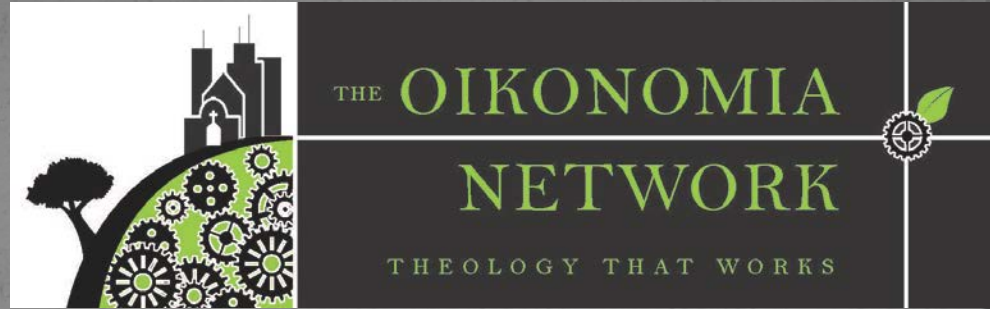




**CORNERSTONE**  
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH



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Unlikely Compassion  
Pathway 3

January 4, 2014

# Unlikely Compassion

- “churches want their members to feel good about serving the poor, but no one really wants to become involved in messy relationships.”
- “Walt, this is nice and all. But what are you going to do if these people actually start coming to our church.”

# Unlikely Compassion

- St. Mary's County: 14th wealthiest county.
  - Median household income of \$88,444.
  - 80% white; 15% African-American; 5% other.
- >90% of church employed by NAVAIR
  - Highly secretive aerospace industry.
  - Bastion of conservative Republicans.
- Cornerstone: ~470 total members (175 children)
  - Average age is 41.
  - >50% turnover.

# Unlikely Compassion

- Mercy Ministry: Reactive or Surgical
- Ironic to be talking on compassion
- “Legitimate” disobedience!
- Over last 8 years, moved from reactive and surgical strikes to being characterized by our mercy, justice ministries, and community impact.

# A Model of Convictions

- “But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare... For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope.” -Jeremiah 29:7, 11

# Conviction: Jeremiah 29:7, 11

- Welfare → Shalom
  - Bryant Meyers' model of relational poverty.
- Exilic narrative.
  - Lord has placed us here at this time, in this place, for the redemption of God's people and the restoration of this community!
  - "The church is the only organization in the world that exists for the benefit of its non-members." –Harvie Conn

# A Model of Convictions

- Isaiah 58:6, 8, 12 states: “Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the straps of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke?... Then shall your light break forth like the dawn, and your healing shall spring up speedily; your righteousness shall go before you; the glory of the LORD shall be your rear guard... And your ancient ruins shall be rebuilt; you shall raise up the foundations of many generations; you shall be called the repairer of the breach, the restorer of streets to dwell in.”

# Convictions: Isaiah 58ff

- Glory from God upon His people reflected to watching world.
- People of God will:
  - Raise up that which has been torn down.
  - Repair that which has been broken.
  - Others will call them: restorers!
- Glory from God upon His people to world drawn to them to give glory to God!
- This is our witness! This is our calling!



# A Model of Conviction

- Acts 6 choosing of the seven deacons.
- Acts 6:7 “And the word of God continued to increase, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith.”

# Convictions: Acts 6:7

- Power of HS working through the local church so transformative that professionals became believers!
- Nagging Question: “If our church disappeared tonight, would anybody in the community notice?”
  - Would anybody care?”
- Hope & Prayer: “Wow! Where would this community be had not Cornerstone been here?!”

# Why do we do compassion ministry?

- Compassion ministry must be part of the character of individual Christians and the church.
- We do not engage in these ministry areas to:
  - Grow our church
    - though that would be a nice benefit
  - nor as a means to evangelism
    - though word and deed can't be separated
- but because we believe that this must be part of the character of every Christian and every church.

# The Growth Question:

## Are “they” coming to your church?

- We are committed to seeking the shalom of our community regardless of whether it causes our church to grow.
- Just as Christians want to serve the poor without the mess of relationships
  - so too, people want to be a part of a church that is impacting its community.

# Moving from Conviction to Commitment

- Listening to the Community
  - Prayer walks
- Learning what Seminary didn't teach me.
  - Reading: *When Helping Hurts, What Every Church Member Should Know About Poverty, Ministries of Mercy*
  - Training: CCDA Immersion week, Chalmer's Center "Church-based Asset Development" & "Faith and Finance."
- Preaching, Studies & Training moved people from conviction to commitment.

# Moving from Commitment to Impact

- Internationally: changed short-mission trip strategy and long-term development strategy.
- Locally: overhauled ministry structure

# Moving from Commitment to Impact

- Started Living H2O
- Changed “crisis” response from relief to development
  - Lending Money
  - Individual Development Plans



# Fostered Community Partnerships

- John F. Sobola Memorial Award for Community Service:

“In looking at response data we noticed a drop in calls in the areas typically frequented by the homeless population in Lexington Park. We were able to draw a direct correlation between the start of the WARM program and this drop in 911 responses. Your congregation, by participating in the WARM program helped fill a void in service to those under-served citizens in St. Mary’s County who had before been calling EMS to get out of the cold.”

– 06/24/2013 Commendation letter to Cornerstone from Shawn Davidson, Chief of the Lexington Park Volunteer Rescue Squad.



# Deepen Partnership with DSS

- Needed a better partnership than the phone book.
- Surprising Openness
  - *When Helping Hurts*

# DSS: Surprising Openness

- “Church can do what we cannot: DEVELOPMENT!”
  - Relationships
  - Developmental programs
  - Spiritual instruction
- Partnership: referrals, Faith & Finance, IDAs.
  - Recipients of governmental aid must take our class!

# Three Key Elements of Compassion

- Biblical conviction that leads to equipping the saints.
- Perseverance to “figure it out.”
- Commitment of time and resources.

# Challenges of Compassion

- Cultural differences of class greater than race.
- Differences between “traditional” families and a maternal centric family structure.
  - “41 percent of American children are born to unmarried women, including nearly half of first births, 53 percent of Hispanic children and 72 percent of African American children.”
- Not having a picture of “success.”
  - Messy ministry: unknown process, end point, success

# Challenge: Development in the Relief

- Can developmental-dignity affirming ministry occur when surrounded by “relief” oriented services that will “do” for them??
- “For disadvantaged people to flourish into their full, God-given potential, they must leave behind dependencies that impede their growth. Initiatives that thwart their development, though rightly motivated, must be restructured to reinforce self-sufficiency if they are to become agents of lasting and positive change.” –Bob Lupton

# Challenge: Development in Relief

- Clients weren't interested in "doing for themselves" when other agencies and services would "do" for them.
  - Why work for something when you can get it for free?
- Does the whole social services system have to change for developmental approaches to work?
- Pull of immediate gratification appears to be much stronger than long-term investment with higher returns.

“..more than we ask.”

- But God does far more “than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.” -Eph 3:20-21
- By God’s grace and the working of His Spirit, He is moving us from reactive compassion to community impact.

# Encouragement

- You are shapers of a generation of pastors.
- What you model matters
  - Ill: Chapel.
- Words of a hero are impactful.
  - Life of a hero is transformative.
  - Next generation will follow how you live.
- May your life model: call of Jesus Christ to compassion is not optional.



# Bibliography

- *Not the Way Its Supposed to Be* by Cornelius Plantinga
- *Creation Regained* by Albert
- *When Helping Hurts* by Corbett and Fikkert
- *What Every Church Member Should Know About Poverty* by Ehlig and Payne
- *Ministries of Mercy* by Tim Keller.
- *Catholic Social Thought*
- *Evangelism: Doing Justice While Preaching Grace* by Harvey Conn
- *Let Justice Roll* by John Perkin's
- *Toxic Charity* and "Urban Perspectives" by Bob Lupton
- CCDA's immersion week
- Chalmer's Center Training "Church-Based Asset Development" and "Faith and Finance."

Questions?

# Faith & Finance Specifics



The Chalmers Center

