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NEXT STEPS
Breaking the Cycle of Poverty in the Inner Cities and Rural Areas of South Carolina

The Department of Social Ministries, Episcopal Diocese of South Carolina, invites churches and Christ-centered social ministries of all Christian denominations throughout South Carolina to use Next Steps, at no cost, to help the poor help themselves improve their life. Next Steps can help establish communication and collaboration among churches in a community-wide effort to help the poor. Next Steps can help:

- **Churches** share information concerning the poor people (Next Steps participants) in their community whom they are trying to help make changes in their life. Sharing information avoids duplication and conserves time and effort.
- **Identify goals** and the *next steps* toward each goal for each participant to improve his/her life.
- **Identify resources** (social, education, employment, and health) in your community that participants can access to obtain help in a crisis and improve their life in the long-term.
- **Produce reports** showing how your church or ministry has improved participants' lives in terms of training, education, employment, transportation, income, housing, etc. Reports can help you win grants, if needed, to sustain your ministry financially.

We (the Department of Social Ministries) now offer a free three-hour course that can familiarize you with the Next Steps online database found at www.SouthCarolinaMinistries.org. During the course we provide you an overview of the Next Step Program. You also receive hands-on experience using the database and web-based tools to identify resources within your community to help you help participants to improve their lives. Beginning in October 2010, we will offer free Next Steps workshops, using the book "*What Every Church Member Should Know About Poverty*" published by www.ahaprocess.com. To view a 6-minute overview about the Next Step Program, please visit www.samaritanministry.com and click on the "Next Step Participant Video." We are indebted to Samaritan Ministry of Greater Washington (SMGW) and Community IT Innovators (www.citidc.com) for originally developing and deploying the Next Steps database and using it successfully for over 20 years in the Washington, DC area.

Whether your church is in a city or rural area, it is likely that people living in poverty regularly come to your doorstep seeking assistance. If they are hungry or in need of toiletries and/or clothing, you may try to meet those needs from your church pantry or, if

your church has no pantry, you may refer them to another church or a social ministry that does. If a homeless person comes to your church office asking for help in locating temporary housing, you may refer him/her to your county's department of social services (DSS) and/or a shelter, if one exists in your community. If needy people visit your church office asking to use a phone or fax, you may accommodate them. If they need help to purchase fuel for their vehicle, or money for public transportation, you may or may not be able or willing to give them cash for fear they might use it inappropriately. If they need money to pay their overdue rent and/or utilities bills, again you may refer them to DSS or a nonprofit nearby, if you are aware of one, that helps in that way. You usually do not have enough cash on hand to satisfy their needs. If this describes your church, through your compassion you are giving these persons a hand-out. However, they are caught in a vicious cycle of poverty. They need much more than a hand-out; they need a hand-up!

Next Steps is designed to help the poor person help him- or her-self *if* s/he wants to make positive changes in his/her life. These changes include setting goals and achieving the next steps toward each goal to earn a living wage, achieve sobriety, obtain healthcare, complete their education, obtain permanent housing, etc. If the churches in your community work together within the Next Step Program, poor people will learn through word of mouth, and the brochure "*Make Changes in Your Life*," that your church has a mission to serve the poor by helping them help themselves improve their life. Visit www.NextStepsSC.org to view a prototype of this brochure. You will be able to modify it to reflect exactly your community's Next Step Program. By October 2010 we hope to have that website fully populated with the free print resources, presentations, workshop materials, job descriptions, etc. that your church will need, in addition to the free Next Steps database training and workshops, to begin your own Next Step Program.

Next Steps is a wonderful ministry opportunity for church volunteers to help their poor neighbors, who want to, improve their lives materially. Next Steps is also a wonderful mission opportunity for church members to share their faith with these same neighbors and invite them to worship services and family events in their church.

For more information about Next Steps please contact Ed Dyckman, Chair, Department of Social Ministries at 843-367-5647, dyckman.edward@gmail.com, 126 West Shipyard Road Mt. Pleasant, SC 29464

Please join our email list online at www.SocialMinistries.com and receive information about social ministries events, social ministries advocacy, and/or breaking the cycle of poverty through Next Steps.