

# Showing Compassion

IN FOOD INSECURITY/POVERTY

Every 4.2 minutes, a  
person in PA/SJ dies  
without Christ!

SH  W

WHO'S ON YOUR WATCH?



# Showing Compassion

IN FOOD INSECURITY/POVERTY

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# WHAT IS COMPASSION MINISTRY?

Who is God? When posed with this question the writers constantly used these words to describe God's character...

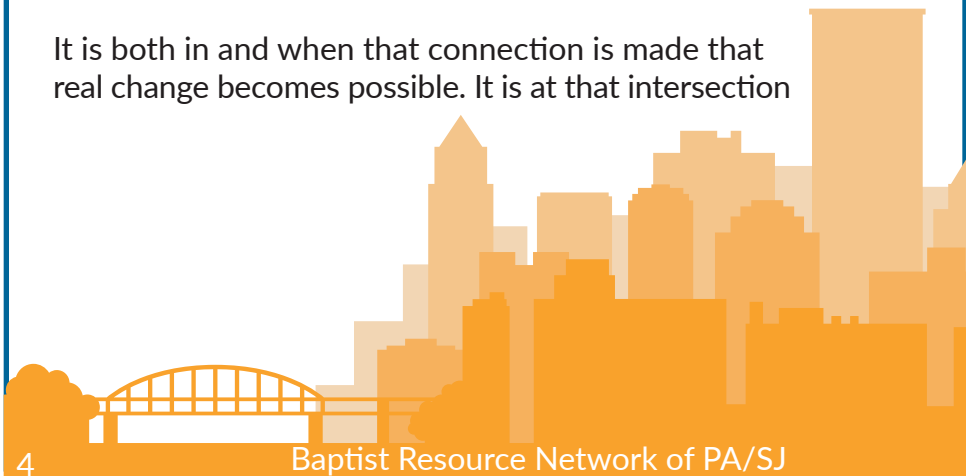
“COMPASSIONATE and GRACIOUS, SLOW TO ANGER overflowing with LOVE and FAITHFULNESS” (Exodus 34:6).

The very first word they used was compassion. Compassion was, no doubt, what so many people witnessed when they encountered the Lord Jesus. He never sent anyone away, and He always showed empathy and felt concern. Bartimeus, the blind man, would agree. So would the ailing woman who was so desperate that she grabbed at Jesus' robe in the middle of a large crowd. They are just a few of the many who knew that Jesus loved and cared for everyone.

You see, compassion isn't something that is taught; it is felt and experienced. Therefore, COMPASSION MINISTRY is so vital to each one of us and our mission to tell the world about Jesus. It is the opportunity we have been given to both declare and demonstrate the Good News of the Gospel in our neighborhoods and communities everyday.

**COMPASSION MINISTRY defined is connecting the body of Christ (the Church) to the broken and needy (the world).**

It is both in and when that connection is made that real change becomes possible. It is at that intersection



that we sense God's presence and see God's power at work in our lives and communities. Compassion Ministry at its core is us busily seeking opportunities to do what Jesus did, meeting people right where they are, and through compassion loving them to where God wants them to be.

Compassion is no doubt an emotion, but it is an emotion that arises in us to move us to action. God describes it like a mother and her love for a child in Isaiah...

*"Can a mother forget the baby at her breast and have no compassion on the child she has borne? Though she may forget, I will not forget you!" (Isaiah 49:15 NV)*

God was speaking about Israel and how they, like us so many times, had abandoned God or forgot Him. Yet, God said no matter how many times we forgot Him, His compassion for us compels Him to never forget us or abandon us.

We have people and communities all around us of hurting and broken people. Regardless of their view of God and who He is, we know His view of them. It is a view of compassion and love. It is the same way we need to look at our neighbors and look at our communities. We must see what He sees and feel what He feels so that we can respond in obedience to do what He asks.

Now is the time for us to **SHOW**  
His compassion for our communities.

THEN THE KING WILL SAY TO THOSE ON HIS RIGHT,  
“Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.”

THEN THE RIGHTEOUS WILL ANSWER HIM, SAYING,  
“Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?”

AND THE KING WILL ANSWER THEM,  
“Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.”

Matthew 25:35-40 ESV

# THREE STRATEGIC PATHWAYS IN COMPASSION MINISTRY

While there are many needs that exist in every community, we have found three strategic PATHWAYS that have the potential for us to do the most good and produce the most fruit in our region.

They are in the arenas of Education, Food Insecurity/Poverty, and Triage/Trauma. Each of these PATHWAYS have several ways that you and your church can mobilize to help meet needs in your community.

## **EDUCATION:**

There is a myriad of opportunities tied to the discipline of education, such as supporting local schools and their students, faculty and staff, teaching English to international residents, or offering computer classes for the disenfranchised.

## **FOOD INSECURITY/POVERTY:**

There are families around us who lack consistent access to enough food and other basic essentials. Churches can meet these physical needs and their spiritual needs.

## **TRIAGE/TRAUMA MINISTRY:**

When a crisis comes (whether a natural disaster, a crisis pregnancy, or abuse), churches can be on the front lines to help through disaster relief, counseling, chaplaincy, and more.



# VARIOUS GATEWAYS IN COMPASSION MINISTRY

Gateways are the doors or bridges in our lives and communities that we can walk through to see the Gospel planted and advanced. A gateway is a specific need that exists in your context that you could have the opportunity to help meet.

**Here is a sample list of 50 possible gateways that exist in many communities:**

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 1. Housing  | 26. Education                              |
| 2. Single Parents                                 | 27. Gender Identity                        |
| 3. Life Controlling Issues                        | 28. LGBTQ+ Community                       |
| 4. Youth  | 29. Literacy                               |
| 5. Disaster Relief                                | 30. Tutoring/After-School Programs         |
| 6. Senior Citizens                                | 31. Child Care                             |
| 7. Homebound Seniors/Disabled                     | 32. Mental Health Counseling               |
| 8. Veterans                                       | 33. Biblical Manhood & Husbandry           |
| 9. First Responders                               | 34. Hospice                                |
| 10. Teachers                                      | 35. Life Skills                            |
| 11. Special Needs Families                        | 36. Financial Counseling                   |
| 12. Health Care Workers                           | 37. Micro-Relief-Temporary Housing         |
| 13. Poverty                                       | 38. Transportation                         |
| 14. ACES Initiative from Dept. of Education & CDC | 39. Women's Shelters                       |
| 15. Premarital Couples                            | 40. Homeless Shelters                      |
| 16. Foster Families                               | 41. College Students/Campuses              |
| 17. Adoptive Families                             | 42. New Residents                          |
| 18. Homeless Families/Children                    | 43. Sports Leagues/Recreation              |
| 19. Displaced Families                            | 44. Small Business Owners                  |
| 20. Addiction/Recovery                            | 45. Section 8 Housing                      |
| 21. Suicide Prevention                            | 46. Incarcerated and Their Families        |
| 22. Prisoner Re-Entry                             | 47. Crisis Pregnancy                       |
| 23. GED   | 48. Job Placement                          |
| 24. ESL Classes                                   | 49. Thrift Store/Food Pantry               |
| 25. Immigration Resettlement                      | 50. Neighborhood Events/Community Calendar |





# HOW DO I KNOW WHICH MINISTRY GOD CALLING ME TO DO?

You know God is tugging at your heart to do ministry, but what is His specific calling for you and your church?

Using the acronym, EMERGE, you can discover how He wants to use you!

**E**

EXPERIENCE different kinds of ministries & opportunities

**M**

MEET the needs you see all around you

**E**

ENGAGE God through prayer and scripture to discern His will

**R**

RESPOND to God's direction for your life and mission

**G**

GIVE time for God to move in your ministry and mission

**E**

EVALUATE your joy and passion as you serve in this ministry

# THE FOOD INSECURITY/ POVERTY PATHWAY:

This pathway is one of the most serious issues facing many of our communities and families daily. An estimated 24,000 people die daily from hunger-related diseases. Poverty and food insecurity are very complex issues and can be influenced by lack of jobs, access to quality education, social injustice, and poor infrastructure. One of the main causes is the absence of fathers in the household. Statistics tell us that households where the fathers are absent are four times more likely to experience poverty and hunger.

We, the church, should run towards poverty-stricken and hungry people, not away from them. Our involvement is and should always be rooted in the character of God, a compassionate and loving God. Countless passages in Scripture identify God's deep affection for the poor, the social outcast, and the sojourner. Here are just a handful:

- Our God is the God who *"will deliver the needy who cry out, the afflicted who have no one to help. He will take pity on the weak and the needy and save the needy from death. He will rescue them from oppression and violence, for precious is their blood in his sight"* (Psalm 72:12-14, NIV).
- *"Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute. Speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy"* (Proverbs 31:8-9, NIV).
- *"Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due, when it is in your power to act. Do not say to your neighbor, 'Come back tomorrow and I'll give it to you'—when you already have it with you"* (Proverbs 3:27-28, NIV).

As Christians, we care about the poor and hungry first and foremost because we serve a God who cares.



Below are some ministry opportunities to display compassion in the strategic pathway of food insecurity/poverty:

**COMMUNITY GARDENS:** Community gardens are shared plots of land where members of the community can work together to grow, maintain and reap fresh vegetables and herbs.

**FOOD PANTRIES/FOOD DISTRIBUTION:** Churches can offer or partner with food pantries, soup kitchens and shelters to ensure that nutritious food is available to families in need year-round. They can host food drives throughout the year, either at their church or at designated community spaces. Through these interactions, churches can share the Good News of the Gospel.

**FREE YARD SALES/MARKETS:** Churches can get into the rhythm of offering an annual FREE yard sale or “FREE Market” with household items, toys, and clothes freely given to underprivileged communities. Church members may gather supplies from their own homes and/or invite their neighbors to share items no longer needed. During Christmas, churches may host toy drives to help minister to their community’s families.

**THRIFT STORES/CLOTHING DRIVES:** Churches may assist people with basic needs of clothing and household items through thrift stores full of donations from church members. Churches can host occasional drives for winter supplies, business clothes, or even prom dresses for teens.

**WORKSHOPS/CLASSES:** Church members may host workshops and classes to help community members develop skills, such as computer skills or resume writing, essential for their advancement. Other classes can include debt-management, couponing, living on a budget, and more. Churches also may opt to help underprivileged families learn of the resources available to assist them, and offer their support in applying successfully.



# MINISTRY PROCESS

Compassion Ministry is vital for every follower of Jesus and His church. It is our opportunity to both share and show the love of Christ. Never forget that Compassion Ministry isn't just taught to our churches or communities, but it is something that should be experienced together. There are three keys to having an effective Compassion Ministry in any community.

**Create Opportunities:** Look around your community and see where there are opportunities for you to bring the power of the Gospel to bear.

**Connect People:** Connection is the catalyst that unleashes the movement of the Holy Spirit in both the lives of the church and the community.

**Cultivate Relationships:** Relationships are essential to the success of the movement. Relationships take time to cultivate and may require some sacrifices along the way. Look for ways to build those relationships and partnerships so that you can see the transformation happen.

So, what's next? How do I move from being just located in a specific community to becoming an active presence in that community?

## THERE ARE FOUR STAGES TO SEEING THIS HAPPEN:

### DISCOVERY STAGE:

This is the stage when you and your leaders look around, look within, and look up so that you can go out. Look around your community and discover what are the particular needs that exist. Look for the greatest areas of brokenness you see and lean into them and see what you discover. Now take the time to look within your church and see what resources you have to help meet those needs. Ask the key questions and leaders what they



think, see, and feel about what you've discovered. Then take the time to look up to God and pray for His wisdom and direction on taking the next step.

### **DIALOGUE STAGE:**

This is the stage when you take the time to meet with key people in your community and your church. This is the time to listen and learn from those community leaders of what the specific needs are and how you could help serve and assist them. Then begin the process of enlisting leaders in your church and community to help you as you prepare to be a difference maker. You will also need to equip and train any of the leaders, so they feel confident on what their role is in meeting the need.

### **DECISION STAGE:**

This is the stage where you take all that you have learned up to this point and begin to make some specific decisions on the direction you feel led to go. It is important in this stage to remember that small steps are much better than big steps as you move towards helping meet any need. Consistency and being able to deliver what is promised goes a long way in establishing strong relationships.

### **DEPLOYMENT STAGE:**

This is the most fun stage of all. This is where you begin to engage and start your journey of bringing the hope of the Gospel to your community. You take those steps you have prepared for and begin to bring the light to the brokenness. Always evaluate what you do so that you can learn, adjust, and grow as you serve. We suggest beginning with short-term goals and commitments so that you can see and evaluate any progress you make.

*WHATEVER YOU DO, do it from the heart, as something done for the Lord and not for people, knowing that you will receive the reward of an inheritance from the Lord. You serve the Lord Christ (Colossians 2:23-24).*

# DISCOVERY:

## FOOD INSECURITY/POVERTY:

Below are some questions to prompt your discovery of your chosen compassion ministry opportunity (such as, community gardens, food distribution, food pantries, free yard sales, thrift stores, and specialized training).

What is the brokenness that you see or are aware of in your community concerning this pathway?

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How can the Gospel be the Good News to that brokenness?

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What are the active related organizations in your community?  
(List schools, other ministries, etc.)

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Who is being served (and not being served) by these organizations?

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Who are the gatekeepers (leaders, officials, decision-makers) of those organizations? As appropriate, list the names and contact information for those you'd like to meet.

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What communication channels exist for you to connect with the organization to initiate ministry? (List phone numbers, websites, social media, and email addresses.)

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What are the opportunities for you to build bridges and meet needs in this pathway? Of the above organizations, which could use your church's assistance?

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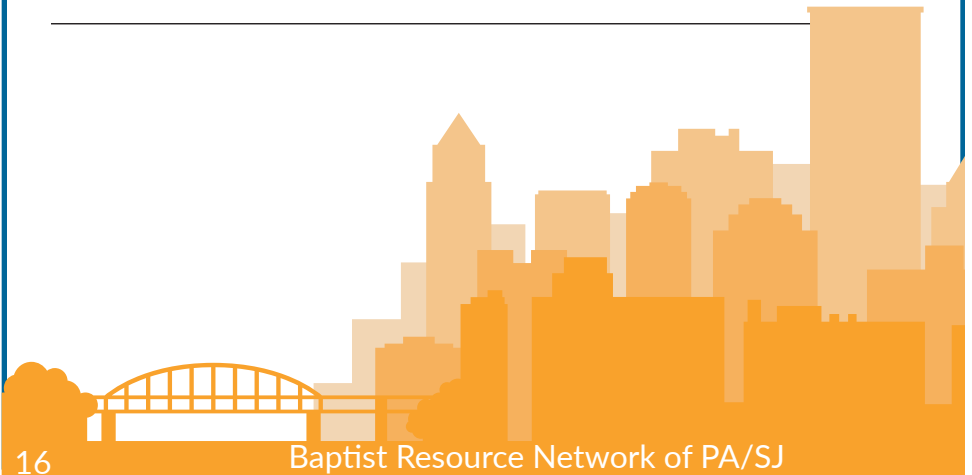
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Are there any connections or open doors already established that your church can leverage with these organizations?

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What challenges or obstacles can you identify that might prevent you or your church from engaging in this ministry?

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How much time are you willing to commit to provide the assistance required?

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What resources would you need?

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What is your next step?

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## INTERVIEWS

### MICHELE PILLA, WHOLESOME RICHES

Wholesome Riches is a compassion ministry led by Michele Pilla, a former Camden school teacher who now serves underprivileged communities with food distribution and life skills training. Pilla's husband Matt is pastor of Keystone Fellowship, South Jersey, which meets in Blackwood, N.J.

Veteran's Memorial Family School in Camden was one of the first schools Pilla engaged in preparing weekend bags of foods after she discovered many students were coming back to school hungry on Mondays.

Since that time, her ministry has grown to include eight other schools and access to all 25 schools in the Camden City school district. The weekend food distribution has grown into regularly scheduled food giveaways for the whole family at multiple schools. Out of the relationships made, there are now several family classes that participants can attend to help them advance in various areas. Because of Wholesome Riches' demonstration of compassion, they are permitted to share the Gospel with their participants.

"God has graciously opened up the door time and time again," Pilla said, explaining that they have served thousands of people already. "Last year, we served 18,000 people, and this year, we expect to double that."

Nilsia Cruz, family coordinator at Veteran's Memorial School, expressed her appreciation for Pilla and Wholesome Riches.

"I just want to say how thankful we are to have Wholesome Riches as one of our partners.



They have helped this school in so many things for the past three years, and we're so grateful to them. Not only do they do the food bank on a monthly basis, they also assist us at Christmas time and during special holidays. They provide special baskets for our families, and they support our families one hundred percent."

Jose Ramos, who works for the Camden school district in the department of solutions and helps Pilla with translation, said Wholesome Riches has been doing a wonderful job in outreach and servicing families.

"It has been phenomenal. I believe that every family that has participated has been very blessed by the ministry, and we are looking forward to growing," he said.

Pilla affirmed, "The need for food here is great. But most importantly is their need for love and acceptance and to know that they have a Savior who loves them, whose going to meet them in their time of need. Not only that, but hope in their circumstances. We are just so blessed to be here."

## LOOKING FOR ASSISTANCE OR WANT TO START YOUR OWN FOOD MINISTRY?

### PENNSYLVANIA'S DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH:

[www.dhs.pa.gov/about/Ending-Hunger/Pages/Food-Pantries.aspx](http://www.dhs.pa.gov/about/Ending-Hunger/Pages/Food-Pantries.aspx)

### THE COMMUNITY FOOD BANK OF NEW JERSEY:

<https://cfbnj.org/findfood>

Visit [brnunedited.org/news](http://brnunedited.org/news)  
for the full stories and more!



# DIALOGUE:

## FOOD INSECURITY/POVERTY:

Once you've had a chance to explore the different ministry options, here are some questions to discuss with your ministry team and those with whom you seek to minister.

What did you learn from meeting with the gatekeepers/ organizations?

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Based on what you have discovered, where do you sense God is encouraging your church to serve?

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What kind of needs could your church meet? How do the skills of people in your church match up with those needs?

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List skills and resources from your church or others in the community that you have available to meet those needs.

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How are you going to enlist or recruit volunteers (from your church or the community)?

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What training or clearances would volunteers need to have before engaging in ministry?

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As you pray, write down what you hear God saying about this ministry opportunity:

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## INTERVIEW

**MICHAEL “HAIR” KELLEY, ASSOC. PASTOR, THE FOUNDRY CHURCH, WALLINGFORD**

If you and/or your group want to serve your community, then a food pantry or community garden are excellent ways to do it. Michael “Hair” Kelley, the associate pastor at The Foundry Church in Wallingford, shares about his experience meeting the need of hunger in his community through his church.

### 1) Why did The Foundry start a community food pantry?

Chuck Kieffer, the lead pastor of The Foundry, realized that the kids involved in the church’s youth group were showing up hungry. This was not the typical growing boys are always hungry. This was a substantial need for food. They simply began a food ministry to feed the kids in their youth group. Then the church connected with college students who both needed food and wanted to serve through the pantry.

“We feed people because people need food,” Hair said. It was not that they started a ministry to reach people. It was that they were reaching people who needed this ministry. When the pandemic hit, their already existing systems and capacity were tested with the increase in need. But their willingness to sacrificially serve others positioned them to be used by God when the needs of the community were exacerbated. Hair referenced Jesus’ parable about the sheep and the goats in Matthew 25, as a theme passage for the ministry. They serve their community, not out of duty, but out of compassion.

### 2) Share two stories about how lives are being changed because of this ministry.

Hair’s job with the food pantry is managing the traffic in the parking lot and greeting people as they come and go. He started when COVID

restrictions changed how people moved in and out of the pantry. This puts him in the position to have conversations. Hair says there is one man in particular that God is working on. He sees the hand of the Lord drawing him closer. His life has many issues: broken relationships, the loss of meaningful employment, and the lack of resources to adequately provide for his children. The Foundry is how he feeds his children.

There is another way The Foundry's food pantry is impacting people with the Gospel. They often have unbelievers to serve alongside of them. Hair says working with someone is the best way to get to know them. They have a volunteer who connected with the church through Alcoholics Anonymous. He volunteers regularly side by side with Christians serving the needs of his neighborhood. He gets to watch the love of God on display in the lives of those he serves with. Hair sees God at work in this volunteer's life. Hair specifically asks that you pray with him that the Gospel conversations that his church is having with both these men, the person in need and the volunteer, come to fruition in their salvation.

3) What should a group think about when deciding to engage in a ministry like this?

When asked this question, Hair offered a word of caution. People will come to absolutely depend on the resources your church provides them for their very lives. Do not start a ministry like this without the commitment to see it through. It is a great dream, but it is also a big job. There is a process involved in being able to provide food for your community. Consider it seriously and soberly. You have to be willing to commit to sacrificially serving others.

# DECISION:

## FOOD INSECURITY/POVERTY:

This is the stage where you take all that you have learned up to this point and begin to make some specific decisions on the direction you feel led to go.

Based on what you have discovered, where do you sense God is encouraging your church to serve? Who are you serving?

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What do you need to serve them well?

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When and how long will you serve?

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How can you evaluate and adjust as necessary?

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What expectations do you have for all involved? Write them down in a Joint Venture Partnership agreement\* so there isn't any confusion. Adapt as needed.

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As you pray, write down what you hear God saying now about this ministry opportunity:

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*\*Contact BRN's Help Desk for more information.*



# DEPLOYMENT:

## FOOD INSECURITY/POVERTY:

This is where you begin to engage and start your journey of bringing the hope of the Gospel to your community.

How can you assist or encourage you volunteers as they serve?

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How do you evaluate and adjust as you serve?

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How do you celebrate your successes and your volunteers?  
(write specific ways)?

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How do you communicate with the gatekeepers to find out how you are doing/did?

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What do you do next?

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As you pray, write down what you hear God saying now about this ministry opportunity:

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# SHOW

## WHO'S ON YOUR WATCH?

*Every 4.2 minutes, a person in PA/SJ dies without Christ. Let's show Christ's love before it's too late!*

#LovePASJ's Phase 2 kit seeks to help churches evangelize the neighborhoods where they did exegesis and prayerwalking. As a natural next step to learning about their communities, Phase 2 of "KNOW, SHOW, GROW" offers resources to equip participants to start meeting revealed needs through compassion ministries and evangelism. This year's kit also highlights evangelism resources available for individuals and groups.

*Haven't had a chance to work on Phase 1 yet? No worries! Contact the BRN's Help Desk ([helpdesk@brnunited.org](mailto:helpdesk@brnunited.org)) today to get your kit!*

[www.lovepasj.com](http://www.lovepasj.com)

# FREE RESOURCES

to help you better love your neighbors

Phase 2 resources include Compassion Ministry Planning Guides, a Prayer Guide, Small Group Bible Study, Evangelism Tracts, an EvangeCube, a Gospel Presentation App, and more!



KNOW | SHOW | GROW

Order your kit at  
[LOVEPASJ.COM](http://LOVEPASJ.COM)



*For additional resources and information  
on loving your community and sharing the Gospel,  
please reach out to the*

*Baptist Resource Network of PA/SJ:*

*email: [helpdesk@brnunited.org](mailto:helpdesk@brnunited.org)*


*call or text: (717) 652-5856*

*or visit online:*

*[www.brnunited.org](http://www.brnunited.org) | [www.lovepasj.com](http://www.lovepasj.com)*





A stylized graphic of a city skyline in shades of blue and orange. The skyline features various building silhouettes, including a prominent tall building with a pointed top. In the foreground, there are several smaller houses with gabled roofs and windows. The background is a gradient of orange and yellow, suggesting a sunset or sunrise.

Baptist Resource Network of PA/SJ  
4620 Fritchey Street, Harrisburg, PA 17109  
[brnunited.org](http://brnunited.org) | [lovepasj.com](http://lovepasj.com)

*"We must do the works of Him who sent Me while it is day.  
Night is coming when no one can work" (John 9:4).*