

HOMELESS AND HUNGER STRATEGIC PLANNING

TASK FORCE REPORT

April 1, 2001

Introduction

Ministering to the Homeless and Hungry was identified in LOPC's December 1999 congregational survey as a top priority. The Session established the Homeless and Hunger Task Force to identify ways that LOPC could enhance and expand our current strengths in serving as Christ's witness in the world.

Session specified the following Objectives for the H&H Task Force:

1. Review the value and effectiveness to the local community of LOPC's Project WINGS program and Hunger Committee efforts including use of LOPC's resources.
2. Summarize history of past and current programs and activities, including allocation of staff, financial resources, and member involvement.
3. Determine how to expand LOPC's assistance to the homeless and the hungry in our community.
4. Determine how to provide a wide range of volunteer opportunities for LOPC.

TASK FORCE VISION FOR LOPC

We dream of a church that is Spirit led and responsive to the needs of those whom Jesus calls us to serve. We seek to be faithful not only to God's call "to make disciples of all peoples" (Matthew 28: 18-20) but also God's expectation that we would "do justice and love kindness" (Micah 6:8). We are determined to allow the transforming power of our faith to be seen through the boldness and courage of our acts of love and compassion. We are called to be forceful advocates for change, seeking to address through education and action those issues that rob our brothers and sisters of their humanity. We believe that each individual is called to service while recognizing that the form of that service will reflect the gifts, skills and passions given by God to that individual. We believe that mission is the work of the whole family of God.

Recommendations

The recommendations of the Homeless and Hunger Task Force evolved from our study of past involvement, the wishes of the Congregation as expressed at our focus luncheon in November, study of the survey cards mailed in by those unable to attend, our research into the activities of churches in the Bay Area and our research into the needs of the community.

The Task Force reaffirms LOPC's denominational connection and recommends continuation of our support of programs addressing hunger and homelessness throughout God's world.

In order to assist the members of LOPC to live out their daily commitment to God, the Task Force recommends a four dimensional approach to local homeless and hunger issues: Congregational Involvement; Communication and Interpretation within LOPC; Influence; and Yearly Commitment.

Our recommendations take the form of biblically based statements or goals that identify the direction LOPC should move in order to meet our vision. The examples beneath the statements are suggestions that came out of the Task Force research and discussion.

1. CONGREGATIONAL INVOLVEMENT

“What good is it, my friends, if one claims one has faith, but has no deeds...for as the body apart from the spirit is dead, so faith apart from works is dead.”

James 2: 14, 26

Faith has an external action. We believe compassionate action naturally flows from our response to God's call and that mission is the work of the whole family of God.

- Continue and enhance involvement with Contra Costa Interfaith Transitional Housing (CCITH).
- Adopt units at CCITH.
- Continue our involvement with present programs such as Elmhurst.
- Support LOPC's commitment to participate in the Rotating Shelter Project.
- Create a Rapid Response Team of “assistance angels” to respond immediately to needs.
- Provide training (i.e., job, life skills, mentoring, tutoring)
- Provide childcare for those in skills training or moving into job market.
- Establish a facility for showers, laundry, lockers for homeless.
- Set up systems for storing and collecting furniture, food, clothing and toys for distribution as needed.
- Prepare and distribute meals, e.g., breakfast in schools where kids arrive hungry, dinners for North Concord Shelter.
- Create intergenerational service activities in which family groups can participate.
- Conduct mission trips involving home-building and similar service assistance.
- Continue to support existing activities that relate to hunger and homelessness (e.g. food barrel, Habitat for Humanity, etc.)

- Plan a partnership with our future LOPC facilities capital fund drive to step out in a mission unique to LOPC – i.e., give birth to low-income family housing or low-income elderly housing project over which we would have membership involvement and control.

2. COMMUNICATION/INTERPRETATION

“For the Lord gives wisdom... Then you will understand righteousness and justice and equity, every good path.”

Proverbs 2: 6, 9

We recommend that Mission In Society facilitate improved communication with the congregation regarding opportunities to serve.

- Communicate constantly what we are doing and how all members can participate.
- Include “Focus on Mission” during Sunday worship once a month. (Review script in advance.)
- Emphasize on our Web site what we are doing, where volunteers are needed and contact person.
- Highlight a monthly column in “Focus” listing where-we-served this month.
- Tie adult education programs in with Bible study to emphasize our mandate to serve the poor.
- Provide an updated bulletin board list of long-term and short-term opportunities and appropriate contact person.
- Facilitate and disseminate mission information in groups such as Voyagers, Singles, Youth, Parishes.
- Contact those who have expressed an interest in mission with notes or telephone calls.
- Work with our ministerial staff in creating the expectation that membership in LOPC means service to the poor and needy – begin with new member classes.

3. INFLUENCE/EDUCATION

“and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God.”

Micah 6: 8

The members of LOPC should be given the resources to understand the causes of homelessness and hunger so that we can act responsibly and strategically in addressing those causes.

- Enhance the knowledge, commitment and creativity of our congregation by providing up to date information on the causes of homelessness and hunger.
- Develop a posture of listening and partnership with the homeless and hungry.
- Establish on our Web site a current list of legislation affecting homelessness and hunger.
- Select a team to monitor and report to the congregation pending legislative action that concerns the homeless and hungry.
- Promote letter-writing campaigns for homeless and hunger issues.
- Provide leadership within our communities to promote Section 8 and other low-cost housing.
- Promote the establishment of a living wage.

- Promote the establishment of low-cost healthcare facilities with the leadership and/or involvement of LOPC medical and dental professionals.
- Investigate and address what should be done for the homeless who are mentally disabled.

4. YEARLY COMMITMENT TO SERVE

“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.”

Matthew 25: 40

A loving and joy-filled relationship with God is experienced when we serve those who have lost hope. The Task Force proposes that every member participate in a mission project each year beginning with a two-hour pledge the first year.

- Create energy and excitement with a Mission Impact Week.
- Invite a guest preacher committed to mission to begin or end the week’s emphasis.
- Have project-leaders visit agencies to determine volunteer opportunities.
- Provide an extensive list of service needs with a broad list of choices – driving, cooking, serving meals, hammering, tutoring, job training, etc.
- Provide training for volunteers where needed.
- Have sign-ups on the patio with project representatives present.
- Include activities for children, youth and young parents.
- Enlist the cooperation of other appropriate committees.
- Emphasize all year long that a key identity of LOPC is personal service in mission.

Homeless and Hunger Task Force Members

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