

## Congregations for Children (C4C) Building Effective and Sustainable Church and School Partnerships

- **Prayer** is foundational in ministry. Social justice is important; however, it becomes transformational when led by the power of the Holy Spirit. Form and inform prayer teams, Sunday school classes, UMW, UMM, and other small groups to pray for guidance for the ministry, children, and church response. Small group contemplative prayer offers opportunity to collectively listen and seek God's directive and God's prophetic voice on behalf of God's children.
- **Develop a C4C church leadership team** with laity leading the planning efforts. Pastors need to be engaged; however, pastors and school administrators are periodically moved. Collaboration begins within the church by creating a diverse team from various committees and ministries. Internal modeling of this philosophy prepares the church for collaborative community response.
- **Review C4C resources** on C4C website. Contact us for help when needed.
- **Reach out to a local school** leadership to initiate the partnership or discuss plans for deepening an existing partnership. Ask what is needed. Schools are overwhelmed so the responsibility of communication falls on us. Seek out natural ties within the church— such as school staff. Under promise and over deliver.
- **LISTEN! LISTEN! LISTEN!** Be prepared to share your ideas but spend more time listening and learning. Who are their current partners? What are they doing? How can your congregation support existing efforts? Seek to identify a staff person designated by the school to be the school contact for the partnership. Seek response that offers opportunity to build relationships with students and families and that lead to positive, provable outcomes for students. Provide C4C resources to school leadership.
- **Seek collaboration** with existing or new organizations and churches. Reach out to community partners to determine who is currently engaged, planning support, of what existing collaborative efforts may already be underway. Collaboration is critical in seeking transformational response; silo driven ministry and duplication can be avoided when we communicate and respond through missional networks, ecumenically, PTO, and with other organizations.
- **Develop a plan of engagement.** Respond as to the needs. Do your homework and plan with engaged community partners. Start small and build on success. **Contextual and organic** church and school partnerships (or other means of response) should be the norm; no two churches, no two schools, no two communities are the same. Respond to local needs, with local resources.
- **Transformational Response** calls for *our* growth and transformation as we seek *transformational change* in the lives of children and families. Thus, the need for deeper understanding of root causes and appropriate response. Encourage small group learning in empowerment ministry models, understanding poverty, and racial equity. Responses of relief are important but for transformation to take place empowerment models of ministry are critical.
- **Develop a communications plan** for the congregation inclusive of worship services, Sunday school classes, UMM, UMW, small groups, prayer groups and others. Communication should be specific to the plan.
- **Relationship building** is foundational to the DNA of C4C. Response to children and families impacted by poverty will require developing trusting relationships inclusive of those with children and families, with the school and with engaged partners. As United Methodists we represent our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ as we engage in transformational ministry, thus relationship building at every level is critical to our witness.
- **Celebrate the partnership!**

### Examples of Covid-19 Responses:

- Many responses during Covid-19 have included emergency relief: included supplies, support with meals, staff support, earbuds, emergency response for family's needs.
- The digital divide is one of the biggest challenges. Where is Wi-Fi needed? What churches or organizations are offering drive up Wi-Fi, opening facilities for parents and children, or staffed or volunteer led Learning Centers? Do your research and respond based on need and your call.
- Begin post Covid-19 planning. Many children will likely lose a year of learning. What can be planned for summer 2021? Summer literacy camps; ongoing childcare, after-school programs will all be needed. Do your research and seek transformational collaborative response.
- Advocate: look to organizations such as NC Child and engage the church in letter writing and phone calls to officials. Be the prophetic voice for the voiceless!



C4C is a resource of the WNCCUMC providing support in developing new and strengthen existing response to child poverty; as well as using our connectional system as a means of support and learning from each other.