

STEPPING STONES



WALKING alongside

strengthening congregational community ministries

» Step by Step: Employment Ministries «

» GETTING STARTED

What is Employment Ministry?

An Employment Ministry is an opportunity for a church to assist individuals in discovering job skills and interests, developing new job skills, finding and sustaining work, building a steady work history, earning an income that will support themselves and their families, and recovering their self respect. Many people go to churches seeking help with basic needs: food, money, shelter, or health care because their income is insufficient to meet their daily needs. Helping them find jobs that provide adequate income will allow them to live independently.

Why is there a need?

With the unemployment rate at 7.6% and 11.6 million people in the country unemployed¹, there are people in every community who need help finding work. Almost 100,000 people who are employed are still living below the poverty level². This number is indicative of the great need that people have to find jobs that provide enough money for them to support themselves and their families.

Congregations can and should continue to provide food, money, or other goods to those in need, but these are stop-gap measures. An employment ministry is one way to provide long-term help by assisting individuals in their efforts to find and maintain adequate and sustainable employment. This ministry can help shape the community around the church by transforming it into an economically healthy community.

Stepping out in faith

Here are some “first steps” to consider before your congregation begins an employment ministry:

Participate in assessments designed to discover the scope of the need in your community and the resources your congregation possesses to meet that need.

- Research existing employment assistance programs in your community and determine what services they provide and eligibility requirements. Learn about government benefits for unemployed workers.
- Determine what services are needed and what you can provide.
- Recruit volunteers to work with employers and job seekers.
- Contact potential employers, inform them of your new ministry, and invite them to be involved.

What this ministry might look like in your church

Congregations can choose any level of involvement, but here are a few suggestions:

- Form a mentoring program to provide one-to-one help to job seekers.
- Offer a workshop to help job seekers prepare for interviews, write resumes, and fill out applications.
- Host an “employment fair” for employers from the congregation and the community to advertise job openings.
- Create a job board to allow employers to post job openings.
- Provide short-term employment opportunities at the church to help individuals build their work history and to provide a work reference.
- Form a support group for job seekers and offer encouragement and accountability as they look for and begin new jobs.



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Backpacks

The *Walking Alongside* Web site provides a Backpack of additional resources and examples for this specific ministry. Included are published articles, Web sites, selected books, testimonials and existing ministries with contact information.

Pathways

Learn from the first-hand accounts of those already engaged in this specific ministry. Plus, develop networking contacts as go-to sources to explore solutions to challenges or celebrations of successes.

Food for the Journey

A short devotional based on scripture that can be used in church bulletins, as a Moment for Mission during worship or as an introduction to a Bible study.

References

1. "Latest Numbers." United States Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics. <http://www.bls.gov>.
2. "Selected Characteristics of People at Specified Levels of Poverty in the Past 12 months." United States Census Bureau, American FactFinder. <http://factfinder.census.gov>.