

WELFARE SERMON



AFM Welfare

Topic: Caring for the Needy Among Us

Just like in the days of the apostles, so is the church today expected to be socio-economic relevant. Out of the 28 chapters of the book of Acts, very early, Chapter 6 deals with the social reality that the apostles had to deal with. They had to be relevant at their time - in the same way we need to be relevant in our time. They were not only faced with the issue of making disciples all nations (Matthew 28:19) - **which is a spiritual approach**, but also had to deal with the conflict caused by the presence of the poor among the disciples (**which is a social response / approach**).

They knew they had to do something! The approach they used is still relevant today as if they were responding to the slogan of the DEAF FEDERATION SOUTH AFRICA (DEAFSA) which says “nothing about us without us”. They called the disciples, presented the current social challenge that they were facing, forwarded suggestions or solutions for discussion which pleased everybody present at the meeting (Acts 6:5a). **They employed a socio-spiritual approach – this is the way I perceive it.**

Church-based Approaches to Welfare:

- **Individual Role**

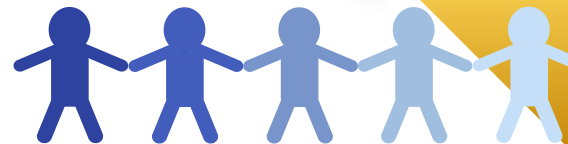
That which you do as a person out of free will (good heart) or having been inspired by the Holy Spirit.

- **Group Role**

That which you do as collective, inspired by God and doing it on His behalf.

For example, the Child and Youth Care Centres (CYCCs) and Cluster Foster Homes (FHs) / Children's Homes that the AFM is running, the Old Age Homes (AOH).

What does God say about caring for the needy? The book of Deuteronomy Chapter 15:11 says: “...there are **always** going to be **poor and needy** people **among you**, so I command you, always be generous, open purse and hands, give to your neighbours in trouble, your poor and hurting neighbours” (from the Message Bible). These words are echoed by the Lord Jesus in the book of Matthew 26:11.



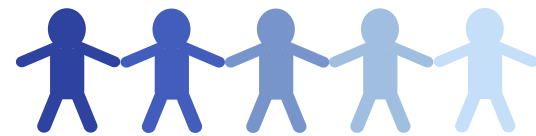
Poor people will never cease to exist, and it is our duty as the church to always have strategies for interventions relevant to this regard according to our time and season – so that we are not taken by surprise. We were pre-informed about social realities like poverty, unemployment, inequality etc.

The **church response** is very important for the benefit of its members and the community that it serves. One must not forget that charity begins at home. Once we love and care for one another, we become attractive to the world and that is a missional breakthrough. **Faith without action is dead. Preaching the gospel without attending to the social needs / realities makes the Gospel a fake.** James 2: 14-16 warns us about this.

14 What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save them? 15 Suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes and daily food. 16 If one of you says to them, “Go in peace; keep warm and well fed,” but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it?

In conclusion: **What does Christ say about caring for the needy?**

We read Matthew 25: 31-46:



The Sheep and the Goats

31 “When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his glorious throne. 32 All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. 33 He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left.

34 “Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. 35 For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, 36 I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.’

37 “Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? 38 When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? 39 When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?’

40 “The King will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.’

41 “Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. 42 For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, 43 I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me.’

44 “They also will answer, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?’

45 “He will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.’

46 “Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life”

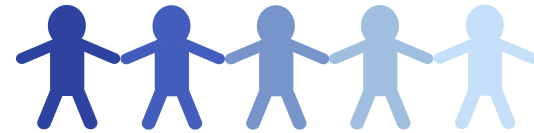
Matthew 6: 1-4

6 “Be careful not to practice your righteousness in front of others to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven.

2 “So when you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honoured by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. 3 But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, 4 so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

What does Holy Spirit say about caring for the needy?

Remember the work of the Holy Spirit using the 12 disciples of Jesus Christ to remember this very important task which is social.



The Choosing of the Seven (NIV) – Acts 6: 1-7

6 In those days when the number of disciples was increasing, the Hellenistic Jews[a] among them complained against the Hebraic Jews because their widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food. 2 So the Twelve gathered all the disciples together and said, “It would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the word of God in order to wait on tables. 3 Brothers and sisters, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will turn this responsibility over to them 4 and will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word.”

5 This *proposal pleased the whole group. They chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit; also Philip, Procorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas from Antioch, a convert to Judaism.* 6 They presented these men to the apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them.

7 So the word of God spread. The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly, and a large number of priests became obedient to the faith.

A task team was appointed to deal with the social challenges that existed among the believers of that time. A lesson to learn for the church today.