## Inquiry in the Australian Curriculum

### Which aspects could link to service-learning?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SCIENCE</th>
<th>HISTORY</th>
<th>GEOGRAPHY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Science inquiry skills</strong>&lt;br&gt;(The shape of the Australian Curriculum: Science, May 2009)&lt;br&gt;These involve:&lt;br&gt;- Explore, be curious and wonder&lt;br&gt;- Ask questions, planning, begin to investigate&lt;br&gt;- (Conducting and critiquing investigations, collecting)&lt;br&gt;- Describe what happened&lt;br&gt;- Make and share observations&lt;br&gt;- Analyse and interpret evidence to reach valid conclusions&lt;br&gt;- Communicate findings.</td>
<td><strong>The capacity to undertake historical inquiry including skills:</strong>&lt;br&gt;(Aims and Rationale: AC)&lt;br&gt;(These involve):&lt;br&gt;- Ask relevant questions&lt;br&gt;- Critically analyse and interpret sources&lt;br&gt;- Consider context&lt;br&gt;- Respect and explain different perspectives (can debate and thinks about human values and current and future challenges)&lt;br&gt;- Develop and substantiate interpretations&lt;br&gt;- Communicate effectively</td>
<td><strong>The stages of a Geographic inquiry investigation</strong> are (reflect upon how ICT can enhance / transform thinking at each stage): (Organisation: AC)&lt;br&gt;<strong>Observing, questioning and planning:</strong> Identifying an issue or problem and developing geographical questions to investigate the issue or find an answer to the problem.&lt;br&gt;<strong>Collecting, recording, evaluating and representing:</strong> Collecting information from primary and/or secondary sources, recording the information, evaluating (information) for reliability and bias, and representing it in a variety of forms.&lt;br&gt;<strong>Interpreting analysing and concluding:</strong> Making sense of information gathered by identifying order, diversity, trends, patterns, anomalies, generalisations and cause-and-effect relationships, using quantitative and qualitative methods appropriate to the type of inquiry and developing conclusions. It also involves interpreting the results of this analysis and developing conclusions.&lt;br&gt;<strong>Communicating:</strong> Communicating the results of investigations using combinations of methods (written, oral, audio, graphical, visual and mapping) appropriate to the subject matter, purpose and audience.&lt;br&gt;<strong>Reflecting and responding:</strong> Reflecting on the findings of the investigation; what has been learned; the process and effectiveness of the inquiry; and proposing actions that consider environmental, economic and social factors.</td>
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SERVICE LEARNING – Building a Culture

Ms Jodie Hoff – Principal – Lutheran Ormeau Rivers District School, LORDS
Dr Meg Noack – Executive Officer Curriculum, LEQ

Elective Session 4H
11am Wednesday 2 October
OUTLINE
During our session we seek to explore and expand our insights about service learning in four important ways:

1. **Lutheran Vision and Values**
   The importance of:
   a) Understanding School Culture

2. **Recognising the connections between Service AND Learning**
   a) What is Christian Service?
   b) What might learning look like when it is connected to service?
   c) A world-wide movement

3. **Building Links**
   a) To the curriculum
   b) To agencies and church
   c) At home
   d) LEA / Regions

4. **Different Community Contexts and the Human Story**

Getting Practical
Models of Service in a
   a) school setting
   b) Real-life exemplars
a) UNDERSTANDING SCHOOL CULTURE

Service Learning and MUST grow from a Lutheran school’s vision and values – otherwise it is always an ‘add-on’.

Sharing one school’s story - LORDS

Lutheran Education highlights service as a value. We encourage our students to contribute to communities by being:

- Self directed, insightful investigators and learners
- Discerning, resourceful problem-solvers and implementers
- Adept, creative producers and contributors
- Open, responsive communicators and facilitators
- Principled, resilient leaders and collaborators
- Caring and steadfast supporters and advocates

(A Vision for Learners and Learning, 2006)

In Summary

School Culture and service are linked. School leadership matters

“Lutheran schools seek to nurture individuals…while living in community and reflecting the characteristics of God through core values…(including)… service”

(A Vision for Learners and Learning, 2006)
a) WHAT IS CHRISTIAN SERVICE?

What picture is in our head when I say the word ‘service’? “A metaphor for service is”…

The origins of Service emerging from the Christian

A unique feature of God of the Old Testament…

- “Realise how significant it is that the Biblical writers introduce God as “A father to the fatherless, a defender of widows” (Psalm 68:4-5)

- God of the Bible stood out from other gods … the God of the Old Testament was on the side of the powerless, and of justice for the poor… (Timothy Keller: “Generous Justice”)

- Israel was charged to create a culture of social justice for the poor and vulnerable because it was the way the nation could reveal God’s glory and character to the world. (Deuteronomy 4: 6 – 8)

Continuing this culture in the New Testament – THE GOSPELS

- Stories about Jesus with people who were rejected by society at that time feature in the Gospels (the unclean, the ill, culturally marginalised, rejected by scandal)

- Teaching about an attitude of service is mentioned often (e.g widow’s mite) and followed by actions (e.g. washing of Disciples feet)

“He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives, sight for the blind and freedom for the oppressed”

Luke 4:18

Jesus [in the story of the Good Samaritan] made his case… your neighbour is anyone in need….
On-going references in Letters to early Christian Communities

- **Support** the poor and needy features (Acts 10: 31; Acts 20:35);
- When specific **need** is mentioned, the Christian community responds (Paul: 2 Corinthians 8: 1 - 5)
- **Deacons** were appointed to attend to this (Acts 6: 1 – 6)
- The communities were called to live a life of **service** to their neighbours (Eph 2: 8-10)

**In Summary**

**Christian Service is ‘in response’**…

“We can receive this ‘ultimate, radical neighbour-love as a gift from God because of what God has done through Jesus. Our response is to ‘start to be the neighbours that the Bible calls us to be’.

(Timothy Keller: “Generous Justice”)

**Service is linked to our understanding of vocation**…

“The picture is of a vast complex network of human beings with different talents and abilities. Each serves the other. Each is served by others. A network of inter-dependence.”

(Vieth: p. 71 – 77)

**Service is about relationships**

‘Service’ is broadly focused on our relationship to:

- the needy / the rejected / the marginalised (where ever they are located)
- Those with particular needs (within our family / school / community / global-village life)

**Christian Service is… an attitude of the heart**

It is my / our response to God who gives generously and who challenges us / me…

It becomes ‘part and parcel’ of my / our identity…

- Using our eyes and ears and brain
- Driven by our heart...
- Before moving our hands and feet
- We notice needs. We listen carefully.
- We examine our motives. We strive to hear the silent ‘voice’.
- We seek to be culturally alert and astute before we act
Where does ‘service’ fit in a Lutheran School?

Our sense of vocation (and servant-hood) shapes all learning
“Learning [shaped by the idea of vocation] will be closely connected to service. Theory must be critiqued by a doing that serves.”

(Christenson, T. The gift and task of Lutheran higher education (p. 129))

Service is not an option – it is a ‘given’
“Lutheran schools need to prepare all children, girls and boys, the rich and poor, the intellectually gifted and the intellectually challenged for that of service.”

(Bartsch, M. Why a Lutheran School? p. 124)

Service is the most enduring life-long quality – and counter-cultural
“Lutheran schools also have to deal with the challenge in a contemporary educational thinking which links education closely with the preparation for the work place but with emphasis strongly on individual benefit rather than service to society”

(Bartsch, M. Why a Lutheran School? p. 124)

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**15** For it is all for your sake, so that as grace extends to more and more people it may increase thanksgiving, to the glory of God.

2 Corinthians 4:15 (NIV)

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In this life we cannot do great things. We can only do small things with great love.

(Mother Teresa)

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Service learning is an educational strategy which intends to turn the community into a classroom and the classroom into a gateway to real life experiences.

(Ausyouth, 2003)

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Not one of our graduates will save the world. Not even all of them together will save the world. Not even all Christian educators acting in concert could save the world. But every day, the school provides the environment for the spark of justice to be set afire in the young and for the passion for justice to take root as the single seed that bears a harvest. And who knows where or when that spark will light of when the seed will bear its fruit?

(Fr Frank Brennan: ACLE III Conference, 2008)

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“We have a responsibility to equip students with the knowledge, skills and values to participate purposefully in a globalized world.”

(Lutheran Schools’ representatives at ISQ’s 2013 Internationalisation Forum)
b) THE LEARNING COMPONENT

What might learning look like when it's connected to service?

The importance of intentional and planned learning

- Many initiatives can be implemented in school by ‘experimenting / trialing / exploring with students’ (e.g. ICT, ‘hands-on mathematics’)
- Research indicates that this change-mode is selected by a number of teachers. Change for these teachers is a mix of ‘doing and thinking’
- When implementing learning AND service, there is a human implication. We are working with others and connecting with their lives... there is potential for a negative impact. An ‘experimental’ change-mode is not appropriate for implementing a service learning program in schools.

The importance of Service Learning within the curriculum

- The expectation is that Service Learning is embedded in all curriculum areas
  - Each and every teacher has a responsibility to ask “how can my learning area contribute to Service Learning in our school” and have a dedicated unit / learning focus e.g.
    - English – advocacy as persuasive writing
    - Literature Study – issues focus
    - Science – “How does this scientific endeavour impact on poor communities?”
    - Geography (http://www.geogspace.edu.au) Use resources on geogspace such as using your computer to discover an unequal world

As we build Service Learning into key curriculum “we have to be careful that we don’t see them as ‘the problem’ and us coming in with ‘the solutions’. We must emphasise mutuality and relationships” Stephanie Maher – Grace Lutheran College
c) SERVICE-LEARNING: A WORLD-WIDE MOVEMENT

Service Learning is part of a world-wide movement aiming to promote civic-mindedness and empathy, as well as to enhance learning. It features in countries such as the United States that claims 1 million student participants.

Defining Service Learning

Service Learning:
- Is a pedagogy that combines academic objectives and service objectives through intellectual enquiry, action and reflection
- Enriches the learning experience and teaches civic responsibility
- Strengthens communities by focusing on real community problems
- Aims to equally transform the learner and the recipient of the service

Impact on student agency

Students see themselves as:
- Active, positive contributors to society
- Empowered with a voice (and hands and feet)
- People of value now (not just potentially in the future)

An alternative to deferred citizenship

“Learning about democracy and citizenship when I was at school, with a bit like reading holiday brochures in prison”

Derry Hannam, English school inspector and advisor for the Council of Europe on Education for Democratic Citizenship

Much is made of the difference between community Service and Service Learning.

The National Service-Learning Clearinghouse describes the difference thus:

“Community Service participants volunteer for the primary or sole purpose of meeting the needs of others and bettering the community as a whole. Young people engaged in high quality service-learning meet the needs of their communities while increasing their academic achievement.

Service-learning students also take part in structured time to investigate community needs. Overall, the most important feature of effective service-learning programs is that students engage equally with learning and service and reflect on their intersections.

www.servicelearning.org/faq

Service-Learning (the world-wide movement) assumes a local service focus and a very strong curriculum focus
3. BUILDING THE LINKS

There are three types of links to consider, to enhance Service Learning practices in the classroom - links to the Australian Curriculum, links to the Lutheran church and agencies and local links.

Links to the curriculum
There are exciting and innovative areas that the Australian Curriculum provides:

- **The Cross Curriculum Priorities:**
  - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and histories
  - Australia’s engagement with Asia
  - Sustainability

- **General Capabilities** – eg. Building Intercultural Understanding, Critical and Creative Thinking

- Connecting and inter-weaving service into specific learning disciplines

Links to Lutheran Church and Agency Partners
For Service Learning, experiences at home and abroad - think about church connections and think about local community connections.

- **LEA and the LEA web-site**
- **Lutheran Education REGIONAL activities (e.g. Soirees / Networking)**
- Mission International (formerly Board of Mission)
- ALWS (Australian Lutheran World Service)
- Finke River Mission / North Queensland Mission
- Lutheran Community Care (LCC)
- Regional Church Agencies (e.g Lutheran Youth Queensland)
- Local or other District Lutheran Congregation
- Local Christian Community (e.g. Blue Care Service, ‘rostered-on’ at Breakfast Club with the local state school Chaplain)
- Other Lutheran Schools

Local links
- Is about responding to those ‘in need’
- May connect to needy ‘close to home’
- Ask ‘what is our local Lutheran Congregation doing? What is our Christian community doing?’
- Local Councils and other agencies (e.g. connecting Home Economics and local community food preparation)

Hold the tension of knowing ‘what you want’ and responsively listening to ‘partner wisdom’. All teachers are responsible for Service Learning and discovering the possibilities for their learning area. Consider where external agencies can enrich by partnering with Lutheran Church agencies.

For the needy shall not always be forgotten, and the hope of the poor shall not perish forever.

CHRISTIAN STUDIES: CL (Christian Living)

- **Key idea 1** Christians believe that God creates people to live in relationship with him and with each other
- **Key idea 2** Christians all called to love and serve all people
- **Key idea 3** Christians have a responsibility in and for the world
4. DIFFERENT COMMUNITY CONTEXTS AND THE HUMAN STORY

There is a pressing need to grow our cross-cultural knowledge and understanding. It means moving beyond our comfort zones - both at home and abroad.

Partner agencies / groups have expertise but, as educators of the 21st century, the Australian Curriculum places increasing demands upon us to recognize and engage with diverse community contexts in our own country and neighbourhood. We need to be listening deeply to the human story ‘beyond stereotypes and labels’. We are likely to be confronted by:

- Linguistic complexities
- Diverse cultural rules: How do we navigate ‘new’ situations?
- Limitations of our own cultural world-view that also impacts upon our actions

Linguistic complexities complicate communication

- How do we obtain a translator? How do we build effective and honest communication? How can we be sure we hear multiple voices ‘on the ground’?

Cultural and ethnic rules: How do we navigate ‘new’ situations at home and abroad?

- In which circumstance would I not offer to shake a man’s hand when being introduced? How would I signal I want someone to come to me? How do I dress when travelling in a predominantly Muslim culture? Why do I not pass anything with my left hand in Asia?

In fact, our innocent bloopers may be humorous, embarrassing and even offensive.

Key educational documents outline our responsibilities

- **Delors (1996)** “Learning: the Treasure within: one of the four pillars of education “learn to live together”

- **MCEETYA (2008)** Melbourne Declaration: We need to develop an “Appreciation of / respect for social, cultural and religious diversity and a sense of global citizenship”. Included was the need to be ‘Asia literate’ (p.5)

- **ACARA (2012)** Intercultural Understanding focuses on “Sharing, creating and contesting different cultural perspectives and practices and support the development of critical awareness of processes of socialization and representation that share and maintain cultural differences” (p. 84 – 96) (from ISQ summary: Internationalisation Workshop 2013)

“**There is no way a white person should feel powerful in a country like Timor. Our good intentions are not good enough.**”

(Presenter from Radford College at DAN Conference 2013)
5. Getting Practical

a) PRINCIPLES GUIDE OUR THINKING

To establish a set of service learning principles for your school, you may be guided by LEA rationale documents on the LEA website (Service Learning: What is it?)

Principles should include conversations and reflection about:

- How to best understand the complexity culture brings…
- How to educate for a global world…
- How to plan ALL excursions and connections (locally and abroad) in a culturally sensitive manner

ALWS has written an excellent set of principles that appear / will appear on the LEA Service Learning website. A summary of key principles include:

- Ensure you have extensive knowledge of the organization you partner
- A key policy approach: nothing about us, without us
- Sustainability with an empowerment and advocacy approach
- Consider the impact and message that accompanies ongoing handouts and gifts of money

(A handout of these principles has been included in your Service Learning packs).

Consider the type of Service

- Formal or informal
- Formal may include direct service, indirect service, advocacy and research

In Summary

Cultural preparation is imperative

We need to consider options, weigh all of the consequences, explore all of the complexities of a situation before acting. “Calculated, strategic service is more astute (than naïve service)”. It examines the factors contributing to the dilemmas of human pain, considers long term effects and proceeds with strategic selectivity”… (and sensitivity)

Dissident Discipleship: David Augsburger (2006)

6. Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to your faith; 7 if service, in our serving; the one who teaches, in his teaching; 8 the one who exhorts, in his exhortation; the one who contributes, in generosity; the one who leads, with zeal; the one who
5. Getting Practical

b) GETTING PRACTICAL

Models of Service: (Margaret Richmond)

- Service Learning is embedded in a particular learning area in a specific year (e.g. LORDS: English and Geography)
- Service Learning ‘rich task’ (e.g. State School Exemplar: Year 3 / 7 Clean Up Australia Day)
- As a single, stand alone course – elective or compulsory (e.g. Independent School Exemplar: Cert Course “English as a Second Language”)
- A whole-of-school approach in which each year works on a component of a project / a particular ‘field of need’
- An inter-school approach
- Have a ‘service event’ that individual teachers then link to their curriculum (e.g. Victorian state high school exemplar)
- Other

Summarising thoughts

- Sustainability of relationships [and projects] with partners is vital
- Explicitly map (and check) the learning. Take care to frame and re-frame what you do.
- Return to our Lutheran Ethos and our school culture
- View your work in this field as part of a ‘bigger-whole’
- Intercultural Understanding and a Servant Heart are vital.
- Clarity and precision around the language we use aids cultural sensitivity
- Expert teachers are learning teachers

In this day and age, teachers should be seen as the lead-learners”
Nicole Gregory - Grace Lutheran College.

Life-wide learning is as important as life-long learning.
John Trippet, Peace Lutheran Primary School, Gatton

Learning lives on after the service is completed
Tracey Dalton, LEQ
Johari Window
I care when I...

Look after things

- Take care of myself
- Keep the environment clean and don’t waste things
- Help people when they are hurt or having difficulties
- Work and play safely

Support others

- Encourage people
- Respect differences
- Listen to and take an interest in people

Speak up

- Say ‘no’ to bullying and putdowns
- Talk about ways I can be a good example to others
- Remind people of how they should treat others

Caring, steadfast supporter and advocate
© 2006 Lutheran Education Queensland
I am a caring supporter when I...

Support others

- Work together with others to demonstrate care
- Identify and practice ways of caring for my environment
- Work and play safely

Look after things

- Am sensitive to my needs and those of others
- Respect and try to understand people who think, behave or believe differently from me
- Help others achieve their goals
- Listen carefully to others

Speak up

- Care for and protect people from bullying, nastiness and putdowns
- Don’t give up on important things
I am a caring and steadfast supporter when I...

Am sensitive
- Show care and concern for people and environments
- Identify and decide on appropriate plans of action
- Consider my own and others’ safety in a variety of situations
- Am sensitive to the needs and feelings of others
- Am considerate of how issues and events affect others
- Learn more about, respect and understand different people
- Am aware of issues and problems locally and globally

Support others
- Help others to achieve and succeed
- Encourage and inspire others to act fairly and compassionately

Speak up
- Defend my own point of view and respect the right of others to their point of view
- Speak up for others who are treated unfairly or who are unable to speak for themselves
- Have the courage to match what I say and do with what I believe is important
I am a caring and steadfast supporter when I... 

Look after things
- Look out for my mates
- Follow safety procedures
- Choose appropriate actions to show care

Am sensitive
- Respect and am considerate of differences in beliefs, characteristics and circumstances
- Seek first to understand, then to be understood
- Consider my own beliefs and values and how they shape my actions

Support others
- Develop an awareness of important issues at local, national and global levels
- Listen to and ask reflective questions to help others develop their understandings

Speak up
- Stand up for what I believe in while respecting the views of others
- Resist peer pressure where my own beliefs and values are at stake
- Defend others when they are negatively pressured by peers

© 2006 Lutheran Education Queensland
I am a caring and steadfast advocate when I...

Act with consideration
- Encourage and assist others to do their best
- Recognise the value of each person
- Care for those in need

Am steadfast
- Am courageous in defending what I believe
- Persevere with things that are important

Am sensitive
- Seek to understand those who are not like me
- Thoughtfully consider my neighbours

Advocate
- Willingly stand up for the rights of others while considering my responsibilities
Caring, steadfast, supporter and advocate

Caring
- Carefully consider the impact of my words and actions on myself and others
- Choose appropriate actions to help others
- Critically consider issues and conditions influencing my and others' health and well being

Steadfast
- Am courageous and encourage what is worthy, even when others criticise my point of view
- Recognise the intrinsic value of others
- Guide and inspire others to create, develop, and attain personal visions and goals
- Demonstrate sensitivity to myself and others, respecting differences in beliefs, attributes and circumstances

Supporter
- Willingly stand up for what is right and just
- Work with imagination and resourcefulness to advocate understanding and compassion
- Take a stand/maintain a position on complex issues, based on my moral and ethical framework

Advocate
PREPARING FOR SERVICE-LEARNING - A REFLECTION TOOL FOR STAFF

Below are a number of questions to ask that will assist teachers to determine areas for further preparation for the development of a service-learning culture...

If answering yes to 5–7 questions in each domain, ground very fertile for service learning culture or may be already embedded; yes to 3–4 questions - ground quite fertile or service learning culture may be already developing; yes to 1–2 means further ground work required as prerequisite to understand and implement service learning.

HEART FOR OTHER - PERSONAL:
1. Have sustained friendships with people of differing ethnic background, culture, religion?
2. Worked locally to connect with people who experience hardship in some way?
3. Been an active supporter/leader of appeals/projects where suffering and hardship occurs? Have advocated amongst friends/community around a particular issue of need?
4. Travelled to hear guest speakers/seek TV programs that address issues/hardships in other places/locally?
5. Subscribe to/read literature to grow my personal understanding of others?
6. Have chosen to visit/planning to visit a 3rd world country and stay(ed) in local accommodation/use(d) local transport etc.? Have developed cross-cultural/ cross-language-listening skills to endeavour to understand context when travelling?

PHILOSOPHY OF STUDENT-CENTRED LEARNING - PERSONAL:
1. Have purposely planned opportunities for students to make genuine choices about projects and learning?
2. Have fostered/would be prepared to foster student-led advocacy no matter where it may lead? Actively encouraged and nurtured student leadership?
3. Actively and in an ongoing manner, encouraged students to monitor their own learning and set learning goals and negotiated learning with students?
4. Have processes embedded in class culture that provides students with a voice, and a respectful process of listening to one another and of gently yet rigorously allowing students to critique one another's ideas?
5. Developed a wide array of pedagogical strategies to foster and encourage student reflection?
6. Work hard to embed real-life contexts into units of work?
7. Consider the LQL's as vital for establishing aspirational vision for learners beyond 'knowing the stuff'.

UNDERSTANDING OF LOCAL COMMUNITY (NEEDS) - PERSONAL/COMMUNAL:
1. Is personally actively involved in a community project/action group beyond school?
2. Has a network of local friends/acquaintances that provide information about diverse groups in the community?
3. Is connected to long-time residents in the area in some way or another? Mixes in the community in a cross-generational manner?
4. Connects well with parents of the school and demonstrates active listening abilities?
5. Can articulate the positives and negatives of local community and has networks that can does advocate for particular local needs?
6. School is recognized as a leader of community values and through its involvement locally?
7. School/class adopted a local project of some kind that aids the local community in some way?

WHOLE OF SCHOOL APPROACH - COMMUNAL:
1. Student leadership is encouraged to participate actively in the general life of the school?
2. Is the whole school actively supporting service and service learning in a holistic, coordinated manner? Or is it individualistic and haphazard?
3. Principal/school leader(s) speaks often about service and its importance and links to school motto, mission and values?
4. All year levels have at least one service project and actively advocate for their project and this is coordinated at a school level also?
5. You can name leaders at every level/juncture of the school who work to bring service to the fore in a coordinated way?
6. There is a service-learning peak group? It consists of students as well as teachers and communicates to the whole school effectively?
7. There is a keenness to read the literature and understand the implications of service-learning in our school?
More Australians are adding a dash of volunteer work to their overseas holidays in poor countries. Between the trekking and the rafting, they are building houses in remote villages and working in orphanages.

They want to give back; they are appalled by global inequality; they seek personal fulfilment through encounters with the destitute and disadvantaged. Whatever the motive, the impulse to help is commendable. But the impact on the locals is not always beneficial.

At this time of year, students are planning - or embarking on - gap-year adventures that may combine mountain climbing with manual labour; and middle-aged professionals and new retirees are pondering how to have fun but spread goodness.

Before setting off, here is a question worth consideration: what consequences flow when an 18-year-old from Sydney's privileged suburbs goes to a village to build a house with a bunch of similar volunteers?
Given their last encounter with bricks was with their Lego set, it is possible the youngsters won’t build a sturdy house. More likely, the locals could teach them about unskilled manual labour.

Quite possibly, the young people are taking jobs from the locals. The youngsters benefit from the feel-good factor, their confidence and self-reliance grow. But manual labour is what is in abundance in the developing world. Who gains most here?

Being good is not as easy as it looks when the uninformed stumble naively into the complex world of international development. Experienced aid and development professionals are urging Australians to do their homework before they become "voluntourists". Decent impulses need to be channelled in useful ways.

The multimillion-dollar gap-year industry, for example, has come under recent scrutiny for its programs. Private operators charge hefty fees to provide the young with travel and volunteering experiences, but an ill-thought-out program can be bad for communities and for relations between rich and poor countries.

A report last year from the British research body Demos said the gap-year industry could be seen as a new form of colonialism, a new way of the West exercising power in the Third World. One in five people who took one of the gap-year packages said they believed their presence in the place they visited made no positive difference to the lives of those around them, with one respondent in the study saying, "I felt that the local community could have done the work we were doing; there were lots of unemployed people there ..."

But a good program, the Demos report said, ensured the young people had relevant skills to offer and gave them opportunities to continue their work once they returned home.

Another popular way to volunteer abroad is to work in orphanages for a short stint.

Hundreds, perhaps thousands, of Australians have visited orphanages in Cambodia and Bali, bringing gifts, money and their skills. So common is this practice that it now has its own name, "orphanage tourism". But are the children helped or harmed by the stream of tourists who move in and out of their lives?

Friends-International, a Cambodia-based development organisation, has called on tourists to stop the practice. "Orphanages must be a safe place for children, not a tourist destination," it says. It claims the number of orphanages has proliferated in order to milk tourists of money; in Cambodia they are a booming business.

An official study showed just a quarter of the children in the orphanages had lost both of their parents. The most unscrupulous operators sent children to tourist haunts to do song and dance routines in order to lure rich Westerners to the institutions. A recent BBC radio documentary showed some of the orphanages in Bali were effectively rackets, exploiting the children and tourists alike.

Child development experts, such as the South African professor Linda Richter, co-author of the paper AIDS Orphan Tourism, have pointed out the psychological damage on very young children of a string of broken attachments with short-term caregivers passing through their orphanage.

A volunteer may believe her or his contribution to be valuable but, in the wider scheme, it may be harmful.

We don't allow a parade of volunteers in Australian child-care centres. Apart from safety concerns, we know children need to form secure attachments to regular carers. Volunteers are needed abroad but mainly those with specific, often technical or high-level skills. Once nurses were needed, now midwife trainers are needed, for example.

Reputable organisations such as Australian Volunteers International respond to formal requests for skilled volunteers from organisations in developing countries. Applicants are put through a rigorous and competitive process of selection.

TEAR Australia, a Christian development and aid agency, has harnessed the enthusiasm of Australians who are demanding the overseas aid experience. It has done this by setting up educational tours of development projects to bring Australians into contact with local communities. This is less about Australians "doing" the work and more about "learning" what the locals are doing.
Some people can't empathise unless they have first-hand experience and, once touched, they become lifelong ambassadors for a fairer global economic order; they become significant donors, letter writers and lobbyists.

But, if the first-hand experience is a pit stop between climbing mountains and riding elephants, you have to wonder who is benefiting from the experience.

The volunteer might find it "awesome" at the time and be chuffed by the locals' "gratitude". But they may learn no lasting lessons about rights and justice and even, unwittingly, do more harm than good.
Are visitors allowed to just drop in and have direct access to children without supervision?

Allowing visitors to have direct contact with children can place children at risk especially when visitors are unsupervised. Good organizations have policies in place to protect children and should not allow visitors to just drop in and have access to children. Visitors to an orphanage should never be left alone with children or allowed to take the children away from the orphanage unattended. Allowing visitors to the centre may result in a pattern of grooming whereby children begin to trust all visitors to the centre, this makes children vulnerable to abuse from visitors with ill intentions. Background checks should be conducted for all staff and volunteers interacting with children. Orphanages who allow people to walk in off the street with no background checks and interact with children are not protecting the children in their facility.

Are children required to work or participate in securing funds for the orphanage?

Children residing in orphanages should in no way be used to promote or secure funds for the orphanage. Children should never be used as a promotional tool, be required to dance, sing, to make or sell products as a way of increasing revenue for the orphanage. This is child exploitation, child labour and violates children's rights and personal safety. By forcing children to engage in revenue raising they are being groomed to participate in the methods used for begging and street work that renders children even more vulnerable to exploitation.

Is there long-term, trained and well-supervised staff?

Children who are living in outside the family unit often have complex needs and require specialist staff to accommodate these needs. Continuity of staff is important for children to attach and bond with a single caregiver. Where possible a constant caregiver should be appointed to attend to the child's daily needs promoting consistency and secure attachments to caregivers. Supervision of staff assures that they are upholding the rights of the child and that any difficulties they encounter are met and addressed. Orphanages that rely on foreign volunteers and staff undermine children's needs for developing long term and meaningful relationships.

Are sibling groups kept together?

It is important that children are not separated from their siblings. Children should have the opportunity to live and stay in small family environments where they have the chance to bond with caregivers and their siblings. Consistency of care is important to children in creating long and lasting relationships. Remaining with siblings also allows children to stay connected to their cultural and family roots whilst they are separated from their families.

Does the orphanage have an active family reunification program?

Are orphanages actively involved in maintaining relationships with living family members so that children can rejoin their family and community? Orphanages should be encouraging community alternatives such as kinship care and foster care above institutionalized care. Orphanages should be able to demonstrate how they are actively exploring family and community care options for children residing in their orphanage. In Cambodia, the government released Minimum Standards of Care as part of its alternative care policy that explicitly states that all orphanages must actively seek family and community alternatives for children living in institutionalized care.

Is the orphanage located in the same community that the child previously lived in?

Displacement of children from their community of origin reduces the chances of the child being reintegrated into his or her community. It also causes disruption of daily routines such as continuity of education, culture and social life and ties. It is important for children to remain connected with their families and community for healthy mental and social development.

Is the orphanage set up to replicate family living or small groups?

It is important for a child's development and life after living in institutionalized care to be provided with the opportunity to learn the life skills that come from residing in a small family environment. A small family environment models essential life skills such as cooking, cleaning, how to interact with adults, managing a budget etc. These skills are essential for young adults in learning to live independently from their families. Some children living in orphanages who lack this stimulation become institutionalized and are unable to be an active participant in life outside the orphanage. Living in a small family environment gives children an opportunity to create meaningful relationships with adults and strong bonds with other children.

Does the orphanage respect and accommodate children's background and religious beliefs?
Each child has the right to practice his or her own religious and cultural beliefs. In no way should a child be persuaded or unduly pressured to practice a religion other than his or her own in line with cultural beliefs. Real and meaningful steps should be taken to ensure that a child can practice his/her own religion and cultural beliefs. This may include, but is not limited to, access to religious sites, interaction with religious and cultural leaders, and a specialized or modified diet.

Points for Schools to Consider BEFORE Entering Into an International Project/Activity

Having an international focus as part of your Service Learning program may involve a partnership with an overseas group. This may or may not involve sending students and/or teachers overseas as part of that program.

If you are wanting to incorporate this aspect into your Service Learning program, you could ask the following questions:

1. **Ensure you have extensive knowledge of the organisation through whom you are working — and this means developing a relationship with it.**

Questions to ask to gain this knowledge include:
- What is their Vision and Mission? Does this support your school’s vision and mission?
- What is the organisation’s long-term work plan? How does your project fit into this plan?
- Do they just keep on doing the same work year after year in the same place or are they empowering people so that they become self-sufficient?
- Does the organisation deal with more than just one aspect of the community (e.g. education)?
- How will your organisation be involved in long-term, sustainable change for the community in which you are helping?
- Is there transparency in relation to where your dollars go?
- Do you receive an initial budget for the project and then an acquittal showing how funds were spent?
- Do you receive financial statements including audited financial reports?
- Do you receive a copy of their Annual Report (there is a national Code of Conduct which regulates what any Australian Non-Government Organisation has to include in the contents of its Annual Report and what it should receive from overseas Non-Government Organisations receiving funds)?

If you have this information you should be able to answer all the points listed below. If you can’t answer these, you must do more checking.

2. **Does the organisation approach its work with the policy of “Nothing about Us, without Us!”?**

The significance of this approach must be instilled in students no matter what the focus of your service is, even if there is no activity/project but just learning through classroom investigation.

If students are involved in a domestic or overseas project this policy has to be applied in all the steps i.e. deciding what activity will the school undertake and the objectives; planning; organising; monitoring progress.

The people who are the focus have to be given a voice AND be listened to in all steps. The process has to be from the bottom up not from the top down.

If you follow Point 1 above, you will know if this policy is in place and that a participatory approach is in action.
In Christian Service Learning the focus should be on the beneficiary/ies and not on the students (or the school) in Australia feeling "good" because of what they are doing.

3. **Does the organisation follow a ‘Do No Harm’ approach?**

In order for your school to be sure you are doing no harm you need to know the context....cultural, political, economic, environmental.... in which the project/activity is being implemented.

Examples include:
Politically, is the government a signatory to the Declaration of Human Rights, the Rights of the Child? What are the policies in the country regarding women and girl children? Is the organisation working within government regulations with regards to education and health policies?

Very frequently, projects benefit only a few in a community i.e. often those with the loudest voices. An activity that benefits one, two or some may do harm to many.

Consider the messages in the articles **Orphanage Tourism and Hands-on Help can be Harmful** (at end of document).

4. **Are you involving students in Inclusive Development or Service?**

Is anyone being left out or is there the potential for anyone in the community to be excluded from the benefits you believe will stem from the project (consider: people living with disabilities or illness, girls, boys, the elderly, vulnerable groups within the community etc.)?

Does the organisation in general support people living with disabilities in the community? How will these people benefit from the project that you are supporting? Has the design of the project considered what people living with disabilities will need?

Is the organisation in general working towards justice for all people in the community? How is this demonstrated in the project you are supporting?

Is the project exclusive to one Church/religious affiliated group? Our Lutheran schools in Australia are inclusive places, so it makes sense that our support for overseas people would also be inclusive.

5. **Is sustainability the guiding principle in the approach?**

Sustainability must be a guiding factor in whatever you decide to do. In essence it means that the benefits of the supported project/activity will continue to and be of advantage to the people *after* you are no longer having your input. In reality, it is possible only when there has been capacity building of the target group.

There is too much evidence of non-sustainable projects, even when people had the best of intentions in the first place ... e.g.

- empty schools because the donors' funds came to an end;
- non-national teachers leave and there has been no agreement with the government to supply national teachers;
- the overseas source of student scholarships ceases so suddenly children no longer attend school;
- broken water points with no community water maintenance group and no community maintenance fund;
- houses made of non-local materials that are too expensive to be replaced by the local people when necessary;
- livestock given but no training in livestock care given;
- teachers who do not want to return to their communities because they have seen extremely well resourced classrooms in other countries;
- crops dying because there has been no training in the correct use of organic pesticides or herbicides etc, etc.

If your school is undertaking an in-Australia service project encourage relationship building; continuity of visits if these are essential to the effectiveness of the project; empowering of beneficiaries so that they are learning a skill, offering input and being empowered by the project not just being non-active, dependent recipients; a regular reviewing of the effectiveness (impact) of the project.

Also, as much as possible, have a group of people leading the project at the school to ensure that when one key teacher leaves, the project does not collapse or when a year level of enthusiastic hands-on students graduate, there is no incoming group to continue it.
6. Obviously if sustainability has been a guiding principle then the organisation and your project should be following an empowerment approach.

So if there is a true empowerment approach inherent in all that the organisation (and therefore your project/activity) does, you shouldn't be entering the project without an end-point planned.

If you are doing the same activity year in, year out with the same recipients, then you are not empowering your target people. You are in essence creating a dependency on your input. (Obviously, if your project involves an aged care facility, this is a different situation.)

Christian service should ensure that the givers of the service recognise the God-planted and nurtured potential, experience, wisdom and knowledge of the recipients and encourage that to blossom and be enhanced.

7. Does the organisation encourage advocacy by the people?

Hand-in-hand with empowerment goes the ability to advocate for the provision of the services which any government as the duty-bearers should provide.

Amazing results have been achieved by, for example, bonded labourers, bonded house girls and the like in countries where NGOs have focused on empowering the people and have taught them how to advocate successfully. Instead of becoming lifetime recipients of hand-outs they have been able to regain their God-given dignity by learning how to advocate peacefully and being successful in doing so.

If your project involves your school repeatedly supplying a service which the government of the country in focus should be providing, little will change. You may be thinking that there are governments that are too poor to supply the necessary services. This is very rare. The fact is that there are almost no poor governments in this world. There are poor countries with poor people. These poor countries receive money through government to government arrangements (bi-lateral) but sadly the money ends up in the pockets of the government members or in very poorly planned projects which do not meet the needs of the people.

You need to make sure that you don't take over doing things that governments should be doing to keep the cycle of them doing nothing continuing.

If you are helping to build a school, make sure that the government is working with you to provide and pay teachers. If international help does everything, they will never choose to do something.

8. Introduce students to terminology of respect and which preserves dignity.

This means teaching students to always see the person first and, as a result, acknowledge this in the terms they use.

E.g. 'people who are blind', NOT 'blind people'. 'People living with albinism, NOT 'the albinos'. Emphasis must always be on the person who has potential and has something to give those who are willing to learn from them. This means that students need to be encouraged to realise that Service Learning is not about them doing something "kind" or "good" for those other poor people. There is an element of condescension in this thinking.

See the real me, not the refugee! Is quite a clever phrase if students are working with people who are refugees.

9. Ongoing hand-outs and gifts of money don't preserve God-given dignity either in Australia or overseas.

In the special cases of emergencies and disasters funds are required but these are directed through Australian Non-Government Organisation that ensure those funds move through the correct channels.

However, if continually fund raising and handing money or gifts over to an organisation, your school is building a focus which isn't part of Service Learning.
The focus in this case is on the students who are raising money/giving gifts and not on the capacity and potential of the recipients. Also, you need to be sure your gifts are suitable to the context to which you are directing them.

E.g. Some schools support the giving of gifts at Christmas to overseas countries. Some things to consider:

- Is there a supply of safe, clean water for use of the toothbrushes that are often recommended by organisations?
- What happens when toothpaste which may be included is finished? (Poor families will not spend money on toothpaste.)
- Does the giving of clothes damage the vendors at the markets who sell second-hand clothing in the village? (Also can be applied to educational supplies, etc. – what do you do to local communities when you send ‘stuff’?)
- Is the giving of school supplies really what the students need? How do you know?
- Some organisations ask for lollies to be included as gifts. Should children be given lollies when it is often not part of their normal diet? Should ‘Westerners’ teach poor children that eating sweets is a good thing, particularly when we know they will have no access to dental care? Are ‘Westerners’ teaching poor children that ‘sweet is best’?
- Some organisations ask for items that need batteries. What happens when the batteries go flat?
- How do you know that these gifts go to the children to whom they are intended? Are any children left out? How do you know?
- How does giving the gift help in the long term? Does it change a poverty situation?

**Develop a Work Plan**

After you have considered all the points listed above, it is then a good idea draw up a Work Plan / Operational Plan for any project. This would include:

- Clearly stating how this project fits into your Service Learning program
- Objectives
- Identification of key activities
- Plan for a monitoring and evaluation process of the impact of the project

ALWS hope the above points raise some stimulating thinking and discussion prior to undertaking an international Service Learning project within your school.

**God be with you in your International Service Learning planning!**

Narelle Bowden-Ford and Susan Seng (Australian Lutheran World Service)
Solving Poverty Is Rocket Science

Christians are among America's most compassionate people. But we can do a better job responding to the complexity of poverty.

Richard Stearns [posted 7/08/2013]

Most of us at one time or another have thrown a dollar bill into the cup of a homeless man standing on a street corner. We do it because we want to help even though we know that our dollar won't really solve a problem that has much deeper causes. He'll be on the street again tomorrow because we've just treated a symptom of his condition without really addressing the cause.

As president of World Vision, I see Christians taking a similar approach to helping the poor internationally. Out of obedience to Christ, churches rightly want to respond to the desperate needs of the billions who suffer in poverty around the world and so they often reach out by feeding the hungry, caring for orphans, sending medical teams or shipping in various supplies. And these things do help to relieve suffering, but at the end of the day the poor are still poor. It's not much different than handing that dollar to the homeless man.

American Christians are astounding in their generosity. Tens of thousands of churches pour resources into feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, and building houses and orphanages. Hundreds of thousands trek to Africa, Asia, and Latin America each year on short-term mission trips desiring to offer their help.

But here's the problem: Poverty, whether here in America or abroad, is one of the oldest and most complex problems plaguing the human race. It is tangled in social, cultural, economic, political, ethnic, geographic, and spiritual factors that challenge even the most skilled experts. Simple solutions just don't work, and well-meaning amateurs can not only waste valuable resources but even cause unintended harm in their efforts.

The complex puzzle of poverty

We are right to help, but we also need to help in the right way. In the complex system of poverty, well meaning efforts can have unforeseen and unintended consequences in another area. Here's a hypothetical example. Let's say that a church here in America decided to partner with a sister church from its same denomination in Zambia. Looking to encourage its members toward missions and to respond to their needs, the senior pastor arranged for a short-term missions trip to the church in Zambia, where they helped build a school.

Over the following year the church planned a bigger project to help address the grinding poverty their brothers and sisters in Zambia faced every day. They began shipping bags of grains and beans to the Zambian church to distribute to the hungry and fundraised for a new health clinic to treat children in the area.

These actions seemed to be quite positive until problems started to arise. The rice and beans, sent regularly from the U.S. church, drove down the prices of those items in the local markets. That caused area food production to drop because farmers, who were already struggling, could no longer afford seeds and tools needed to farm their land.

The clinic also ran into trouble. During construction, the local government learned about it and decided to cancel a clinic they had planned for the area. The church mobilized doctors and nurses from the U.S. to staff the clinic, but the costs of finding and transporting these volunteer staff meant that the new clinic could only be open sporadically. When U.S. doctors were there, people were treated for malaria,
dysentery, and other diseases, but the rate of new infections stayed the same because causes had not been addressed.

Despite these challenges, more people flocked to the little church in Zambia to take advantage of the food and health programs. It grew quickly, but that growth provoked resentment. The village chief, who attended a different church in the village, resented its sudden popularity. So now the community had become divided denominationally and politically.

Finally, during a subsequent visit, one of the American visitors noticed the Zambian pastor doing suspiciously better financially. A new motorbike, a new house, and finer clothes appeared to confirm rumors that the pastor was taking some of the money the church had sent to maintain the clinic.

I often say that the complex task of helping communities is, in fact, like rocket science. We easily underestimate the intricate complexity of the puzzle of poverty—culturally, politically, socially and economically, even in a small community. The American church had intended to do good, but their initiatives had damaging and unintended consequences. Effectively addressing poverty requires cultural understanding, technical expertise, and a great deal of perseverance. It takes wisdom and experience to recognize the difference between the symptoms of poverty and its causes. The simplistic solutions brought by the well meaning church had only managed to put short term Band-Aids on problems that had much deeper causes.

In this hypothetical example, giving food to a church treated a symptom—hunger —while actually exacerbating the underlying problems of poor farming methods, and access to markets. The constant illnesses were largely due to the contaminated water supply and inadequate sanitation and hygiene. The clinic would have been more sustainable had the community petitioned its own government to provide one, or at least to provide local health workers to staff it. Involving leaders from across the community instead of just one church might have avoided the divisiveness that erupted.

A more complete solution to this community's problems would have likely required addressing the water and sanitation issues, improving agricultural methods and irrigation systems, economic development initiatives, facilitating access to markets for farmers, youth leadership development training, safe childbirth courses and AIDS and malaria prevention to name just a few of the puzzle pieces needed for this community to truly begin to overcome its poverty. Addressing all these issues simultaneously takes most American congregations way beyond their current capabilities.

**Principles for a new approach**

It is critical for the church to get this right. We have been called to preach the good news to the poor, to feed the hungry, bring water to the thirsty, care for the sick, and stand up against injustice. We have been sent to care for the widow, the orphan, the alien, and the stranger. This is the work of the Great Commandment and the Great Commission. Despite these many challenges, churches can and must equip themselves with new strategies, innovative approaches, and the expertise needed to do this work with excellence. Let me propose four principles that can help guide us toward a new approach to the puzzle of poverty.

1. **Poverty goes beyond material things.**

Because poverty is a complex puzzle with multiple inter-related causes, solutions addressing just one or two pieces of the puzzle will not fundamentally change a community trapped in poverty. We have to help a community address their challenges on multiple fronts: food, water, health, education, economic development, gender, child development and even leadership and governance.

We have to get beyond the notion that providing 'stuff' to poor communities will lift them out of poverty. No amount of material assistance will transform a community that struggles with gender inequality, domestic abuse, alcoholism, inadequate education, tribal tensions, and other cultural issues. It isn't enough to just provide things—schools, clinics, food—to a community.

I like to use the analogy of a computer's hardware and software. Poor communities do need "hardware" inputs like water wells, irrigation systems, schools, clinics and microloans. But hardware alone is not enough. Thriving communities also need good governance, committees to manage community health, water and education, savings and loan groups, business training for farmers and entrepreneurs, support groups for domestic violence victims, farmer's cooperatives, access to markets, and strategies for disease prevention, neonatal care, and child nutrition. We may also equip the community to advocate on their own behalf for better services—roads, electricity, teachers, and health workers—through their local government.

Solving the puzzle of poverty requires that we go well beyond just meeting material needs.

Working with a community through these "software" strategies provides them the foundation they will need to leverage their physical and structural assets while equipping them with the tools needed to take charge of their own development going forward.
And let’s not forget that the most powerful software tool we can offer is the human transformation that comes from a saving relationship with Jesus Christ, something no government or United Nations agency has to offer. This is why the church is potentially the most powerful change agent of all.

2. **Sustainable solutions require community ownership.**

Americans like to fix things. Often we rush into a community, diagnose its problems, and prescribe quick-fix solutions, without taking the time to listen and learn. Imagine if the roles were reversed. How would we react if a group of Christians from Africa, upon learning that our local public school system was performing poorly, came to your hometown to help? With no knowledge of our culture, our language, our children, our schools, our political processes or the real causes of the problem, they would look rather silly to us. Might we not look the same way to them?

When we seek to work cross-culturally we need to take the time to appreciate the rich knowledge and considerable assets already present in a poor community. The people of the community are created in God’s image, brimming with gifts, talents, and abilities very useful in their context. They often know a great deal about their own problems and their potential solutions.

More importantly, if we seek to solve all of their problems for them, we become more likely to create a harmful dependency than a lasting solution. This is about their community and their children’s future. We can advise, encourage, help, and provide some expertise they may lack, but the community should lead and direct its own change. We simply help make it possible. When a community takes pride and ownership of its accomplishments, the solutions are more likely to be sustainable and we can work ourselves out of a job.

3. **We may need to bring in the experts.**

When a U.S. church sets out to construct a new sanctuary building, the pastor doesn’t just post a sign-up sheet in the foyer. For big and complex projects, we hire professionals—an architect, general contractor, skilled tradesmen, and so on. There are roles for us “amateurs,” maybe hanging drywall, spackling, and painting but building a new church is not a volunteer project.

Yet, when we approach global poverty—one of the human race’s most intractable problems—we think we can somehow tackle it using only amateurs and volunteers. Churches call in experts to help with all kinds of things: music, accounting, audiovisual support, counseling, and building construction. Shouldn’t we do the same to assist us in tackling complicated problems halfway around the world? Some of this expertise may reside within our congregations, but we will likely have to look outside as well, perhaps hiring people with the necessary skills or partnering with organizations that have experience and a long track record of success. (Interested churches can start with these two umbrella groups: [InterAction](http://www.interaction.org) is a respected secular alliance of international NGOs, with many Christian members. The [Accord Network](http://www.accordnetwork.org) brings together Christian organizations working internationally.) Even when those with specific expertise provide project leadership, there will always be some valuable places where volunteers from your church can also add value.

4. **Change doesn’t happen overnight.**

Be patient and stick with it. Many poor communities have been poor for decades—even centuries. They won’t transform in two or three years. A church that commits to go deep and long with a community can experience the richness of relationships that come from doing God’s work with God’s people in a spirit of love and commitment. World Vision invests between 10 and sometimes 20 years in the communities in which we work, but the changes we see are often remarkable. Our goodbyes are often both tearful and joyful knowing that our friends can now continue their journey without us. If you don’t have an exit strategy the community you are serving may never become fully independent.

A few months ago I visited a community in Honduras where World Vision had been working for 18 years. I got a glimpse of the kingdom of God coming in all its fullness. Once poor, despairing and without hope, the community was bustling with life and optimism. Farmers had been trained and organized into co-ops to gain better access to markets. Crop yields and incomes had improved. Mothers met in groups to weigh their babies, assess their level of nutrition, and help new mothers to know how to raise healthy children. Savings groups were stimulating savings, giving loans, and boosting family incomes and assets. Children had participated in leadership development programs, attended school, and grown more involved at all levels in their community. Meetings began with prayer and Bible reading, often led by the children, and local churches had become more deeply involved in people’s daily lives. Bible study groups had sprung up—one founded by a former alcoholic and wife abuser who had found new faith when he came to receive agricultural training.

When Jesus told his followers to preach the gospel of the kingdom to the ends of the earth, he asked us to show the world a different way to live. He asked us to demonstrate His great love in powerful ways and to restore, redeem, and renew the brokenness in our world. There is no more powerful invitation to this new way of life than the tangible demonstration of that kingdom to people who have been broken, exploited, forgotten, and ignored.
Christians do a good thing when they eagerly respond to the needs they see around the world. Sometimes, though, as business guru Jim Collins has said, "the good is the enemy of the great." It is a good thing to give a meal to a hungry child, but it is a great thing to offer "life in all of its fullness" to that child, her family and her community and to do it with compassion, excellence, and the good news of the gospel.

Scripture says, "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news" (Isa. 52:7). When we offer loving help to our neighbors in ways that allow them to live full and abundant lives, we make the good news attractive and we bring substance to that oft prayed line, "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven."