

poverty

Leader's Guide

by Faye Wilson

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Introduction

Jack Keller Jr., editor of the study text, begins the book with a powerful quote: “The biblical message of salvation is both a comfort and a promise to the poor and, at the same time, a call to those of us who are not materially poor to be connected with God’s vision of shalom for all.”

In reading this book and other resource materials it is also clear that the message of salvation is a call to those who appear to “have” and those who obviously do not “have,” to work alongside one another to ensure that God’s vision of abundant living for all becomes a reality.

In addition, he calls on us to learn a new vocabulary of values or, if we will, return to using the true vocabulary of our Christian and Wesleyan heritage—the vocabulary of love. Galatians 5:22-23 makes it plain: there is no law against love, generosity, kindness and self-control. The greatest commandment both reminds and challenges us to love God with all our hearts and our neighbors as ourselves (Luke 10:27). Another familiar passage of scripture, Micah 6:8, asks, “What does the Lord require of you?” The answer is clear: to have a caring heart and a justice-seeking spirit. In that embodies the law of Christ: Love.

In order to improve and expand our vocabulary of values, the writers of the text present an overview of various issues related to poverty. We are asked

to reconnect with the scriptures that define God’s preferential options for the poor. We are asked to look deep within and address our spiritual poverty, not just the material poverty in the world around us. We are expected to remember our Wesleyan heritage in which founder John Wesley expressed concern that material prosperity would threaten what he believed to be “constitutive” to our faith walk: “friendship with, aid to, and advocacy on behalf of the poor.”

In addition, we are urged to think of poverty in the plural. Pamela D. Couture writes in Chapter 4, “Poverties in the United States,” that sometimes “We as the church may fail to recognize that poor persons are already among us in our congregations because many economically poor persons ... look like everyone else in the communities in which they live.” She reminds us that in the United States, for example, United Methodist Church members may be among the poor: undocumented seasonal workers, citizens who work full time at minimum wage, single women who are paid 30 percent less than male counterparts in the same jobs and with the same or more responsibilities, persons whose mental illness makes it difficult for them to work regularly—the list is endless.

What do we say to these things? What do we do about these things? How do we save ourselves, our daughters, our sons, our neighbors, our world? We

turn to the Bible to receive new directions for moving our families, our neighborhoods, our communities, our countries and our world toward the future hope where all may have life abundantly. We delve into the experiences and challenges of living poor in today's society. We repent—for not knowing, for failing to fully care, for gathering more of the world's resources that are rightfully ours, for squandering the blessings that come our way, for craving and accepting an excess of resources that knowingly deprives others of the fruits of their labors.

David Wildman writes in Chapter 5, "Global Poverty: We Are All Connected," that children in Uzbekistan have their education and their health perverted as they are indentured by their country to pick cotton. Their country is the world's sixth largest produc-

er and the third largest exporter of cotton—a harvest that is picked entirely by hand. Entire schools are given quotas of cotton that they must pick before they continue their lessons. Most of the profit of \$1 billion annually finds its way in the pockets of the country's ruler and his chosen allies.

We are all connected, and what we believe, practice, purchase and consume may negatively affect our neighbor and impoverish ourselves. So this study urges us to reconnect with the lessons of the Bible and of our spiritual heritage as we strive to build a beloved community. May we continue to learn, serve and advocate. As St. Teresa of Avila reminds us, ours are the feet with which Christ walks to do good to others; ours are the hands with which Christ blesses all the world.

Preparing to Lead the Study

This study is designed to help study leaders guide adult participants through the basic text. Make sure the participants wrestle with and gain new understandings through the study book and the supplementary DVD *Standing in Need: Systemic Poverty in Our Midst* that have been prepared for this theme.

Read the book thoroughly and prayerfully. Mark up the book. Make notes in the margins or write ideas down in a notebook. Look for stories that tug at your heart, statistics that challenge your imagination, information that convicts your spirit and ideas that spur you to action.

Steep yourself in the words, hopes, dreams, concerns and challenges of those in poverty, if you do not know firsthand. You don't have to take prolific notes. Just experience—hear the words, see the images, catch the vision—and bring that experience, passion, brokenness and fire to your class.

Finally, be sure that your research includes reading scriptures that talk about God's preference and commandments in addressing the poor. Listen to songs that speak to you. Read the words to various hymns and songs. Example songs and scriptures are also listed for you in the "Resources" section.

As you prepare for this study, ask God in what ways you can live so that you will be a light and a delight

to those in your class and those in your community. Go with God!

Music

"As a Fire is Meant for Burning," *The Faith We Sing* #2237

"God Weeps," *The Faith We Sing* #2048

"I Give Myself Away," William McDowell, *As We Worship Live!* CD

"Jesu, Jesu," *The United Methodist Hymnal* #432

"Lord, You Have Come to the Lakeshore," *The United Methodist Hymnal* #344

"Open My Eyes That I May See," *The United Methodist Hymnal* #454

"Sent Out in Jesus' Name," *The Faith We Sing* #2184

"Star-Child," *The Faith We Sing* #2095

"The Summons," *The Faith We Sing* #2130

"This Little Light of Mine," *The United Methodist Hymnal* #585

"Together We Serve," *The Faith We Sing* #2175

"Unsettled World," *The Faith We Sing* #2183

"What Does the Lord Require of You," *The Faith We Sing* #2174

"When the Poor Ones," *The United Methodist Hymnal* #434

"Why Stand So Far Away, My God?" *The Faith We Sing* #2180

"Wounded World that Cries for Healing," *The Faith We Sing* #2177

Scriptures

Read these other scriptures to understand God's preference for the poor and God's judgment on those who oppress the poor.

Exodus 22:22	Zechariah 7:10
Deuteronomy 15:1-11	Micah 6:6-8
Deuteronomy 24:10-13	Matthew 16: 24-26
Nehemiah 5:7, 11	Matthew 25:34-40
Psalms 69:32-33	Matthew 26:11
Psalms 82:3	Luke 4:18-19
Proverbs 4:26	Luke 14:12-14
Proverbs 22:22-23	Luke 19:8
Proverbs 31:20	Acts 2:44-45
Isaiah 1:23	Romans 12:15-16
Isaiah 25:4	Romans 15:25-27
Isaiah 58:6-12	2 Corinthians 8:14
Isaiah 65:17-25	Galatians 2:10
Ezekiel 34:18-19	James 2:14-17
Habakkuk 2:2	

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Online

United Methodist Women
www.unitedmethodistwomen.org/poverty

Ministry With* the Poor
The United Methodist Church
www.ministrywith.org

AARP
www.aarp.org

The Blessing Basket
www.blessingbasket.org

Grameen Bank
www.grameen-info.org

International Labor Rights Forum
www.laborrights.org

Setting the Climate for Learning

Dr. Stephen Brookfield, who has written extensively on the adult learner, tells us that teaching is sharing what can be known and using our learning to create appreciable differences in the world. With this study, we certainly hope that every learner will leave with an “action plan” to serve with and alongside of the poor.

Adult learners come to any new study setting with a rich background of experiences, many with a reservoir of questions and challenges. As the study leader, welcome them all—every question, every challenge, every concern, every dream, every despair. It is important that everyone has an opportunity to share experiences and to know that their comments will be listened to with respect.

These sessions are designed to tap into what study participants have already learned. They are organized in a manner to allow adult learners to use various learning styles to access new material and explore challenging and disturbing issues.

Be sure to use materials that allow learners to use as many of their senses as possible. We all have different learning styles. Some persons retain material best by reading and taking notes. Others need to talk with others about what they have read and heard in order to most effectively process new learning. And others learn by creating—molding clay, drawing, painting, etc. They require a kinetic experience.

This study has the potential for evoking conflict. Many are unsure what they should “do for the poor.” Many are hesitant to upset the status quo. Not all participants will understand poverty as a systemic issue, not a personal issue.

The study has the potential to elicit emotional responses. As Pamela D. Couture says in the study, the poor are in our church. Discussion may bring up painful memories for some participants. Again, use the vocabulary of love to show compassion and care.

Respect for Individual Participants

To maximize any learning experience, be attentive to the emotional needs of the participants. Make everyone feel welcome. Make an attempt to learn and use the names of the class members. Set the stage for questioning and sharing, and assure class participants that all questions are welcome.

Sometimes participants come with preconceived notions that are hard for them to set aside in favor of new information. The teaching process must invite people to consider additional information while acknowledging that past experiences and understanding have validity.

Part of the hospitality process is ensuring that every person who would like to has the opportunity

to speak. The teaching process must allow for time for reflection and discernment. It means that some creative silences must be built into the lesson plan, as silence often brings revelation and ideas. Some people need to write down their thoughts before speaking aloud. Create the opportunities for everyone to find and use their voice. Be sure to invite (not insist) that each person share a thought, a concern, a new learning.

Equally important is creating a conversation culture that does not allow one person to dominate. Some people have the gift of gab. Others have a lot of experience on a particular topic. Others are incredibly shy and need a moment to enter the conversation. There are ways to invite participants to share their experiences without derailing the teaching process. Some helpful statements for guiding conversations include the following:

- I'd like to have a couple of people give me a one-minute response to this issue.
- Take 30 seconds to bring that thought to a conclusion.
- This area has been quiet—I don't want to leave you out. Does someone here have an idea to place on the table? (Some people need to be invited to speak.)
- [Class member] has thrown down the gauntlet on this issue; is there anyone else who would like to speak for this issue or present another opinion?

Despite these tips, occasionally one person in the group will refuse to relinquish the floor or observe the suggested time limit. When this happens, stand near the person, make eye contact, thank him or her for sharing and take back the conversation. Direct the person to write down any further thoughts to share at a later time.

Finally, it is important that participants feel heard and respected. Be sure to thank people for sharing or restate one of the main points that a person has shared. If a person makes an insightful comment, be sure to acknowledge it.

Physical Space

When you are working in an unfamiliar space, take some time to study the layout and location of the classroom. Most classrooms will have some challenging elements (e.g., noise and other distractions). Where possible, reduce distractions and set the room to a comfortable temperature. Alert participants if a room tends to be hot or cold so that they can prepare accordingly.

The lesson for each session suggests a classroom arrangement. If it is difficult to rearrange chairs and desks or tables, opt for arranging the seating in a U shape. This allows each participant to maintain face-to-face contact with the leader and interact with other participants. When desks and chairs are immovable, consider using standing exercises in various corners of the room to allow participants to share with others.

Be sure your audiovisual equipment is working. Take time to familiarize yourself with its use. If using a projector and PowerPoint or similar program, be sure to use a readable font size with a simple background, using only one font and one statement per slide. When writing on newsprint, use large writing and dark colors.

Part of making the lessons engaging is to develop multiple strands of teaching. Lectures are useful in sharing specific material in a short space of time. Bulletin boards and other wall spaces are helpful for sharing supplemental information and encouraging

learning on an individual's own timetable. Be sure to add new information often. You can hang information from the ceiling or string a clothesline and photos and information to it. A resource table with books, magazines, brochures, quotes and leaflets are great for participants who like to browse.

You also may want to designate a space where participants can add their own thoughts as the class progresses, using index cards, sticky notes, artwork, magazine clippings, etc. Consider giving assignments that have participants doing in-class research using available materials.

Code of Confidentiality and Conduct

In any study, and especially as we grapple with the issues of poverty, it remains important that we hold participants' stories and revelations in the utmost confidence. Whether a person is reconnecting to a cycle of poverty in her or his life or confessing to not having loved their neighbor as they ought, it is essential to make and keep the learning space sacred for sharing.

I encourage you to create a code of confidentiality and conduct with your class. Invite learners to read the code aloud before each class session.

Sample Code

Classroom Code of Confidentiality and Conduct

Every class member is valued.

Everyone has a right to speak.

No one is to use his or her voice or actions to hurt another.

No one is to dismiss the words and concerns of another classmate.

What is said in class remains in class.

No one's story shall be shared without that person's permission.

Provide empathy and care where appropriate.
Listen. Speak. Listen. Pray.

Elements of the Session

The lessons are designed for two-hour sessions. As a general guideline, each element is assigned a particular time frame, but you should be flexible. The following are the different parts of the lessons (except for the intergenerational session).

- **Quote of Note:** This is a selection from one of the book's chapters. This quote should be posted on newsprint or projected for participants to read as they enter the classroom. It is both an anchoring element as well as a springboard for exploring the context of the quote and what it says for that session.
- **Go Online:** This points the leader and the participants to a website or video clip that will supplement the topics being explored.
- **Objectives for the Session:** This identifies specific ideas to be explored during the session.
- **Materials Needed:** This is a list of all items needed in order to conduct the lesson as designed.
- **Preparation:** This tells the leaders which items need to be created before the lesson begins.
- **Opening Worship:** This is a time to center on biblical scriptures and images. A hymn or song will be used, and a prayer will be offered. If reproducing songs via photocopy or PowerPoint (or in similar ways), be sure your host site or organization has the proper license to do so. See www.licensingonline.org or www.onelicense.net for an example.
- **Story Sharing:** This is a storytelling opportunity. The story will come from the text, another resource or will be a fictional account.
- **Group Research:** This is a small-group activity during which persons will discuss a question or explore concepts that have been shared.

- **Time With the Text:** This is an opportunity for the group leader to share key information from the textbook, drawing on the leader's experience and the group's research. While it is expected that each student will have read the book, it is also helpful to highlight various passages and concepts for all learners.
 - **Standing in Need:** This is the session that uses the *Standing in Need* DVD created as a supplement to this study. A segment is shown, and participants have a chance to discuss the scenes that they have viewed.
 - **Speak Lord:** This is a time of quiet and reflection. In order for us to hear our calling, our mandate, a time of stillness and opportunity for discernment is needed. "Speak Lord" refers to the experience of hearing God speak to us, as many of our biblical ancestors experienced. A United Methodist hymn titled "Lord, Speak to Me" provides guidance for the purpose of this part of the class.
 - **Call to Action:** This is an opportunity for participants to identify an action they would like to see happen for themselves or their church community, including steps that be can taken toward that action.
 - **Closing Worship:** This is an opportunity to reflect, sing and pray for a full synthesis of the learning experience with an action model. Again, if reproducing songs be sure you have the proper license to do so.
 - **Assignment:** This is the homework participants should complete before the next session.
- Bibles
 - *United Methodist Hymnal, The Faith We Sing*, Global Praise songbooks and other songbooks
 - DVD: *Standing in Need: Systemic Poverty in Our Midst*
 - Newsprint
 - Markers
 - Masking tape
 - Transparent adhesive tape
 - Wall putty
 - Index cards in different colors and sizes
 - Construction paper (multicolored)
 - Glue
 - Scissors
 - Yarn
 - Twine or clothesline
 - Push pins

Materials and Supplies

The following supplies will allow you to be flexible in creating your lessons and provide materials for participants to be creative:

Session 1

The Poor Among Us: Chapters 1 and 2

Quote of Note

We will always have the poor among us. But we have not addressed the working poor.

— The Rev. Joseph Lowery

Go Online

The Art Project Houston
www.theartprojecthouston.org

Objectives of the Session

- Understand biblical perspectives on poverty.
- Learn how churches and organizations interact with the poor.
- Examine personal opinions about who are the poor.

Materials Needed

- Index cards (3 x 5, four different colors)
- Construction paper
- Markers
- Scarves (to be used as blindfolds)
- Clothesline and clothes pins
- Bible
- Words and music to the song “Open My Eyes That I May See” (*The United Methodist Hymnal* #454)

Preparation

- Have hymnals available or write the words to “Open My Eyes That I May See” on newsprint or PowerPoint (or displayed in a similar manner).
- Make nametags or prepare supplies for participants to make their own nametags.
- Make a copy of the Story Sharing reading.
- Recruit a person to present the Story Sharing story.
- Place blindfolds on desks or chairs (some participants may have their own).
- Place a colored 3 x 5 index card on each participant’s desk or chair.
- Place a sheet of construction paper and a marker on each desk or chair.
- Hang a clothesline in the classroom if able.

Opening Worship (10 minutes)

Have participants remain in their seats. Have them put on the blindfolds. Once they are on, read aloud Deuteronomy 15:11. Then read the first three paragraphs from Chapter 1 in the study book. Finally, share with the group this statement:

One of the challenges we often face as Christians is that we have blinders on about what life is really like for the poor. We stock the food pantry but are afraid to

reach out to members of our own church. This study asks us to remove what it is that keeps us from seeing and hearing the cry of the needy. So in this opening worship, we are asking God to help us to see and respond to the poor among us. And if we are the poor “in spirit,” we ask that our eyes and hearts be turned toward the life of loving and serving to which we are called as Christ’s disciples.

Direct everyone to remove their blindfolds. Have everyone sing together “Open My Eyes That I May See.”

Welcome (20 minutes)

Share words of welcome with the class and ask participants to introduce themselves and to share in 30 seconds or fewer why they chose to study the subject of poverty.

Introduce yourself in the same way. Share why you chose to teach the study. Then give an outline of what will be covered in today’s session. Emphasize that in this session you will be encountering the poor—through the text, DVD and your own experiences.

Story Sharing (5 minutes)

Church and Community Worker Was the Answer

If you think a former United Methodist Women national officer looks forward to retiring from being an advocate for poor women, children and youth, you’re wrong! Josephine Deere, a former national secretary and a member of the Oklahoma Indian Missionary Conference, is always happy to describe the ministries with the poor in her area:

Let me share with you our ministry at Clinton Indian Church and Community Center [CICCC]. This ministry is located in the heart of the Cheyenne and Arapaho Nation and in an area of the state where income levels are very low. At one time the church was going pretty strong, but attendance fell and it began to struggle. It was noticed there were a lot of children around the church. The pastor who had a two-point charge that included Clinton had a couple adults and several children who would attend. In discussion with the adults, it was obvious there needed to be some type of children’s ministry in that area. The church and the housing addition that houses a lot of the native people in that area are on the west side of town while the tribal facilities are on the east side of town. A number of activities would take place at the tribal facilities, but with no transportation, these children were getting left out. A lot of the children in this area are being raised by grandparents who live on social security or a very low fixed income. We, the Oklahoma Indian Missionary Conference, were able to have one of our own become a church and community worker and be appointed to Clinton. The program is starting to grow, and the children are a blessing to all who come in contact with them.

Deere reports that the center is still struggling for funds. “The CICCC is the first established center for our conference. Also a number of the children are direct descendants of some of the Cheyenne and Arapaho who were massacred in the Sand Creek Massacre that Chivington led, and those memories run deep.” (From Chapter 1, pp. 10-11)

Group Research (20 minutes)

Tell the class that they are to create a poverty profile that will be displayed on the clothesline. On one side of the construction paper, have them write down 5-10 words or phrases that they believe describe the life of a poor person. On the other side, they should make notes on a time in their lives when they felt poor (financially or in spirit).

Next, tell the group that the color of their index card symbolizes the group that they will be in throughout the session. Have them gather with others with the same color index card and sit as a group and share their profiles. Participants should keep their index card or remember their colors, as they will be gathering in this same group in subsequent sessions. Ask a volunteer from each group to write down the names of the group members. After sharing, have individuals clip their profiles to the clothesline then return to their group.

Time With the Text (30 minutes)

Assign each group a section of Chapters 1 and 2 to read or review. Have the groups write down 10 key concepts or concerns that emerged from the text. For example, it is challenging to see where a church would give the pastor a raise but not consider it for their sexton or office assistant. Allow about 15 minutes for this exercise.

In the remaining 15 minutes ask for a report from each group. Be sure to add information from the text and your experiences to show how we encounter and/or avoid the poor. Review clearly what the Bible says to Christians about preferential treatment of the poor, the concept of Jubilee (see Leviticus 25:1-13).

Standing in Need (10 minutes)

Watch the DVD clip titled “What Are the Faces of Poverty?” Allow for discussion. Ask what was shown on the DVD that added to the information gleaned from the text. Ask what is similar to ministries in their communities and churches.

Speak Lord (1 minute)

Ask for complete silence. Invite class members to close their eyes and reflect on what has happened so far in the class. Ask them to seek discernment about how to encounter the poor as the Bible directs us. Ask them to listen for God’s voice.

Call to Action (10 minutes)

Have class members individually make a list of actions they can take to be in ministry with the poor (it can be a personal action or a church action). Ask each participant to trace his or her hand on a sheet of construction paper, then have class members select one action they are most likely to do and write it on their “hand.” Tell them to share this vision with one other person.

Closing Worship (10 minutes)

Place a desk or small table in the center of the room. Share with the group that poverty is both personal and corporate. Remind them that it takes personal action to bring about a corporate change. Sing the hymn “Open My Eyes That I May See” again and invite people to bring their hand and put it on the table as a symbol of commitment to be connected with the poor for the purpose of making meaningful changes. Once all have returned to their seats, close the session with the following antiphonal prayer, asking class members to echo your words:

There Shall Be No Poor Among Us

The Bible says
that God has a passion for the poor.
We claim this passion
for ourselves,
for our churches
and for our families.
We firmly believe
that one day soon
we will boldly say,
“There are no poor among us,
because God has granted us all
riches in Christ Jesus.”
Amen.

Assignment

Read Chapters 3 and 7. List 10 things in each chapter that strikes a chord—new information, shocking information and unclear and new vocabulary. Go online and read about the Art Project Houston.

Session 2

Poverty Within Us: Chapters 3 and 7

Quote of Note

Consumers were, more than ever before, and in increasingly sophisticated ways, invited to purchase and consume beyond their reasonable needs

— Paul L. Escamilla

Go Online

Do an Internet search for “the no spend challenge,” the idea of which is to challenge yourself to purchase only necessities, not luxuries. Here are some websites to get you started:

- www.andthenshesaved.com/spendingfastguide lines
- <http://frac.org/federal-foodnutrition-programs/snapfood-stamps/snapfood-stamp-challenges>

Objectives of the Session

- Reconnect with our spiritual heritage as one with the poor.
- Understand the strong pull toward being a consumer.
- Make our commitment to being a companion to the poor wherever they are.

Materials Needed for the Session

- Index cards (4 x 6)
- Poster board
- Markers
- Glitter
- Bell or timer
- Paint stirrers (or other kinds of sticks)
- Wood glue
- Ball of yarn
- Words and music to the songs “A Charge to Keep I Have” (*The United Methodist Hymnal* #413) and “Sent Out in Jesus’ Name” (*The Faith We Sing* #2184)

Preparation

- Have hymnals available or write the words to “A Charge to Keep I Have” and “Sent Out in Jesus’ Name” on newsprint or PowerPoint (or displayed in a similar manner).
- Make a copy of the Story Sharing reading.
- Recruit a person to present the Story Sharing story.
- Place index card on each participant’s desk or chair.
- Recruit class members to read the scriptures.
- Recruit a person to lead the prayer.
- Set up an art supply table with glue, glitter, markers, paint and paint stirrers.

Opening Worship (10 minutes)

Sing “A Charge to Keep I Have.” Sing all four verses, but have volunteers read a scripture between each verse. Scriptures are Isaiah 58:6-12, Matthew 25:34-40 and Luke 4:18-19. Read the following prayer or a similar prayer in your own words: Holy and Gracious God, you have let us know what you would have us to do. We are to “serve this present age, our calling to fulfill.” Help us to have open hearts and minds to care for the poor and the downtrodden. For this we pray, Amen.

Follow-up (5 minutes)

Ask if anyone did an Internet search of the Art Project Houston from the assignment from the first session. If yes, invite one person to share what he or she discovered.

Story Sharing (10 minutes)

After the story, have class members pair with one another and share what they’ve have learned so far about their Wesleyan heritage (as well as the Bible and the commandment to care about the poor).

John Wesley (a fictional account)

You know, my heart, my heart was strangely warmed. Amen. I had this burning inside of me. Amen. My first sermon was in the open field. I preached. I preached to the miners.

I preached to the laborers, I preached to the poor. Amen. I have always cared about the poor. The Bible says that we should not forget the widows and orphans. Amen. So when my brother Charles and I were studying at Oxford, we spent several hours a week with the poor. We visited them. We began tutoring their children. Amen. People criticized us, yes, they did. Amen. But I told them, “The hon-

orable, the great—we are willing to leave to you. But give us the tired, the poor, the outcasts. We will serve them. Amen.”

Wherever I went, whomever I was with, I said, “Visit the poor.” It was our custom every Christmas to distribute coals and bread among the poor. But I saw they needed more. So I went on a begging trip for four days. Amen. I walked up and down the streets crying, “Help the needy, look out for the poor.” And they did. To all the people called Methodists, remember: help the poor, look out for the needy. Do all the good you can, to all the people you can, in every way you can. Amen.

Group Research (20 minutes)

Share with the class that our Wesleyan heritage (as well as the Bible) has given us a charge: that we care about the poor, that we rub shoulders with the poor, that we don’t just “send” resources but bring resources, that we see with our own eyes. But there are other forces competing for our affection and attention. Using an index card, have participants make a list of 5-10 commercials that continue to grab their attention and make them want to buy something that they really don’t need. Or they can identify commercials or magazine ads that they think are unethical in their appeal.

Then have participants stand in two circles, a smaller circle inside a bigger circle. Those in the inside circle should face those in the outside circle so that everyone is paired with a partner (leader may participate to ensure that everyone is paired). Allow 45 seconds for partners to share about a commercial that competes for their attention and affection, then the outer circle should move two persons to the left. Repeat the sharing. Continue

to move the circles until participants have shared with at least four persons.

Have them gather in their groups again and discuss the following question: In what ways do the commercials we've identified help us to serve the poor? Benefit the poor? Create the poor? Allow 5-10 minutes for discussion. Invite group members to share and reflect on the experience.

Time With the Text (30 minutes)

Divide into the four groups based on index card color. Have two groups review Chapter 3 and the other two groups review Chapter 7. Based on their homework from the previous session and the notes they made, ask them to make a list of the 10 most important points to remember about the text. Identify anything that convicted them or spurred them to action. Call on the groups in turn to report their learning. Be sure to supplement their lists with challenges and concerns that you have identified.

Standing in Need (20 minutes)

Watch the DVD segments "What Is Poverty?" and "Meet Susie Jenkins." After watching the first segment, allow time for participants to jot down memorable scenes and key information. Watch the second segment and repeat the exercise. In their color groups, have participants discuss the video clips and make links between information from the text and the DVD. Allow time for sharing.

Speak Lord (1 minute)

Turn off the lights. Ask for complete silence. Invite class members to close their eyes and reflect on what happened so far in the class. Ask them

to seek discernment about how to encounter the poor as the Bible directs us. Ask them to listen for God's voice.

Call to Action (20 minutes)

Prepare for a flash mob activity. Tell the group that at dinner that evening (for regional and conference schools) or at the next church service (for local church groups, in concert with the pastor) they will present a one-minute witness. At the signal, such as a ringing of a bell or a cell phone alarm, everyone should stand frozen in place, holding aloft a sign that gives a scripture phrase or statistic about poverty. Be sure to decide on a time and a signal.

Direct participants to the art tables and ask them to make signs and banners that will help educate people about the realities of poverty. When done, attach the posters to paint stirrers to make it easier to hold them up. They can use a scripture, a line from a hymn, a phrase from the text, statistics, the name of a missionary, etc. for the poster. They can also create original artwork. Remind them to write in large letters to make for easier reading.

Closing Worship (10 minutes)

Sing "Sent Out in Jesus' Name." Share that one key element of poverty is unemployment. Unemployed people don't just need information about job openings; they desperately need to know that there is a caring world out there for them. This closing worship is a prayer meeting for the unemployed.

Have the group stand in a circle. Take the ball of yarn, hold the string and lift up the name of someone who is unemployed (or underemployed or forced into early retirement). Still holding the loose

string, toss the ball of yarn to someone else who adds a prayer or lifts up a name before tossing the yarn to someone else. Continue the prayers and the lifting up of concerns until everyone has had an opportunity to share and there is a visible “safety net” created with the prayers for those who are hungry for work.

Remain in the circle, holding the web. Begin singing the spiritual “Kum Ba Yah” (*The United Methodist Hymnal* #494).

Assignments

Remind persons of the date and time for the flash mob event. Continue to allow time for persons to complete their signs. They may make more than one and recruit people from other classes to be part of the silent witness. Read Chapters 4 and 5 and make a list of 10 significant learnings and challenges that are brought forth in the text. Go online and read about “the no spend challenge” (see www.andthenshesaved.com and www.frac.org).

Session 3

Poverty All Around Us: Chapters 4 and 5

Quote of Note

We as the church may fail to recognize that poor persons are already among us in our congregations because many economically poor persons, especially women, look like everyone else in the communities in which they live.

— Pamela D. Couture

Go Online

Do an Internet search for the name “Kelley Williams-Bolar” and read about her story of being jailed for “theft of educational services.” Define instances of people being convicted for being poor.

Objectives for the Session

- Examine poverty issues in the United States and other countries.
- Identify key challenges to addressing and ending poverty.
- Focus on issues that are specific to women and girls.

Materials Needed

- Packing tape or wide ribbon
- Construction paper
- Scrap paper
- Markers

- Candle or flashlight
- Pennies (40)
- Plastic cups (four)
- “Passport to poverty” signs
- “Store” signs
- Words and music to the song “Star-Child” (*The Faith We Sing* #2095) and “This Little Light of Mine” (*The United Methodist Hymnal* #585) or another song with a similar theme

Preparation

- Make a copy of the Story Sharing reading.
- Recruit volunteers for opening worship and to read the Story Sharing story.
- Have hymnals available or write the words to “Star-Child” and “This Little Light of Mine” or similar song on newsprint or PowerPoint (or displayed in a similar manner).
- Prepare materials for the Penny Wars game:
 - Make store signs: Grocery Store, Corner Market, McFee’s, Dollar Mart. Tape a sign at random to front of student desks or tables.
 - Recruit a “manager” for each of the four “stores.”
 - Supply each store with slips of scrap paper.
 - Make “passport to poverty” signs that state the following: laid off, no high school diploma, live in a shelter, no health insurance, raising my brother’s kids, taking care of Mom and Dad.

- Set up “roadblocks” to abundant living: using tape, block off some of the seating in the classroom, making it difficult for others to reach their desks. Hang the passport to poverty signs on the tape.

Opening Worship (5 minutes)

Sing the song “Star-Child.” Have a volunteer read the following prayer: God of all children, young and old, have mercy on us here. We know you hear the cry of the street child and the beat child. Please hear the cry of the confused child, the timid child, the child who wants to do something but doesn’t know what, the child who wants to advocate but is simply scared. Have mercy on us. Amen.

Follow-up (10 minutes)

Encourage persons to share how it felt to be “blocked” from accessing seating in the classroom. Explain that being poor is like running into myriad roadblocks every day, and it feels like someone has handed you a passport that allows you to visit only the countries of distress, longing and hopelessness. Ask if anyone did an Internet search on the “no spend challenge.” Allow for about a minute or so of sharing.

Story Sharing (5 minutes)

Josie Queen (a fictional account)

Hi, I’m Josie Queen, and I’m here to tell you that being poor is hard. I wanted a better life, but growing up my mom was sick and my dad could never find a good job that paid well. So I quit school and got a job so that my family and I could have money. We lived where we could afford, and where we lived was just not good. The landlord wouldn’t send an exterminator for the mice or a plumber to fix the

leaking pipes and broken toilet. We couldn’t afford to pay for someone ourselves.

I was married for a few years, had two children. Then my husband left us. I don’t even know where he is. We moved in with my parents, back in the pitiable house in which I grew up, because we couldn’t afford our home anymore and so I could help take care of my mother. I work two jobs, but I don’t even make minimum wage at one of them, and neither of them offer benefits. It’s hard. I spend money on buses and taxis because I can’t afford a car, even if a dealer would sell me one. Only one person on my block has a car, and he’s a drug dealer, the only way it seems anyone in my situation can afford a car.

Can you imagine raising your kids here? People do it every day, generation after generation. I need something better for my family. Our country needs something better for its people. I need your help.

Group Research (30 minutes)

Explain that the group is going to play a simulation game called “Penny Wars.” Divide the class into the four families described in the next section. Give each family a plastic cup in which to hold their pennies. Choose a manager for each store who will name products and prices their store offers (based on the guidelines outlined), writing the products and price on slips of paper for the purchasers. Give the families 15 minutes to talk together and complete their shopping. Have each family report what they were able to buy and if it was enough to support everyone in the family. See if any family had money remaining. Explain to the class that poverty is shaped not only by the income one has but the number of people he or she must support on that

income. Discuss the health effects of low income, such as how eating nutritionally with little money is virtually impossible.

Penny Wars

Families

Boyd Family

Members: Mother, two children, grandfather (daughter's dad)

Income: 8 pennies

Daily tasks: Buy food to make dinner, pay electric bill (2 pennies) and pay for daughter's field trip (1 penny).

Home scenario: They live in a poor area. Corner Market is within walking distance, or they can take bus (1 penny) to Grocery Store, which has fresh meat and vegetables.

Craig Family

Members: Father, mother, adult children who do not live at home

Income: 10 pennies

Daily tasks: Buy food to make dinner, pay electric bill (2 pennies) and pay cable bill (3 pennies).

Home scenario: They live in a stable suburban neighborhood and have a car. They can get to any of the stores via car for 1 penny.

Leon Family

Members: Father, mother, teenage son, and elementary-age daughter

Income: 8 pennies

Daily tasks: Buy food to make dinner, pay electric bill (2 pennies) and pay for son's soccer fees (2 pennies).

Home scenario: They live in stable neighborhood and have a car that runs—barely. They can get to all of the stores via car for 1 penny.

Young Family

Members: Father, mother, three children under age 5

Income: 8 pennies

Daily tasks: Buy food to make dinner, pay electric bill (2 pennies), buy formula for the baby (2 pennies) and pay for a doctor's visit for middle child (2 pennies).

Home scenario: They live in stable neighborhood with a good used car. They can get all of the stores via car for 1 penny.

Stores

Grocery Store

You have fresh fruits, vegetables and meats. And you have a roast beef dinner special for 5 pennies.

Corner Market

You have sodas, canned foods and packaged deli meat (that has been there for three months, but since it looks okay you are still selling it). You have a few bananas and apples, but they are low quality. You think the eggs are pretty fresh. And the packages of dried beans are always good. Everything is special at your store—you offer no sales.

McFee's (fast food)

You have the usual: burgers, fries and sodas. Today you are running a special for families: Five burgers and fries for 5 pennies

Dollar Mart

You sell home supplies and some food products: baby formula, canned tuna and sausages, canned green beans, boxed macaroni and cheese. All canned and boxed items are a penny except for the baby formula, which costs 2 pennies. There is no fresh meat or eggs.

Time With the Text (30 minutes)

Have class gather in their original color groups. Assign the groups one of the following tasks:

- Identify the factors that lead to poverty in the United States.
- List the challenges and concerns in relation to global poverty.
- Write down critical statistics that everyone needs to know in relation to poverty in the United States and the world.
- Make a list of how poverty is particularly harmful for women and children.

Have each group make at least five posters (on construction paper) that captures some of the information that they have distilled from the text. Come back together and “air the dirty laundry” by having the groups clip their sheets to the clothesline, reading the posters as they hang them and ending with the line, “It’s a dirty shame.”

Standing in Need (14 minutes)

Watch the DVD segment “Youth and Poverty.” In pairs, discuss some of the following issues: How can we provide financial and social stability for children aging out of the foster care system? How can we support United Methodist Women national mission institutions such as the Neighborhood Center in Harrisburg, Pa.? Allow the group to raise other issues and concerns that come from the first three DVD segments.

Speak Lord (1 minute)

Turn off the lights. Ask for complete silence. Invite participants to close their eyes and reflect on what happened so far in the class. Ask them to seek discernment about how to encounter the poor as the Bible directs us. Ask them to listen for God’s voice.

Call to Action (10 minutes)

Share with the group that loving as Christ calls for acts of mercy and justice. Ask them to write a draft of a letter to the editor of their newspaper, a lawmaker, the pastor of their church or the mayor of their town and make a request for one systemic change that would meet the needs of poor persons. Remind them that system change involves changing policies and procedures. One systemic change request might be increasing the minimum wage. Persons at the bottom of the pay scale are the ones least likely to get any kind of raise. That means their income is eroding as gas and grocery prices skyrocket. If you have time, invite a couple of volunteers to read their letters.

Closing Worship (10 minutes)

Darken the classroom as much as possible. As participants remain in their seat, light one candle (or turn on a small flash light). Share the following proverb: It is better to light a candle than to curse the darkness. Invite others to share light sources: mini flashlights, cell phone lights, etc. Sing “This Little Light of Mine” or another song with a similar theme. Ask a volunteer to share a closing prayer.

Assignment

Explain that the Call to Action time in the final session is a concert of hope. Each person is asked to contribute a brief poem, song, dance, memorable quote or a poster or drawing that will be shared during that time. Have art supplies available for students to use at the end of the session or to take with them. Read Chapters 6 and 8. Invite class members to do an Internet search on the name “Kelley Williams-Bolar.”

Session 4

Ending Poverty Through Advocacy and Charity

Quote of Note

We are reminded by news coverage every day that we live in a global village. Christians and other people of goodwill believe that with that awareness comes the responsibility of caring for all who live in the village.

— Elizabeth Calvin

Go Online

Do an Internet search for “Theresa Wilson” and “Blessing Basket.” How does this project help to eradicate poverty?

Objectives for the Session

- Be able to articulate the difference between charity and justice.
- Learn about just and sustainable programs that address poverty, particularly the role of micro-credit.
- Identify how microeconomics benefits women.
- Create an action plan for individuals and a dream plan for a “beloved communities” for churches.

Materials Needed

- Words and music to the songs “When the Poor Ones” (*The United Methodist Hymnal* #434),

“The Summons” (*The Faith We Sing* #2130) and “Jesu, Jesu” (*The United Methodist Hymnal* #432)

- Copy of “For Courage to Do Justice” (*The United Methodist Hymnal* #456)
- Copies of “We Speak Your Name” (found in the Story Sharing section of this session)
- Shallow bowl
- Pebbles (decorative stones used in vases, enough for everyone to have one)
- Water (2 cups)

Preparation

- Recruit volunteers for opening worship: a scripture reader, a meditation reader and someone to pray.
- Make copies of the Story Sharing reading.
- Recruit readers for the Story Sharing presentation, “We Speak Your Name.”
- Have hymnals available or write the words to “When the Poor Ones,” “The Summons” and “Jesu, Jesu” on newsprint or PowerPoint (or displayed in a similar manner).

Opening Worship (10 minutes)

Sing “When the Poor Ones.” Read Amos 5:15. Also have someone read “For Courage to Do Justice.” Have a volunteer read the following prayer: God,

save us from weak resignation to the evil we deplore. Strengthen our hearts and minds that we can stand in vigil, that we can write letters of protest, that we can link our arms in solidarity and walk along side the poor. In Christ's name we pray, Amen.

Follow-up (5 minutes)

Ask if anyone did an Internet search for the name "Kelley Williams-Bolar" and about her story of being jailed for "theft of educational services." Invite one person to share what he or she discovered.

Story Sharing (10 minutes)

Share with the group that we have a great cloud of witnesses who have walked the walk and talked the talk in reference to living in poverty and addressing poverty. The class will call a few of those names today. A reader will say, "I speak the name of [person's name]." The class will reply: "[Person's name], we speak your name," then the reader will complete the selection.

We Speak Your Name

READER 1: I speak the name of Eula Hall.

GROUP: Eula Hall, we speak your name.

READER 1: Eula Hall is known as the "Mother Teresa" of Mud Creek, Ky. With only an 8th grade education she worked tirelessly to help establish the Mud Creek Clinic, which is now also known as the Eula Hall Health Center. She did not give up even when the first clinic burned down and worked to raise enough money to build a new clinic. At 80 years old, she still works at the clinic today, ensuring that her Appalachian community receives the health care it needs.

READER 2: I speak the name of Edwin Smith.

GROUP: Edwin Smith, we speak your name.

READER 2: Dr. Edwin Smith, a dentist in Bourbonville, Ky., founded a mobile dental clinic called "Kids First Dental Services" that helps children in Appalachia, the top spot in the United States for tooth loss. The area's lack of nutritional food and clean water attribute to poor dental health.

READER 3: I speak the name of Khadijah Williams, who, like Liz Murray, went from homeless to Harvard.

GROUP: Khadijah Williams, we speak your name.

READER 3: Ms. Williams had gone to 12 schools in 12 years. Homeless and on the move for most of her life, she finished only half of 4th grade and 5th grade and skipped 6th grade altogether. She spent only two weeks in 8th grade. In response she reached out to local organizations who could help her learn what she'd missed. In 2009 she graduated 4th in her high school class and was accepted at Harvard.

READER 4: I speak the names of filmmaker Tyler Perry, football star Michael Oher and stock broker Chris Gardner, all who were among the homeless poor before achieving success.

GROUP: Tyler Perry, Michael Oher, Chris Gardner, we speak your names.

READER 4: Chris Gardner's life story was chronicled in the movie *The Pursuit of Happyness*. Glide Memorial United Methodist Church, which has a great ministry and advocacy for persons who are poor, was featured in the movie. Mr. Gardner credits that church with saving his life and strengthening his esteem as he struggled to support himself and his son while homeless and working for a better life.

Group Research (10 minutes)

Ask class to meet in their color groups one last time.

Invite them to spend time speaking the names of those they know who are overcoming hurdles or who are knocking down the roadblocks to abundant living on behalf of the poor. Allow for each group to share one or two examples at the end.

Time With the Text (20 minutes)

Have class remain in their groups. Assign two groups Chapter 6 and two groups Chapter 8. For those discussing Chapter 6, have them discuss the value of microeconomics and to say why it can or can't be applied in regions in the United States. For those discussing Chapter 8, have them make a comprehensive list of all that can be done in the area of advocacy by the ordinary citizen.

Standing in Need (24 minutes)

Watch the DVD segment "Advocacy for Those Standing in Need." In pairs, identify ways in which people can help address issues of poverty and discuss how hope was portrayed overall in the video for those standing in need. Have them share how hope is being shared in their own communities. Return to the larger group and share stories of hope.

Speak Lord (1 minute)

Turn off the lights. Ask for complete silence. Invite participants to close their eyes and reflect on what happened so far in the class. Ask them to seek discernment about how to encounter the poor as the Bible directs us. Ask them to listen for God's voice.

Call to Action (20 minutes)

Have the class prepare to share poetry, quotes, artwork, songs and commitments in a "Concert of

Hope." Lead the group in singing "This Little Light of Mine" (*The United Methodist Hymnal* #585) and other songs and hymns that have been used in the study. Intersperse the singing between the presentations of information and action plans.

Closing Worship (10 minutes)

Pour water into a shallow basin or bowl. Give each participant a small, flat stone. Sing the song "The Summons." Invite all to come forward and drop their pebble in the basin of water and state: "I will make a ripple of hope with and for those who are experiencing poverty."

After everyone has shared, sing "Jesu, Jesu" and recite the following prayer by St. Teresa found on page 107 of the *Poverty* text.

Christ Has No Body

Christ has no body but yours,
no hands, no feet on earth but yours.
Yours are the eyes with which he looks
compassion on this world.
Yours are the feet with which he walks
to do good.
Yours are the hands, with which he blesses
all the world.
Yours are the hands, yours are the feet,
yours are the eyes, you are his body.
Christ has no body now but yours,
no hands, no feet on earth but yours.
Yours are the eyes with which he looks
compassion on this world.
Christ has no body now on earth but yours.

— Teresa of Avila (1515–1582)

Session 5

An Intergenerational Session

This is a two-hour session on the study designed specifically for congregations who may have difficulty implementing the four-session study. It is also designed as a breakout session so that the study elements can be used with all age levels.

Materials Needed

- Poster board
- Markers
- Index cards (4 x 6)
- Basket
- Paint stirrers (or similar sticks)
- Words and music to the song “Open My Eyes That I May See” (*The United Methodist Hymnal* #454), “Jesu, Jesu” (*The United Methodist Hymnal* #432) and “Sent Out in Jesus’ Name” (*The Faith We Sing* #2184).

Preparation

- Have hymnals available or write the words to “Open My Eyes That I May See,” “Jesu, Jesu” and “Sent Out in Jesus’ Name” on newsprint or PowerPoint (or displayed in a similar manner).
- Write each of the following scripture references on individual index cards and place them in a basket.
 - Exodus 22:22
 - Deuteronomy 15:1-11

- Psalm 82:3
- Proverbs 31:20
- Isaiah 25:4
- Isaiah 58:6-12
- Zechariah 7:10
- Micah 6:6-8
- Matthew 25:34-40
- Romans 12:15-16
- Romans 15:25-27
- Recruit 11 people to look up the assigned scripture in their Bibles and be prepared to read it aloud to the entire group.
- Make copies of the Story Sharing reading.
- Recruit two people to read the Story Sharing stories.
- Recruit a person to lead the reflection “We Speak Your Name.”

Part I: Who Are the Poor and Why Should We Care? (20 minutes)

Sing “Jesu, Jesu” (*The United Methodist Hymnal* #432).

Create Poverty Profiles (5 minutes)

Give every participant a sheet of construction paper and markers to create a poverty profile. Ask people to write down key words or draw images that describe the life of a poor person.

DVD segment “What Are the Faces of Poverty?” (5 minutes)

After watching the segment, have the children draw a picture representing something they saw on the DVD. Have the youth and adults update their poverty profiles based on new information gathered from the DVD segment.

Discussion (5 minutes)

Review what the text and the DVD say about poverty. Encourage youth and adults to add to their profile to create an accurate picture of how poverty looks.

Part II: John Wesley and the Poor (20 minutes)

Story Sharing

After the story, have an adult, youth and child pair together and share what they’ve learned so far about their Wesleyan heritage (as well as the Bible and the commandment to care about the poor).

John Wesley (a fictional account)

You know, my heart, my heart was strangely warmed. Amen. I had this burning inside of me. Amen. My first sermon was in the open field. I preached. I preached to the miners.

I preached to the laborers, I preached to the poor. Amen. I have always cared about the poor. The Bible says that we should not forget the widows and orphans. Amen. So when my brother Charles and I were studying at Oxford, we spent several hours a week with the poor. We visited them. We began tutoring their children. Amen. People criticized us, yes, they did. Amen. But I told them, “The honorable, the great—we are willing to leave to you.

But give us the tired, the poor, the outcasts. We will serve them. Amen.

Wherever I went, whomever I was with, I said, “Visit the poor.” It was our custom every Christmas to distribute coals and bread among the poor. But I saw they needed more. So I went on a begging trip for four days. Amen. I walked up and down the streets crying, “Help the needy, look out for the poor.” And they did. To all the people called Methodists, remember: help the poor, look out for the needy. Do all the good you can, to all the people you can, in every way you can. Amen.

Discussion

Note that there are other forces competing for our affection and attention. Using an index card, have participants make a list of three to five commercials that continue to grab their attention and make them want to buy something that they really don’t need. Or they can identify commercials or magazine ads that they think are unethical in their appeal.

Speed Talk

Have participants stand in two circles, a smaller circle inside a bigger circle. Those in the inside circle should face those in the outside circle so that everyone is paired with a partner (leader may participate to ensure that everyone is paired). Allow 45 seconds for both partners to share about a commercial that competes for their attention and affection, then the outer circle should move to two persons to the left. Repeat the sharing. Continue to move the circles until participants have shared with at least four persons.

Return to seats and debrief with the facilitator, confessing which commercials make them think mostly of themselves and not a bit about the poor.

Part III: Poverty All Around Us (20 minutes)

Based on information from the text, share the numbing statistics on how poverty looks in the United States and other countries. Be sure to emphasize the systemic changes that are needed. Explain how microeconomics is making a difference to so many people.

Projects

If computers or a computer room is available, or if enough class members have smartphones they are willing to use, have an adult pair with a teen and a child and conduct an Internet search on the following topics:

- Food stamp challenge: Could they feed themselves on three dollars per day?
- Kelley Williams-Bolar: Should she have been put in jail for what she did?
- Art Project Houston: How is this project unique in helping the homeless?
- The Blessing Basket: How is this project more than charity?

Prepare for a Flash Mob

Stage a flash mob to share information and statistics on poverty. Using poster board, markers and paint stirrers, create signs that can be held up. Once signs have been created, have the group practicing freezing in place, holding up their signs. Figure out a public place where you can stage this flash mob, on a signal standing still for 30-60 seconds while holding up the signs for others to read.

Part IV: Women and Children in Poverty (20 minutes)

Story Sharing

Josie Queen (a fictional account)

Hi, I'm Josie Queen, and I'm here to tell you that

being poor is hard. I wanted a better life, but growing up my mom was sick and my dad could never find a good job that paid well. So I quit school and got a job so that my family and I could have money. We lived where we could afford, and where we lived was just not good. The landlord wouldn't send an exterminator for the mice or a plumber to fix the leaking pipes and broken toilet. We couldn't afford to pay for someone ourselves.

I was married for a few years, had two children. Then my husband left us. I don't even know where he is. We moved in with my parents, back in the pitiable house in which I grew up, because we couldn't afford our home anymore and so I could help take care of my mother. I work two jobs, but I don't even make minimum wage at one of them, and neither of them offer benefits. It's hard. I spend money on buses and taxis because I can't afford a car, even if a dealer would sell me one. Only one person on my block has a car, and he's a drug dealer, the only way it seems anyone in my situation can afford a car.

Can you imagine raising your kids here? People do it every day, generation after generation. I need something better for my family. Our country needs something better for its people. I need your help.

Call to Action

Share with the group that loving as Christ calls for acts of mercy and justice. Ask them to write a draft of a letter to the editor of their newspaper, a lawmaker, the pastor of their church or the mayor of their town and make a request for one systemic change that would meet the needs of poor persons. Remind them that system change involves changing policies and procedures. One systemic change request might be increasing the minimum wage. Persons at the bottom of the pay scale are the ones

least likely to get any kind of raise. That means their income is eroding as gas and grocery prices skyrocket. If you have time, invite a couple of volunteers to read their letters.

If time permits, watch the DVD segment “Youth and Poverty.” In groups of three or four persons, discuss some of the following issues: How can we provide financial and social stability for children aging out of the foster care system? How can we support United Methodist Women national mission institutions such as the Neighborhood Center in Harrisburg, Pa.? How can we help move women from underemployment, especially when they are single mothers? Allow the group to share their ideas with the larger group and raise other issues and concerns that came from the video clip.

Story Sharing

Share with the group that we have a great cloud of witnesses who have walked the walk and talked the talk in reference to living in poverty and addressing poverty. The class will call a few of those names today. A reader will say, “I speak the name of [person’s name].” The class will reply: “[Person’s name], we speak your name,” then the reader will complete the selection.

We Speak Your Name

READER: I speak the name of Eula Hall.

GROUP: Eula Hall, we speak your name.

READER: Eula Hall is known as the “Mother Teresa” of Mud Creek, Ky. With only an 8th grade education she worked tirelessly to help establish the Mud Creek Clinic, which is now also known as the Eula Hall Health Center. She did not give up even when the first clinic burned down and worked to raise enough money to build a new clinic. At 80 years old, she still works at the clinic today, ensur-

ing that her Appalachian community receives the health care it needs.

READER 2: I speak the name of Edwin Smith.

GROUP: Edwin Smith, we speak your name.

READER 2: Dr. Edwin Smith, a dentist in Bourbonville, Ky., founded a mobile dental clinic called “Kids First Dental Services” that helps children in Appalachia, the top spot in the United States for tooth loss. The area’s lack of nutritional food and clean water attribute to poor dental health.

READER 3: I speak the name of Khadijah Williams, who, like Liz Murray, went from homeless to Harvard.

GROUP: Khadijah Williams, we speak your name.

READER 3: Ms. Williams had gone to 12 schools in 12 years. Homeless and on the move for most of her life, she finished only half of 4th grade and 5th grade and skipped 6th grade altogether. She spent only two weeks in 8th grade. In response she reached out to local organizations who could help her learn what she’d missed. In 2009 she graduated 4th in her high school class and was accepted at Harvard.

READER 4: I speak the names of filmmaker Tyler Perry, football star Michael Oher and stock broker Chris Gardner, all who were among the homeless poor before achieving success.

GROUP: Tyler Perry, Michael Oher, Chris Gardner, we speak your names.

READER 4: Chris Gardner’s life story was chronicled in the movie *The Pursuit of Happyness*. Glide Memorial United Methodist Church, which has a great ministry and advocacy for persons who are poor, was featured in the movie. Mr. Gardner credits that church with saving his life and strengthening his

esteem as he struggled to support himself and his son while homeless and working for a better life.

Closing Worship (30 minutes)

Place a desk or small table in the center of the room. Remind the group that it takes personal action to bring about a corporate change. Sing again “Jesu, Jesu.” While singing, have them put the drawings of their hearts on the table as a symbol of commitment to be connected with the poor.

Have one of the children or youth read the following story from the children’s mission study.

Would You Like a Piece of Cake?

Jonathan’s father put on his oven mitts and opened the oven door. “Dad, what smells so good?” asked Jonathan, as he ran into the kitchen from the living room. Chuckling, his dad replied, “I thought you were playing video games, but I see the aroma from the cake interrupted you!”

“Dad, when can we cut it? I know it has to cool, but when can we eat it? In 15 minutes? Thirty minutes? When, Dad, when?” Jonathan asked excitedly as the words tumbled out of his mouth. “It smells so good.”

Just at that time, Jonathan’s mom came in the room. “The cake is not for us,” his mom said, as she patted Jonathan on the head. “Tonight is when we go as a family and serve food at the men’s shelter. We are going to help others at the Loaves and Fishes Café.”

“I don’t want to go,” Jonathan said, pouting. “I want to stay home and play my

games. Why do we have to go anyway? Why can’t you get a babysitter for me?”

Jonathan’s dad picked him up and sat him on the nearby counter. Pointing to the cake, he said, “The cake smells good, right?” Jonathan nodded his head vigorously. “Well, the Bible talks about us being Christians and that we should have a sweet smell about us,” his dad added.

“Well, at least we won’t be called the stinking Christians,” Jonathan broke in, laughing at his own joke. “But I still don’t understand why we all have to go. I’m a kid. What can I do at the Loaves and Fishes Café?”

Jonathan’s mom looked him straight in the eyes and asked, “Do you remember when Grandmom Jennifer came to visit last month?” Jonathan nodded his head. “Do you remember how she helped you pack your clothes for Mark’s birthday sleepover?” she asked. Jonathan nodded his head a second time.

“Well, just like you wanted Grandmom to help you get ready for Mark’s birthday celebration, we want you to help us prepare a good meal tonight,” she said. She explained to Jonathan how some people come to the Loaves and Fishes Café because they don’t have enough money to buy food and prepare it at home.

Jonathan cocked his head to one side and asked, “Have we ever not had enough food to eat?” His parents exchanged a quick glance before his dad said, “Actually, yes,

son, that has happened to us.” Continuing, he added, “Once when you were almost two years old I was laid off from my job. Your mom was not working at the time and we did not have savings like we do now. I was so worried.”

“We both were worried,” his mom chimed in. It was a tough time for the young family, having to pay the rent and buy food for their growing son. “But our church helped us out, and some family members as well.”

Jonathan asked, “Did Grandmom Jennifer help you out like she helped me?” Smiling, his mom said, “Yes, she did. And she encouraged us to be hopeful. She reminded us that God can work miracles.”

Jonathan’s dad said, “Grandmom Jennifer told us that we should not sit around and feel sorry for ourselves. That we must do something for others. So we ate meals at a local shelter, similar to the Loaves and Fishes Café, and we also helped to serve meals there. We gave and we received.”

“Hmmm, I think I understand now,” Jonathan said. “So, Dad, can I help you put frosting on the cake? And I can I lick the spoon?”

“You bet,” his dad replied. “And when we get to the café, I want you to ask everyone, ‘Would you like a piece of cake?’” (From *The Girl under the Bridge* by Faye Wilson, New York: Women’s Division, the General Board of Global Ministries, The United Methodist Church, 2012, pp. 39-40.)

Close with a prayer thanking God for the wisdom of Grandmom Jennifer and for help in discerning the best way each class member can work to end poverty and bring heaven on earth. Sing “Sent Out in Jesus’ Name.”