Kerry Olson, Zanele Sibanda Knight, and Geoff Foster, Firelight Foundation, 2006 and 2008. www.faithbasedcarefororphans.com

Because We Care, Elizabeth Oswald, World Vision International, 2009.

Better Care Network Toolkit. www.crin.org/bcn/toolkit/

The Importance of Family Care & the Limitations of Orphanages

These resources explore the situation of children living in orphanages, some of the factors contributing to their placement there, and the grave consequences this can pose for them emotionally, socially, and psychologically. With this understanding, the resources shared below promote alternatives that respect a child's need for the love and care of safe families (all available on www.bettercarenetwork.org).

Families, Not Orphanages. John Williamson, Aaron Greenberg, Better Care Network Working Paper Series, 2010.

The Risk of Harm to Young People in Institutional Care. Kevin Browne, Save the Children and Better Care Network, 2010.

Roofs and Roots: The Care of Separated Children in the Developing World. David Tolfree, Save the Children UK, 1995.

The Impact of HIV & AIDS on Children

The following resources explore some of the most-up-to-date evidence on HIV and AIDS and its impact on families and children. These resources build upon the growing global recognition that responses to HIV and AIDS must center on increased support to families as the best means of providing care and protection for children.

Africa's Children, A Church Response to Children's Issues in Sub-Saharan Africa. Frank Dimmock, Presbyterian Church, 2008.

Home Truths: Facing the Facts on Children, AIDS, and Poverty. Final Report of the Joint Learning Initiative on Children and HIV/AIDS, 2009.

Positively Caring: Ensuring That Positive Choices Can Be Made about the Care of Children Affected by HIV. EveryChild, 2010.

Principles of Partnership / Short-Term Missions

The resources in this section further explore the principles of partnership and guidelines for short-term missions introduced in this publication.

Faith Untapped: Why Churches Can Play a Crucial Role in Tackling HIV and AIDS in Africa. Tearfund.

Serving with Eyes Wide Open: Doing Short-Term Mission with Cultural Intelligence. David Livermore, Baker Books, 2006.

Standards of Excellence in Short Term Mission. www.stmstandards.org/

STM Network: Helping You Go. stmnetwork.ca/

When Helping Hurts: How to Alleviate Poverty Without Hurting the Poor...Or Yourself. Steve Corbett and Brian Fikkert, Thomas Nelson Publishing Company, 2009.



Key Resources

The Faith to Action Initiative Website

The Faith to Action Initiative's website provides links to many of the resources listed here (including downloadable copies of *Journeys of Faith* and *From Faith to Action*), as well as additional resources and information on key conferences and events. The website also includes updates from the ministries featured in this publication, as well as additional stories from churches engaging in care for orphans and vulnerable children. To access, please go to: www.faithbasedcarefororphans.org

Engaging the Church & Raising Awareness

Christian ONE Sabbath (www.one.org/us/onesabbath/christian.html) rallies individuals and congregations to raise awareness and advocate on behalf of people living in extreme poverty and struggling against preventable diseases. Using ONE Sabbath tools, churches respond through advocacy to such global challenges as AIDS, malaria, lack of access to clean drinking water, and children out of school.

The Micah Challenge (www.micahchallenge.org) is a global coalition of Christians educating and encouraging others to learn about the Millennium Development Goals, to find ways to reach out and help those living in poverty, and to hold governments to account for their promise to halve extreme poverty by 2015. With campaigns in 40 countries, Micah Challenge is a global movement to encourage deeper Christian commitment to the poor, and to speak out to leaders to act with justice.

The World Vision Experience: Step into Africa (www.worldvisionexperience.org) is an interactive, multimedia walk-through exhibit that transports visitors into the life of an African child affected by the AIDS crisis. Since 2005, over 130 churches around the country have hosted the exhibit, drawing in over 300,000 church members and visitors.

See also pages 12 and 13 for information on three additional campaigns: **World AIDS Day**, **Orphan Sunday**, and **Advent Conspiracy**.

Films for Raising Awareness

Films can be a powerful tool churches and community groups can use to share stories of hope and change in Africa. Some of the films listed below can be used along with the small group study questions and key resources to spark conversations with your church group.

Yesterday is a 2004 South African feature length film that tells the story of a young mother called Yesterday who discovers she has AIDS. Caring for her husband through his own death from AIDS and unable to access treatment, her one hope is that she will live long enough to see her daughter, Beauty, go to school. (www.yesterdaythemovie.co.za/)

The Lazarus Effect (available on YouTube) shares the real-life stories of four people living with HIV whose lives were transformed by gaining access to life-saving antiretroviral treatments. This short documentary is an eye-opening testimonial to the measures that can be taken to halt the global struggle against HIV and AIDS. (30 minutes)

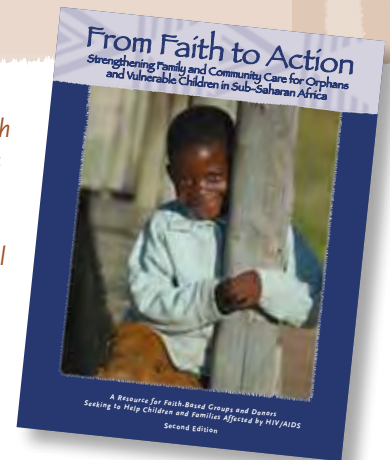
Binta and the Great Idea (available on YouTube) uses the experiences of two African schoolgirls to explore the true meaning of progress and humanity from the African perspective. This film is a strong conversation piece for those exploring the meanings of sharing, solidarity, and the sustainable use of resources in the African context. (27 minutes)

Journey to Jamaa (jamaa.worldvision.org) is a film-based, interactive worship experience that allows church members to step into the lives of two children from Uganda. Designed to take place during normal church services, the film and accompanying materials provide the opportunity to learn about the needs of children and families around the globe, how World Vision is helping, and how Christians can be involved.

"My wife and I have been blessed with two beautiful sons who became part of our family through international adoption—we can't imagine our lives without them. However, we still remember the faces of the many children in the orphanage who realistically had little chance of ever being adopted. We often wondered what we could do to invest in the care and nurture of their lives.

From Faith to Action helps provide the answer. We are now committed to investing in community and local family care for addressing the needs of orphaned and vulnerable children. I excitedly share From Faith to Action with any person or group who expresses interest in the global needs of children."

~ John Derrick, Cooperative Baptist Fellowship



Companion Resource: From Faith to Action

From Faith to Action: Strengthening Family and Community Care for Orphans and Vulnerable Children in Sub-Saharan Africa. Kerry Olson, Zanele Sibanda-Knight, Geoff Foster, Firelight Foundation, 2008.

From Faith to Action is a companion resource to *Journeys of Faith*. First published in 2006 and reprinted in 2008, over 40,000 copies of *From Faith to Action* have been distributed by members of the Faith to Action Initiative, the publication's 32 endorsing organizations, and by church orphan care and mission networks worldwide. The publication, available for download or by order from www.faithbasedcarefororphans.org, addresses the following questions:

- How does HIV/AIDS affect children and families in Africa?
- What are the most effective programs and strategies addressing this crisis?
- Why should orphanages be considered only as a last resort?
- How can your faith-based group or church become involved?

"There are more than 12 million children orphaned by HIV/AIDS in Africa. This is a staggering statistic that we cannot ignore. I have seen firsthand how churches and faith-based groups in Africa are walking their faith by responding with great compassion and care to the needs of children and families. I believe that the Church here in the U.S. has an important role to play in supporting these efforts. We need to remember that every child is loved by God. From Faith to Action is a wonderful resource for all those with a heart for children."

~ Kay Warren, Saddleback Church

Additional Resources

Understanding & Promoting Better Care for Children in Need

A Last Resort: The Growing Concern about Children in Residential Care.

Andrew Dunn, Elizabeth Jareg, and Douglas Webb, Save the Children UK, July 2003.

Better Care Network Continuum of Care Series. Victor Groza, Kelley Bunkers, Better Care Network, 2011. www.bettercarenetwork.org

Children in Residential Care and Alternatives (Children at Risk Guidelines, Volume 5). Tearfund, 2001.

Guidelines for Alternative Care: A United Nations Framework.

SOS Children's Village International, 2009.

Keeping Children Out of Harmful Institutions: Why We Should be Investing in Family Based Care. Corinna Csaky, Save the Children UK, 2009.

Love for Orphans Transforms. Jedd Medefind, Catalyst Online.

Special Issue: How Can Faith-based Groups Best Help Vulnerable Children in Africa?

The Journal of Family and Community Ministries, Baylor University School of Social Work, Fall 2009.

Websites & Resource Portals on Issues

Affecting Orphans & Vulnerable Children

International AIDS Alliance Website, www.aidsalliance.org

OVC Support.net: A Global Hub on Children and HIV, www.ovcsupport.net

Strategies for Hope Trust, www.stratshope.org

For website addresses and direct links, as well as additional and updated resources, please go to: www.faithbasedcarefororphans.org

Working with Children in Communities

Community Action and the Test of Time: Learning from Community Experiences and Perceptions: Case Studies of Mobilization and Capacity Building to Benefit Vulnerable Children in Malawi and Zambia.

Jill Donahue, Louis Mwewa, USAID, 2006.

Friends in Need, A Handbook for the Care of Orphans in the Community.

Marion Deryshire, A Viva Network Publication, 2002.

The Way We Care: A Guide for Managers of Programs Serving Vulnerable Children and Youth. Family Health International, 2009.

Considering the Role of Adoption in Response to Care Needs of Children

Misguided Kindness: Making the Right Decisions for Children in Emergencies. Joanna Doyle, Save the Children UK, December 2010.

There Is No Me Without You. Melissa Faye Greene, Bloomsbury USA, 2006. www.melissafayegreene.com

The Hague Convention on Intercountry Adoption is a set of guidelines and procedures set forth to protect the rights of children, birth parents, and adoptive parents and to prevent the abduction, exploitation, sale, or trafficking of children. The U.S. State Department provides more information on Hague-accredited adoption agencies (as well as agencies denied accreditation) and the Convention itself on its website at adoption.state.gov/hague/overview/text.html

Understanding the Needs of Children & Communities Affected by HIV & AIDS

Children and AIDS, Fifth Stocktaking Report, 2010. Unite for Children, Unite Against AIDS, 2010.

Scaling Up Effective Partnerships: A Guide to Working with FBOs in Response to HIV and AIDS. Religions for Peace, 2006.

Children on the Brink 2004: A Joint Report on New Orphan Estimates and Program Strategies. UNAIDS, UNICEF, USAID, 2004.

The Framework for the Protection, Care and Support of Orphans and Vulnerable Children Living in a World with HIV and AIDS. UNAIDS and UNICEF, July 2004.

Enhanced Protection for Children Affected by AIDS. UNICEF, March 2007.

Children Affected by AIDS: Africa's Orphaned and Vulnerable Children. UNICEF, 2006.

A Generation at Risk: The Global Impact of HIV/AIDS on Orphans and Vulnerable Children, Chapter 6, Religion and Responses to Orphans in Africa. Geoff Foster, Carol Levine, John Williamson, 2005.

State of Africa's Children, 2008, UNICEF, 2008.

Global Reports & Statistics on Vulnerable Children

Progress for Children: Achieving the MDGs with Equity. UNICEF, September 2010.

State of the World's Children, 2011. UNICEF, 2011.

For updated statistics, go to www.childinfo.org or www.unicef.org



Key Terms & Acronyms

Adoption The permanent legal transfer of parental rights and responsibilities for a child.

- **Domestic (national) adoption** involves adopters who live in the same country as the child.
- **International or intercountry adoption** involves adopters who live in a different country from the child.
- **Intercultural adoption** involves adopters from a different ethnic or cultural background from that of the child.
- **Extrajudicial adoption** is a form of adoption that has the effect of conferring legal rights and duties, but undertaken by a process that is not legal (e.g., by the adopters accepting someone else's child and registering him/her as though he/she were their birth child).

AIDS (Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome) A chronic, potentially life-threatening condition caused by the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV). (See also the definition of HIV, and note that AIDS and HIV are distinct, though related.)

Antiretroviral drugs Medications for the treatment of infection by retroviruses, primarily HIV. Standard antiretroviral therapy consists of the use of at least three antiretroviral drugs to maximally suppress the HIV virus and stop the progression of HIV disease. Huge reductions have been seen in rates of death and suffering when a potent antiretroviral regimen is used.

Asset-based approach An approach to development that appreciates and mobilizes the individual and community talents, skills, and assets within the local community, rather than focusing only on problems and needs. The asset-based approach to community development and partnerships builds on the skills of local residents, the power of local associations, and the supportive functions of community members.

Caregiver A person with whom the child lives who provides daily care to the child, and who acts as the child's "parent" whether he or she is a biological parent or not. A caregiver can be the mother or father, or another family member such as a grandparent or older sibling. It includes informal arrangements in which the caregiver does not necessarily have legal responsibility.

Church-to-church partnership An arrangement between two churches, generally one in the global South and one in the global North, who enter into a long-term relationship to further the goals and needs of the local church and its community members.

Community owned/initiated Refers to development that is mobilized and led from within the local community, rather than being initiated or driven by an external (non-local, non-indigenous) agency or group. Orphan and vulnerable child care programs that are "owned" by the local community are much more likely to lead to long-lasting change that is not dependent on external donor engagement.

Extreme poverty The lack of basic human needs, such as clean and fresh water, nutrition, health care, education, clothing and shelter, because of the inability to afford them. Generally, extreme poverty refers to an individual living on less than \$1 U.S. dollar per day.

Family-based care Keeping or placing children within families rather than in orphanages or in institutional residential care. This can include strengthening the child's natural family so that he/she is not separated from loved ones, as well as the placement of a child in a nurturing family environment, with at least one consistent parental caregiver, where children are part of supportive kin and community. Examples of family-based care include kinship care, foster care (both formal and informal), and adoption.

Foster care The full-time care of a child or adolescent within a non-related family who agree to meet the developmental, psychosocial, medical, educational, and spiritual needs of a child who is not able to live with his/her own parents or extended family. Formal foster care describes arrangements that have been ordered or authorized by an administrative body or judicial authority; it usually involves an assessment of the family for the child and the provision of some kind of continuing support and monitoring. Informal foster care is a private arrangement made between the two families (or other party acting on behalf of the child). Informal arrangements are sometimes monitored and supported by the local church or community.

The global church and the local church. The global church refers generally to the church around the world. For the purpose of this publication, this term is used to describe all those churches that are partnering with "local indigenous churches" to support their ministries. The local church is used here to refer to the African or the indigenous church that is located within the community being served and is directly ministering to local needs.

Global North and global South A socioeconomic and political division that exists between the wealthy developed countries, known collectively as "the North," and the economically poorer countries or "the South." The global South is commonly referred to as the developing world, "third world," or "majority world."

HIV A disease that damages the immune system by interfering with the body's ability to fight the organisms that cause disease. There is no cure for HIV, but there are medications that can dramatically slow the progression of the disease. If untreated, HIV can lead to AIDS.

Home-based care Regular home-based visits provided by a volunteer or community worker in order to support and monitor the wellbeing of those who are ill, elderly, or particularly vulnerable (including those living with HIV and AIDS). This community service can include medical, psychosocial, emotional, and spiritual support to those in need.

IDP Internally displaced persons are persons or groups of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their home as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights, or natural or human-made disasters. While forced to flee their homes, internally displaced persons still remain within their country's borders. IDP camps serve as temporary and at times long-term settlements for those who cannot return to their homes and are frequently served by humanitarian organizations.

Institutional care The short-term or long-term placement of a child into any non-family-based care situation. Other similar terms include residential care, group care, and orphanage.

Intermediary For the purpose of this publication, an intermediary is a nonprofit organization that works internationally to support cross-country church-to-church partnership. The intermediary typically already works with the local indigenous church or community to support their ministry and serves as a link between this church and community and churches in the global North seeking to support these local efforts. Intermediaries often provide logistical support, cultural translation, and other assistance aimed at fostering successful cross-country partnerships.

Kinship care The full-time care, nurturing, and protection of a child by someone other than a parent who is related to the child by family ties or by a significant prior relationship. Informal kinship care is any private arrangement provided in a family whereby the child is looked after by kin. Formal kinship care describes arrangements that have been ordered or authorized by an administrative body or judicial authority; it usually involves an assessment of the family for the child and the provision of some kind of continuing support and monitoring. In the absence of formal systems, community groups and churches sometimes provide continued support and monitoring of children in informal kinship care.

Livelihood strengthening The range of activities targeted toward those living in poverty that support the development of social capabilities, skills, and material assets required in order to earn a livelihood. Examples of livelihood-strengthening initiatives include microloans, income-generating activities, and saving and credit organizations. All require some level of technical expertise and adherence to better practice in order to be successful.

- **Microloans** Small loans provided to those in poverty designed to spur entrepreneurship. Microloans provide start-up capital for individuals to buy the goods, tools, or resources needed to start small businesses and income-generating activities.
- **Income-generating activities** Form of livelihood strengthening, frequently funded by microloans or external partners that provide those living in poverty with an opportunity to develop a skill or product to be sold or offered as a form of livelihood. Examples include small-scale farming, bead making, and soap making.
- **Saving and credit organizations** An organization of people who would otherwise not have access to formal financial institutions who join together in order to save and borrow informally among each other. Saving and credit organizations within local communities are generally based on systems of transparency and simplicity that are well adapted to communities with low levels of literacy and less formal systems for protecting property rights.

Participatory development An approach that promotes meaningful, rather than tokenistic, participation of indigenous local communities, churches, and families in planning, implementing, and evaluating the interventions in their lives. Approaches and methods of participatory



development emphasize local knowledge and enable local people to make their own appraisal, analysis, and plans and are based on principles of local empowerment and community ownership. Participatory development should also include meaningful involvement of children and youth, particularly in the decisions that affect their individual lives, such as care placement and family-related matters.

Residential care Care provided in any non-family-based group setting.

Short-term mission Short-term mission trips are undertaken by church groups composed of members of the congregation who travel to a community outside their own to serve in that community, often alongside a local church. Groups frequently organize and raise funds to be able to embark on these missions, which are centered around the concept of Christian service and solidarity.

Social stigma is a severe social disapproval of personal characteristics or beliefs that are perceived to be against cultural norms. Stigma is a process by which the reaction of others leads to marginalization and social isolation and/or persecution, due to such characteristics as mental illness, physical disabilities, nationality, ethnicity, religion, and sexual orientation or HIV status.

Vulnerable children Children whose rights to care and protection are being violated or who are at risk of those rights being violated. This includes children who are poor, abused, neglected, or lacking access to basic services, ill, or living with disabilities, as well as children whose parents are ill, who are affected by fighting forces, or who are in conflict with the law.

Youth- or child-headed household A household in which a youth (typically an older sibling), assumes the primary responsibility for the day-to-day running of the household, providing and caring for those within the household. A supported youth- or child-headed household is a form of family-based care in which children are looked after by an older sibling or youth, with support offered by the local community and/or by external agents.

Faith to Action Initiative

Mission & Members

Founded in 2006 and led by a group of organizations focused on care for children, the Faith to Action Initiative brings together Christian organizations, leaders, churches, and individuals seeking to respond to the needs of orphans and other vulnerable children, particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa and other areas affected by HIV/AIDS. Our mission is to promote approaches to care that uphold the value of family and community in the life of a child. We do this by offering key resources through our website, publications, conference workshops, and webinars. These resources provide information on the limitations of long-term orphanage care, examples of best practice in caring for orphans and vulnerable children, and principles of practice for U.S. churches interested in partnering with organizations serving children in Africa and beyond.

The Faith to Action Initiative includes the following member and advisory organizations:

Bethany Christian Services

Bethany Christian Services International works in 17 countries, providing a continuum of adoption, orphan care, and social development services (abandonment prevention, family reunification, deinstitutionalization, foster care, domestic violence services, independent living training, volunteer services, humanitarian aid, educational services, and child sponsorships) to reach the goal of finding a permanent, safe, and loving family for every child.

901 Eastern Ave. NE; PO Box 294, Grand Rapids, MI 49501-0294
(Tel) +1-800-BETHANY (Fax) +1-616-224-7585
www.bethanyglobal.org



Better Care Network

The Better Care Network is an interagency network dedicated to facilitating global information exchange and collaboration around the issue of children without adequate family care. Serving as a convener and knowledge broker across key stakeholders, BCN seeks to enhance the global response of children without adequate family care by promoting technically sound policy and practice globally.

UNICEF Better Care Network
3 UN Plaza, Room 735, New York, NY 10017
(Tel) +1-212-326-7384 (Fax) +1-212-735-4413
www.bettercarenetwork.org contact@bettercarenetwork.org



Bright Hope

Bright Hope is a Christian relief and development organization committed to serving those living in extreme poverty (less than \$1.00 a day). By partnering with local indigenous churches, which understand the unique issues of their culture, Bright Hope supports projects that provide hope for today, tomorrow, and eternity. Hope for today comes in form of physical aid and education; hope for tomorrow in the form of microloans, scholarships, and economic assistance programs; and hope for eternity is found in a growing relationship with Jesus Christ.

2060 Stonington Ave., Hoffman Estates, IL 60169 USA
(Tel) +1-224-520-6100 (Fax) +1-847-519-0024
www.BrightHope.org Info@BrightHope.org



Christian Alliance for Orphans

The Christian Alliance for Orphans works to inspire, connect, and equip Christians to "defend the fatherless" through effective adoption, foster care, and global orphan ministry rooted in the local church.

6723 Whittier Ave., McLean, VA 22101
(Tel) +1-703-891-3277
www.ChristianAllianceforOrphans.org



FHI

FHI is a global health and development organization whose rigorous, science-based approach builds programs that create lasting change. Founded in 1971, FHI maintains offices and staff worldwide, helping to forge strong local relationships that enable us to make measurable progress against disease, poverty, and inequity—improving lives for millions.

2224 E. NC Hwy 54, Durham, NC 27713
(Tel) +1-919-544-7040, ext. 11120 (Fax) +1-919-544-7261
www.fhi.org



Firelight Foundation

The mission of Firelight Foundation is to improve the wellbeing of children made vulnerable by HIV, AIDS, and poverty in Sub-Saharan Africa. Firelight supports grassroots organizations that help families and communities meet the needs of their children. Founded in 1999 as a private foundation and becoming a public charity in 2010, Firelight has provided support to over 300 community and faith-based organizations serving an estimated 250,000 children in 10 Sub-Saharan African communities.

740 Front Street, Suite 380, Santa Cruz, California 95060
(Tel) +1-831-429-8750 (Fax) +1-831-429-2036
www.firelightfoundation.org info@firelightfoundation.org



Orphan Outreach

Orphan Outreach is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization dedicated to glorifying the Lord through reaching out to the millions of at-risk children throughout the world. Ministering primarily in Guatemala, Honduras, India, Latvia, and Russia, we support national local church-affiliated programs designed to offer quality care and give hope to orphan and vulnerable children. James 1:27 is the inspiration of our mission and the motivation and passion toward attaining our vision.

2001 W. Plano Parkway, Ste. 3700, Plano, Texas 75075
(Tel) +1-972-941-4440
www.orphanoutreach.org



Save African's Children (SAC)

Save Africa's Children (SAC) expands the scope of care for orphan and vulnerable children impacted by HIV/AIDS, armed conflict, and poverty in Sub-Saharan Africa. To date, SAC has partnered with over 400 orphan care programs in 23 countries affecting 250,000 vulnerable children. We partner with local churches and civil society organizations to build a dynamic and diverse movement to restore hope and a future for Africa's children.

3045 Crenshaw Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90016
(Tel) +1-323-733-1048 (Fax) +1-323-778-8168
www.saveafricaschildren.org



Visionledd

Visionledd believes in a world where churches are the hands and feet of Jesus ministering to orphans, widows, and others infected and affected by the HIV/AIDS pandemic. We foster partnerships between North American Christians, businesses, and churches and their African counterparts who battle against HIV/AIDS and for transformed communities in 8 African nations.

PO Box 20158, Mesa, AZ 85277
(Tel) +1-480-381-3120 (Fax) +1-480-832-9976
www.visionledd.com



World Vision

World Vision is a Christian relief and development organization dedicated to helping children and their communities worldwide reach their full potential by tackling the causes of poverty. World Vision serves the poor regardless of religion, race, ethnicity, or gender in more than 90 countries around the world, including 26 in Africa.

PO Box 9716, Federal Way, WA 98063-9716
(Tel) +1-253-815-1000
www.worldvision.org



List of Churches & Organizations featured in *Journeys of Faith*

We acknowledge and thank the following:

African Inland Churches (AIC), Kenya, p. 25

ALARM (African Leadership and Reconciliation Ministries), U.S. office, Dallas, Texas, p. 34

Bethany Christian Services, Grand Rapids, Michigan, p. 10

Bright Hope, Hoffman States, Illinois, p. 40

Burke Presbyterian Church, Burke, Virginia, p. 11

Compassion Family International (CFI), Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, p. 15

Hope for His Children, Lebanon, Indiana, p. 15

Hope for Life, Nakuru, Kenya, p. 25

Nakuru AIDS Initiative, Nakuru, Kenya, p. 23

Mission Community Church, Gilbert, Arizona, p. 28

Ngaramtoni Evangelical Lutheran Church, Ngaramtoni, Tanzania, p. 18

Onesimus, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, p. 52

Orphan Outreach, Plano, Texas, p. 47

Rockland Community Church, Evergreen, Colorado, p. 18

Samfya Community of Care Providers (SCCP), Samfya, Zambia, p. 40

Somebody Cares, Lilongwe, Malawi, p. 28

The Forsaken Children, Germantown, Tennessee, p. 52

The Journey Church, San Jose, California, p. 12

The Well, Tallahassee, Florida, p. 10

Visionledd, U.S. office, Mesa, Arizona, pp. 28, 46

Walnut Hill Community Church, Bethel, Connecticut, p. 9

Watermark Community Church, Dallas, Texas, p. 34

Wheaton Bible Church, Wheaton, Illinois, p. 23

Willow Creek Community Church, South Barrington, Illinois, pp. 8, 40

World Relief, Baltimore, Maryland, p. 9

World Vision, Federal Way, Washington, pp. 10, 12

Notes

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

Devotion

We thank you God
That you have given us
Hearts to be moved by love and compassion,
Hands to be raised in praise and service,
And minds to be guided in wisdom and discernment.
Strengthen our hearts, hands, and minds to follow more fully
The path that you set before us.
Guide the steps of our journey,
So that we can follow in the footsteps of our Lord Jesus
Who has taught us by His own example that we are called
To humbly serve the orphaned, the widowed, the vulnerable,
And all of those in greatest need.
Strengthen the work of your Church
To bring justice to the oppressed,
To help without hurting,
To serve as the hands and feet of Jesus,
In a broken and wounded world.
Amen

We thank you Heavenly Father
For your great and unending love
For each and every child.
In your perfect wisdom,
You have created us for family
That every child may grow surrounded in love
And with a sense of belonging.
May your heart be our heart,
And your plan be our guide:
For every child's heart, joy
For every child's soul, meaning
For every child's body, protection
For every child's mind, peace
For every child, family.
Amen

O God, our Creator and Counselor,
Help us to be your Church ~
To listen and learn as we walk with you.
We pray for the courage to care.
Show us how to connect with our global neighbors,
To understand their needs.
In our desire to get things right,
Help us to recognize the need to be sensitive.
Help us to see clearly your purpose.
Through the leading of your Spirit
May we enter into relationships of love ~
Relationships that offer joy and encouragement
And refresh the hearts of your people.
We ask that partnerships between churches
Deepen our understanding of every good thing you desire.
Instill within us an appreciation
For the diversity and divinity of community.
We intercede for the local congregations all over the world
Who seek to transform and strengthen their communities.
May they reflect your goodness as they love their neighbors,
Offer opportunity and possibility to individuals,
Provide hope and home to children,
And support those seeking to thrive as family.
We pray the followers of Christ will work together in harmony
To reveal your kingdom here on earth.
For the sake of the children, may your will be done.
Amen

“Christian individuals and churches are rising to care for orphans with a passion not seen in generations. It's beautiful, and truly reflects God's heart. But enthusiasm must always be paired with wisdom if we seek lasting positive good for those we serve. **Journeys of Faith** will prove an invaluable resource for those desiring to do so. It will equip both newcomers and veterans with the understanding, examples and key insights needed to not only love orphans, but to love orphans wisely and well.”

~ Jedd Medefind, President
Christian Alliance for Orphans



Journeys of Faith is a resource and a guide for churches and individuals seeking to address the needs of orphans and vulnerable children in Africa and beyond. Written and produced by the Faith to Action Initiative (a coalition of Christian and child-focused organizations), *Journeys of Faith* helps readers move from a basic understanding of the impact of poverty and HIV/AIDS on children and families in Sub-Saharan Africa to a more in-depth understanding of the Church's role in ministering to the needs of orphans and all children in need.

Emphasizing family-based care as the biblical and “best practice” model for orphan care ministries, *Journeys of Faith* features:

- 12 key strategies for supporting the needs of orphans and vulnerable children
- Inspiring examples of how churches in the United States are getting involved
- Stories of partnership between U.S. churches and churches/Christian ministries in Africa
- Examples and principles to guide practice in partnerships and in short-term missions
- Resources, tools, website, and small group study questions to guide further learning

Journeys of Faith, and its companion publication *From Faith to Action: Strengthening Family and Community Care for Orphans and Vulnerable Children in Sub-Saharan Africa* (2006, 2008), can be ordered or downloaded free of charge from the Faith to Action Initiative website at:

www.faithbasedcarefororphans.org