

# CELEBRATE

SDOP Sunday | *People Investing in People*



March 13,  
**2022**



Presbyterian Committee on the  
**Self-Development  
of People**

## WELCOME

By Rev. Dr. Alonzo Johnson, SDOP Coordinator



*“We are only a healthy community if we are taking care of everybody.”*  
Edgar Villanueva, *“Decolonizing Wealth”*

As I think introspectively about Matthew 25 and the COVID-19 pandemic, the first thought that comes to mind is how powerfully resourceful our communities are. This resourcefulness is evident in the way that our community partners have continued to be vital in addressing poverty and its intersectional issues even amid this seemingly incorrigible pandemic. In actuality, our community partners recognize that communities matter! — which means that even in a time such as this, the work of poverty eradication is always a critical priority. The sustained work of establishing wholeness and care is characteristic of our community partners and continues to be a true testimonial to Matthew 25 and how it is lived out. In their resiliency, our community partners are dedicated in these incredibly difficult times to promote justice, build relationships and establish economic equity. These are also the pillars on which SDOP stands.

Through this resource, we invite you to recognize the ways that the LORD is calling us to be resourceful in Jesus Christ through continuing to support the work and witness of SDOP. Whether your worship experience is physical, virtual or both, this resource is designed for you to share in it the news of SDOP’s dynamic work, witness and stories. We encourage you to use this resource in your Bible studies, Sunday school classes, youth group lessons and any other opportunity where you learn and grow together. We pray that this resource will inspire you and serve as a guide for you and your ministry to become better familiar with the ways that SDOP engages in its work through the church and in communities. We pray that this resource also inspires you to support this redemptive work through the One Great Hour of Sharing collected on Easter Sunday.

## REFLECTION

By Rev. Francis Miller

Recently our presbytery invited leaders to engage in seminars that considered our own intercultural competency. We took an inventory to gauge our ability to function effectively across cultures, to think and act appropriately, and to communicate and work with people from different cultural backgrounds. The results came back showing that my self-perception was higher than what the inventory revealed.

Having believed that I had done sufficient work on this subject and with myself, it was a bit of a blow to my self-esteem. While



trying to reconcile this, as will happen, a real-life example presented itself.

I was invited to participate with clergy from a variety of denominations in a weeklong training-retreat. Due to the pandemic, the event was moved from a retreat center to Zoom. Like most things over the past year-plus, it wasn’t quite the same as being able to meet in person. One of the most striking differences was the inability to get to know people in the “downtimes” between scheduled workshops; the deeper trust-building moments were lacking.

All these factors contributed to an incident that happened around the closing celebration. The suggestion was for the participants to suggest a favorite song that others would enjoy hearing, and perhaps dancing to. One of our leaders chose a song that had a fun groove to it but came with the disturbing allusion of being “tied to the whipping post.” The next day, several folks in the group shared their discomfort with the song because of the haunting memory of the way whipping posts were used on African Americans during and post-slavery.

With trust still tentative within this group, we had to work through the complexity of the situation. The one who moderated the conversation invited us to consider the concept of “Dis-covering a shared story.” So much remains hidden about our collective understanding of how America is forming. We see products of overt racism around us, but many white folks are now being shown how much of white supremacy has been covered over by other things and allowed to fester. So, a white man can love a song that speaks of “a whipping post” without thinking of the historical trauma it causes for African Americans — that history was covered in his consciousness until it was dis-covered for him by others.

Those were true moments of the Church doing its necessary work. We were invited to dis-cover just how insidiously race has been woven into the fabric of our national and personal identities. It shed light on the call to repentance required of white folks for us to embrace the Beloved Community into which Jesus calls us.

Rev. Francis Miller

Pastor, *Lyndhurst Community Presbyterian Church*, Cleveland  
Chair, *Committee on the Self-Development of People*  
(Presbytery of the Western Reserve)

Video introducing SDOP: <https://youtu.be/SsCFYEz8E5w>

Co-Founder, *Dougbe River Presbyterian School of Liberia*

The mission of Dougbe River School is to provide an education to students in the Grand Gedeh County, Liberia, Africa.

## WHAT DOES SDOP DO?

SDOP is a ministry that affirms God's concern for humankind. We are Presbyterians and ecumenical partners, dissatisfied with poverty and oppression, united in faith and action through sharing, confronting and enabling. We participate in the empowerment of economically poor, oppressed and disadvantaged people seeking to change the structures that perpetuate poverty, oppression and injustice.

## SUGGESTED USES FOR THIS RESOURCE

- If your presbytery/synod has a SDOP Committee (call the national office to find out if a committee exists in your mid council), invite one of its members to speak during your worship service. Call the national office to learn if there are national committee members in your area who could be invited to speak to your congregation.
- SDOP committee members or others can promote the resource (i.e., Social Justice Committee, Mission Committee, etc.); you do not have to be a pastor to do so. It is, however, always encouraged to bring the resource to your pastor's attention.
- SDOP committee members can share their own experiences as they promote the resource.

If you are a national or mid council SDOP committee member:

- Take pictures if you are meeting with local groups or if you are present at SDOP events. We encourage you to also take pictures, if possible, when a local group or a representative of SDOP speaks in a congregation, presbytery or other venue. Send us copies of those pictures so that we too can lift up what you are doing for SDOP Sunday.

## HERE IS HOW YOUR CONGREGATION CAN HELP

- Invite participants of a nearby SDOP project to offer a "Minute for Mission" during your Sunday worship service. Contact the national SDOP office to learn of community partners in your area.
- We encourage you to include this resource in newsletters, articles, etc.
- You can call pastors and other church leaders to remind them of SDOP Sunday and the materials available.





### Afghan Cattle Cooperative (ACC) Bristow, Virginia

Afghan Cattle Cooperative will raise and sell cattle to improve the lives of families in the cooperative who are currently living below the poverty level. Funding will be used to purchase and sell herds of cattle for breeding and to supplement income because women cannot work outside of the farm due to language barriers. ACC members will contribute their time and skills to raising livestock and teaching their children animal husbandry and related life skills.

Afghan refugees in Prince William County, Virginia had two major needs: job opportunities and Halal food. There was experience in farming and cattle raising in the northern Virginia county's Afghan community, so some refugees pooled their resources to purchase cattle and secure land.

In March 2021, the Afghan Cattle Cooperative (ACC) formed; and in October, the farm management group formed and registered as Afghan Farm Associates LLC. The goal is to help meet the growing demand for Halal food, which is food permissible, cultivated and prepared according to Islamic law for the local Afghan and Muslim community. A member of the Refugee Resettlement Ministry at Greenwich Presbyterian Church in Nokesville, Virginia recommended that the group apply for funding from the Presbyterian Committee on the Self-Development of People (SDOP).

"Since we didn't have enough budget to run our farm the way we wanted on our own, we needed external support to boost our efforts toward achieving our goals," says Mohammad

Shafiq Faqeerzai, general manager of the Afghan Cattle Cooperative. "Consequently, we submitted a grant application, and luckily it got approved by the generous management of SDOP."

"SDOP's assistance will be vital on the execution of ACC's goals. We have planned to expand our farm by purchasing up to 12 more calves and/or young cows and one bull and the required amount of hay for the winter season, and other necessities."

The application process with SDOP was easy, Faqeerzai says. They submitted materials online and then there was a virtual meeting with SDOP staff and committee members.

The demand for food and jobs continues to grow as more Afghan families are coming to Virginia, as well as communities across the U.S., following the end of the U.S. War in Afghanistan.

Faqeerzai says the farm is a place "where the Afghan refugee families get to gather and spend their spare time by working in the farm and enjoy being close to the cattle. Meanwhile, they are learning the modern farming system of the USA from the neighbor farmers of the community and other farmer members of Greenwich Presbyterian Church."

#### HOW TO GET INVOLVED:

Visit <https://www.presbyterianmission.org/ministries/sdop/get-involved/> for ways to further engage with the Presbyterian Committee on the Self-Development of People.



### Warriors on Wheels, Detroit [wow4metrodetroit.org](http://wow4metrodetroit.org) | Detroit, Michigan

Warriors on Wheels has repaired and retrofitted with accessibility controls a donated 13-passenger bus to provide transportation to meetings, events and advocacy activities for members with disabilities.

When the COVID-19 pandemic hit, Warriors on Wheels of Metropolitan Detroit decided to start a grocery delivery service to help vulnerable people stay safe. The delivery service for people who are disabled or who are older adults is just one of the ways that Warriors on Wheels (WOW) has assisted people in Michigan with the help of the Presbyterian Committee on the Self-Development of People and other supporters.

“In addition to grocery deliveries during the pandemic, we also provide car services to individuals who no longer have attendant care in Michigan due to the change in laws,” wrote Lisa Franklin, WOW’s founder and chief executive officer, in a Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) questionnaire.

WOW describes itself as a grassroots, nonprofit advocacy organization of people with disabilities for people with disabilities. “We serve with compassion and dedication to our community because we believe that what is good for us is good for us all,” Franklin said.

The organization got its start in 2006 as Women on Wheels, and then it became Warriors on Wheels in 2008 as men became involved. The nonprofit has monthly meetings to discuss issues, find solutions, support families and provide resources. It also engages with city and state governments on issues relating to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

The nonprofit organization has been a strong advocate for people who need a voice with the main audience being the disabled Black community, Franklin said.

“WOW was one of the lead organizations that fought for and won the advancement of an Office of Disability Affairs in the city of Detroit government,” Franklin said. “We fought for

10 years.”

The group also fights stigma, a problem that has hindered people with disabilities “for centuries, creating a society of ableism,” Franklin said. That type of behavior “alienates, segregates (and) demeans” very viable human beings and violates human rights.

WOW became aware of SDOP as an indirect result of attending Detroit City Council meetings to speak out about ADA violations in the area. An ally approached them and told them about PC(USA)’s mission and invited them to a board meeting.

“We appreciate SDOP for your support from the very beginning,” Franklin said. “Your initial support provided us with the funding to revamp an accessible minibus, which we use to attend meetings, extend our advocacy and provide light transportation services to the underserved population in the disability community.”

The relationship has continued with follow-ups, visits and emails, said Franklin. “We have been spotlighted for our work by SDOP a few times to share our experience with other potential awardees,” she said. “SDOP makes you feel like family.”

WOW’s members have been tightknit with each other during the pandemic, holding Zoom meetings and social activities to keep from feeling isolated.

“We have not lost one member to COVID, and we believe that providing resources, grocery delivery, masks and just a kind word of encouragement have kept us out of harm’s way; and prayer is our foundation,” Franklin said.

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## SENIOR CITIZENS



### Age Friendly Central Brooklyn, Inc. (AFCBI) [agefriendlycb.org](http://agefriendlycb.org) | Brooklyn, New York

The Age Friendly Central Brooklyn project comprised of older adults was awarded a grant. The funding will assist it with publishing costs of its newsletter. The newsletter shares healthy aging strategies, highlights issues of the day as they relate to aging and provides information on upcoming activities that help the senior residents develop a sense of community.

AFCBI's mission is to empower adults 62 years of age or older to live an active, rich and fulfilling life by engaging in activities that meet their social, economic, cultural and civic interests. A community-based organization, AFCBI is led by older adult volunteers. Its uniqueness stems from the fact that its participants both control and benefit from the program activities.

AFCBI's main audience is predominantly retired women of African descent, age 62 or older, living in central Brooklyn. Special attention is given to those living in isolation or those with mobility issues. There are four cohort groups that develop AFCBI programs. They include:

- Advocacy.
- Economic empowerment.
- Intergenerational inclusion.
- Social inclusion.

Donna Williams, AFCBI ambassador and secretary, says helping older adults use technology will improve the quality of life and address the social isolation of its members.

"Increasing the digital literacy of our community can not only help connect family and friends, but it can also help facilitate doctor telehealth visits, ordering groceries and provide safe online banking."

There are several other opportunities that AFCBI provides for

its members, including:

- "Third Chapter Living," AFCBI's monthly publication.
- Annual Active Aging Week, a weeklong series of activities promoting the benefits of a healthy and active lifestyle.
- Blue Zone cooking classes to encourage healthy eating.
- Exercise for strength and fun (e.g., walking and line dancing).
- Monthly reading in local public schools to grades K–3 by AFCBI members.
- Wellness workshops on mental health, dental health and COVID-19.

"We offer an array of activities and services to promote healthy aging and longevity," says Williams. "Each month we publish 'Third Chapter Living,' a publication that highlights the issues of the day as it relates to aging. We present real stories from the community; and each edition features an article promoting health and wellness for older adults, as well as an affirmation, which we know helps empower our membership."

SDOP's support was a "lifeline" according to Williams, as it allowed AFCBI to distribute "Third Chapter Living" both digitally and in print, which has evolved from a newsletter into more of a magazine.

"The notion of 'self-development of people' speaks to our mission, said Williams. "There is synergy between what SDOP represents and what AFCBI wants to accomplish."

#### HOW TO GET INVOLVED:

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## The CASOE Group [thecasoegroup.org](https://thecasoegroup.org) | Detroit, Creative Arts Spirit of Excellence (CASOE)

CASOE provides arts programming — theatre, dance, music and media arts — that, despite severe socioeconomic challenges, help youth and young adults from ages 2–21 connect and succeed artistically and academically. Founded in 2004, CASOE provides meaningful arts and cultural opportunities in underserved Detroit communities where youth have limited access to share in the arts.

For the past 17 years, CASOE has provided live stage performances featuring hundreds of youth and their families. According to Janice Smith, founder and chief executive officer, CASOE's most impactful projects have been the live stage performances addressing key social issues that offer audiences a chance to reflect upon important social justice themes presented in an entertaining and thought-provoking message. CASOE engages a wide range of local actors, dancers, musicians, stage crew, set designers and other artists to produce their performances.

“CASOE's long-term impact can be measured by individual CASOE members who work with us for years and go on to successful careers in the entertainment industry,” said Smith. “These young people attribute their success to the solid foundation that was built working with us.”

Despite the high rate of children living in poverty in Detroit, Smith adds there is enormous potential for growth among the city's pool of young talent. The COVID-19 pandemic placed severe challenges for CASOE as it was forced to suspend live performances resulting in a 42% reduction in annual revenue. However, a transition to a virtual arts platform

meant that more kids could engage in the arts, and provided a critical outlet for families with children out of school. CASOE's virtual programming became an educational, artistic and recreational resource for many.

CASOE's grant from SDOP is helpful in several ways, including:

- The investment in members rising out of poverty, and
- The ability to sustain the partnership for longer than a year.

“SDOP's investment in our members rising out of poverty was the first grant we received that addressed this critical issue,” said Smith. “Many of our members work long hours for little or no pay. SDOP's funding made a significant difference in their lives. And the ability to sustain our partnership has been amazing. We are in frequent communication with the SDOP Committee, which is a positive experience for us.”

CASOE provides SDOP with updates on how its funding benefits the group through member testimonials, photos, social media posts and public meetings with stakeholders.

“SDOP's assistance has been invaluable in helping CASOE accomplish some of its goals,” said Smith. “We can offer more initiatives for at-risk youth in poverty and increase our members' income with a consistent biweekly paycheck.”

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**Interchurch Center for Theological and Social Studies** [cieets.org.ni/upgrade](https://cieets.org.ni/upgrade) | Managua, Nicaragua

The Interchurch Center for Theological and Social Studies is an intermediary partner in Nicaragua. It uses SDOP criteria to fund projects in Nicaragua.

For nearly 37 years, the Interchurch Center for Theological and Social Studies (El Centro Intereclesial de Estudios Teológicos y Sociales, CIEETS) has worked to provide transformative theological education and implement community development programs in rural areas of Nicaragua. This work is serving some of the poorest communities in the second poorest nation in the Western Hemisphere.

The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) has been involved with CIEETS for most of that history, executive director Jairo Arce says. It was mission co-worker Tracey King-Ortega of Presbyterian World Mission who advised the organization to apply for funding from the Presbyterian Committee on the Self-Development of People (SDOP).

“Having the support of SDOP allowed us to solve economic problems for a good number of families and get ahead by improving their family economies,” Arce said. “The Self Development of People project has come to help in the search for entrepreneurship with poor, unemployed families, with the participation of mostly women.”

Acre said that the organization’s intention is to be a transformational force in the most impoverished parts of the country through the close relationships of churches with urban and rural communities, working “towards a society that seeks

to embody the values of the Kingdom of God in our nation and the region.

“This effort is aimed at the human development of the most vulnerable churches and communities in Nicaragua,” Arce said. He added it has encouraged dialogue and reflection on economic, social, and ecological issues of national interest that establish justice and peace, which are vital to the development of the country.

In recent years, CIEETS has faced numerous challenges: the COVID-19 pandemic, which has severely impacted the communities the group serves; natural disasters, including back-to-back hurricanes that struck the region in the fall of 2020; domestic and community violence; loss of support from agencies with revised policies for working with faith-based organizations; and conservative religious movements in the country that run counter to CIEETS’ message and work.

Acre said that working with SDOP has been a good fit for CIEETS because it addresses “the reality of poverty and the needs of the unemployed people with whom we work and the challenge of responding from Christian practice to the needs of the most vulnerable.”

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### Chilibre Women's Training Centers, Gonzalillo Community Organization and Women's Meeting Space Panama City, Panama

Chilibre Women's Training Centers/Gonzalillo Community Organization and Women's Meeting Space is a project focused on creating family gardens and a community nursery that initially provided food supplies for 75 people, with a view to reaching 300 people. In addition to consuming the food themselves, participants intend to sell the surplus product to cover the basic needs of workers (health permits, a fixed position and administrative procedures will be necessary).

Female empowerment is taking place in Panama thanks to the Chilibre Women's Training Centers, Gonzalillo Community Organization and Women's Meeting Space.

The Presbyterian Committee on the Self-Development of People (SDOP) has funded a project aimed at making it possible for families to grow food at home to help overcome challenges, such as high unemployment during the pandemic. "The project consists of the creation of home gardens for consumer food, with a collective vision to support people and communities affected by COVID-19," mainly women who lead households, Ileana Lopez, coordinator of the project, wrote in a Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) questionnaire.

The project — designed to foster knowledge of urban production and boost the capacity of the community to overcome crises — also includes starting an experimental nursery to produce seedlings and installing a community stand. The idea is not only to feed the growers' families but to sell surplus food.

"The interest of the participants is to make this process of producing food sustainable," Lopez said. SDOP has done continuous monitoring, making it possible

to correct course when needed, Lopez said. "It has also given us the opportunity to communicate what we are doing and empower the participants by having support for the initiative." SDOP has promoted the project and provided a simple process for receiving funding, Lopez said.

The main groups involved are:

- Chilibre Women's Training Centers began in 1995 to train women about domestic violence, personal improvement and how to build self-sustaining projects. Activities include sewing, cooking, cultivating and making products, such as crafts and jewelry.
- Gonzalillo Community Organization focuses on community protection, sanitation and development.
- Women's Meeting Space fights for women's rights, preventing gender-based violence and developing training experiences for indigenous women and women from poor communities.

Unemployment and the pandemic have hurt the economic stability of people in the area. "They work informal jobs, or they don't work," Lopez said. "Most of the women do housework."

The gardening project created a bright spot. "Not only did women work in the sowing, but it also became a family space" and seemed to "improve the mental health of many participants very impacted by the COVID-19 virus."

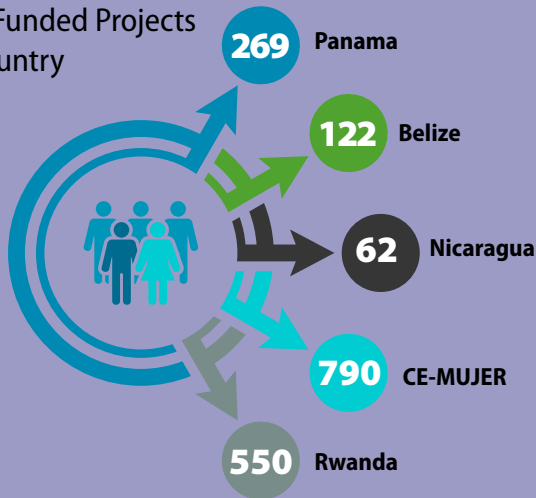
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# SDOP BY THE NUMBERS - 2021

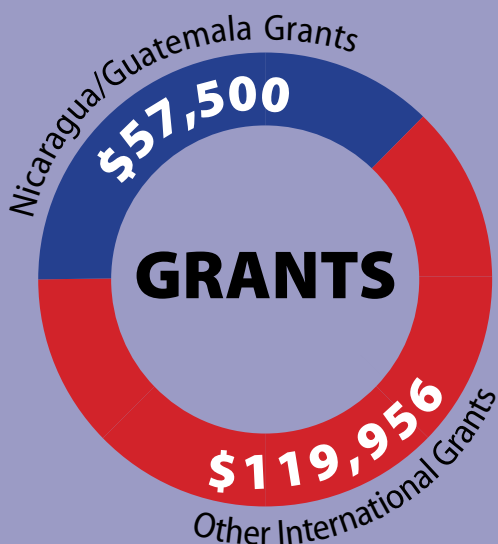
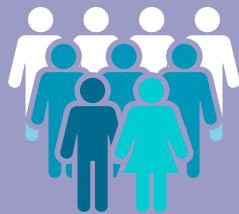
## INTERNATIONAL

Number of Beneficiaries from Funded Projects by Country



**1,793**

people benefited by international grants



## NATIONAL PROJECTS

**20 projects**  
**\$282,900**

**1,778** people benefited

**COVID-19 Grants**  
**9 projects**  
**\$35,000**

**1,356** people benefited

## MID COUNCIL (MC) PROJECTS

**26 projects**  
**\$108,372**

**5,224** people benefited

**COVID-19 Grants**  
**3 projects**  
**\$4,656**

**67** people benefited

## **UPDATE ON SDOP'S WORK IN NICARAGUA/GUATAMALA**

A few years ago, SDOP received a bequest from a long-time Presbyterian, Matilda Cartledge, in which she asked us to use part of these funds for economic development projects in Nicaragua and Guatemala. Years later, SDOP has made this request a reality. In 2019 we started sending these funds to two organizations, who were named SDOP “intermediary partners” in these countries: the Interchurch Center for Theological and Social Studies in Nicaragua and The Protestant Center for Pastoral Studies in Central America in Guatemala. They have, following the SDOP funding criteria, distributed these funds to grassroots community groups of economically poor people. After almost two years of this partnership with these organizations, SDOP is very satisfied with the work they have done, and how the SDOP funds/the Cartledge funds have been used. In both intermediary partner reports submitted to SDOP, the two organizations have shared that these funds have drastically changed the lives of group (project) members and have made long-term changes in their communities. The funded projects range from honey producers, free-range chicken raising, production of medicinal plants, groups of artisan women, bakery groups and housing improvement projects to support poor communities to recover after the impact of natural disasters. SDOP looks forward to continuing its support of these underserved communities in Nicaragua and Guatemala.

## **SDOP'S RESPONSE TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC**

In 2021, SDOP awarded grants to community organizations/groups that were working with low-income communities impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Additionally, in 2020, SDOP marked 50 years of partnering with economically poor, oppressed and disadvantaged community groups. However, the funds that would have been used for its 50th anniversary celebration instead went toward awarding COVID-19 grants to communities facing critical needs. National SDOP approved 21 COVID-19 grants aimed at alleviating the COVID-19 pandemic impact totaling \$118,000 to 30 community-based projects in the United States while nine COVID-19 grants were approved by mid council SDOP committees.

## **Self-Development of People in the Northwest**

**By Rev. Larry Low**

“Will the last person leaving the airport please turn off the lights?” This was the billboard message as I was entering Seattle for the first-time in. It was 1971 and Seattle was in the midst of its own depression as her No. 1 company, Boeing, had reduced its workforce by 75% from 50,000 workers to 8,000. Everybody was “hurting,” but especially people of color in the area.

Rather than despairing, groups of people began organizing to improve their situation. On Beacon Hill (Seattle), a group led by a teacher began a sit-in at an empty school building.

There were little or no public services for the Spanish-speaking residents in the area, and the group advocated to the school board to allow them to transform the building to a social service hub to serve the community, especially those whose parent language was Spanish. After several months, the city ended the sit-in by granting the group the use of the building for a certain period to see what would happen.

One of the first projects was redoing the kitchen. One of the first “agencies” to help was the Self-Development of People, who granted them \$50,000 to remodel the kitchen, which they used to begin a luncheon program for seniors.

Today, “El Centro De La Raza” is a cornerstone in Beacon Hill, especially for the Spanish-speaking community. It now has a bilingual preschool, a job center, a food bank and an activity program for young people.

Another grant went to a program that had its beginnings as two University of Washington students set up a couple of card tables to assist recent non-English residents, many who were seniors, with completing applications for government programs. This took place in the international district, an area that usually is a place where “newcomers to the city” would first reside. Other residents helped organize and after several months they registered as the CISC.

Today the program serves as interpreters for several Southeast Asian language residents as well as Ukrainian residents and employs over 100 different interpreters on their staff.

I mentioned these two programs as two that SDOP funded that have thrived and grown over 50 years. Both programs might have been unable to get monies to fund their projects, but SDOP interceded.

SDOP grants projects that have been positive to both the individual as well as the community. North of Seattle, there is a community of ex-convicts who have a business of roasting coffee (not Starbucks) and selling/distributing their product to churches and other small businesses.

In the Portland area, there is a migrant community that has access to a plot of farmland but needed money to develop an irrigation system to water their crops.

SDOP met with both communities and after meeting with the communities felt that their respective projects met with SDOP guidelines. There are several more projects that I can name (but will not for brevity's sake).

With the pandemic, there will be more needs experienced by minority groups perhaps unable to get “seed” money. SDOP has been active and successful in the Northwest and should be a

great asset here in the future.

Rev. Larry Low is a Member of Madrona Grace Presbyterian Church and Seattle Presbytery  
Former SDOP National and Presbytery of Seattle Committee Member

Past Chair, Presbytery of Seattle SDOP Committee

### BOOK LIST ABOUT POVERTY AND RELATED ISSUES

*Always with Us? What Jesus Really Said About the Poor*  
Rev. Dr. Liz Theoharis

*The Third Reconstruction*, Rev. Dr. William J. Barber  
Jesus and the Disinherited, Howard Thurman

*Decolonizing Wealth*, Edgar Villanueva

*The Problem with Wealth*, Elizabeth Hinson-Hasty

*Evicted: Poverty and Profit in the American City*  
Matthew Desmond

*The Rich and the Rest of Us*, Tavis Smiley, Cornel West

*Just Mercy: A Story of Justice and Redemption*  
Bryan Stevenson

*The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*, Michelle Alexander

*Locking Up Our Own: Crime and Punishment in Black America*, James Forman Jr.

### A List of Ways we Can Engage in Poverty Eradication

The United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs determines that “poverty entails more than the lack of income and productive resources to ensure sustainable livelihoods. Its manifestations include hunger and malnutrition, limited access to education and other basic services, social discrimination and exclusion as well as the lack of participation in decision-making. Various social groups bear a disproportionate burden of poverty.” We can engage in poverty eradication if we:

1. Educate the American public on the immensity of poverty in America and worldwide, and how little we are doing to combat it. Challenge the mentality that people are poor because they are lazy or don’t work hard enough to overcome poverty.

2. Deracialize poverty: Re-educate the American public on the conscious and unconscious, false connection between poverty and race. How the face of poverty is often portrayed as being black or brown, while millions more whites are impoverished.
3. Partner with agencies that are effective in strategy and delivery. Study what works and apply strategies and programs to apply in local communities.
4. Identify ways to fight poverty on a multitude of levels: federal, state and local. Do a study of the most effective programs that work and duplicate their paradigms and eliminate those that are ineffective.
5. Address poverty as a regional issue. Identify the most prevalent causes of poverty in your state and local community. Define whether you live in a high, low or medium-poverty region.
6. Base the federal minimum wage on the cost of living. States should adjust their state minimum wage based on the cost to live in that state.
7. Determine state-by-state what the basic income necessary is to be able to afford to live in that state rather than utilizing a national average. According to the Economic Policy Institute’s Family Budget Calculator, the revenue needed for a family of two (adults only) “varies from just under \$43,000 in one state to over \$66,000 in another.”
8. Men and women suffering from poverty in each region must have full political, economic and social participation in the “design and implementation of policies that affect the poorest and most vulnerable groups of society” (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs).
9. Advocate that the federal government raise the national standard determining poverty, established in 1963, that defines poverty being an annual income of \$24,858 for a family of four; \$12,488 for an individual. This is exceedingly low and completely unrealistic.
10. Strengthen government safety net programs (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program [SNAP], Earned Income Tax Credit, Social Security, Medicaid/Medicare), not weaken them. A 2018 Urban Institute analysis estimated that SNAP lifted 8.4 million people out of poverty in 2015 and reduced child poverty by 28%.



11. Address the intersectional root causes of poverty systematically:
  - Food insecurity. Increase SNAP benefits.
  - Wage inequality
  - Lack of opportunities for upward mobility in employment
  - Inadequate public transportation.
12. Address and remove the barriers placed upon those formerly incarcerated that keeps them impoverished. The stigma of a felony conviction prevents employment and prevents any type of government assistance. Develop effective re-entry programs that provide support and mentoring for men and women who have suffered incarceration.
13. Work to eliminate homelessness by providing homes, not programs.

### References:

- Economic Policy Institute, “Government Programs Kept Tens of Millions Out of Poverty in 2017,” (Sept. 12, 2018)
- Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, “Programs Targeted for Cuts Keep Millions from Poverty, New Census Data Show” (Sept. 10, 2019)
- 24/7 Wall St.
- USA Today, “Progress in Fighting Poverty in America has Slowed Despite Recent Economic Recovery” (Oct. 4, 2018)
- USA Today, “Hawaii, Alaska Among the States that Require a Higher Family Income to Avoid Poverty” (Dec. 3, 2019)

### GIVING OPPORTUNITY

Consider giving directly to SDOP at [presbyterianmission.org/donate/E051602](https://presbyterianmission.org/donate/E051602).

SDOP is supported by generous gifts to the One Great Hour of Sharing (OGHS). Contribute to the OGHS Self-Development of People

- online at [presbyterianmission.org/donate/og200000](https://presbyterianmission.org/donate/og200000);
- by phone at 800-872-3283;
- or to send a check, please write “OG200000” on the memo line and mail to:

Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)  
P.O. Box 643700  
Pittsburgh, PA 15264-3700

### CALL TO ACTION/GET INVOLVED WITH PRESBYTERIAN COMMITTEE ON THE SELF-DEVELOPMENT OF PEOPLE!

- Consider giving to the One Great Hour of Sharing, a special offering taken up during Lent to support Self-Development of People, Presbyterian Disaster Assistance and Presbyterian Hunger Program. Visit <http://specialofferings.pcusa.org> to learn more about the OGHS offering and/or to give.

- Consider giving directly to SDOP. Your gift together with others makes it possible for thousands of communities all over the world to have an opportunity to take control of their own destinies and develop solutions to their own challenges. The power of your giving is in the fact that it gives hope, meaning and purpose to people who for one reason or another find themselves in hopeless situations.
- Invite SDOP committee members or staff to speak to your congregation, presbytery/synod meetings, mission fair, etc.
- Learn more about SDOP’s international projects in Belize and the latest on the West African Initiative.
- Serve on the SDOP committee within the bounds of your presbytery or synod. If there is not a committee, consider establishing one.
- Submit a form to the General Assembly nominating committee to serve on the National SDOP Committee. Email [valerie.izumi@pcusa.org](mailto:valerie.izumi@pcusa.org).
- Invite a SDOP group in your area to share about its project with your congregation.
- Share a “Minute for Mission” about SDOP with your congregation.

### FREE SELF-DEVELOPMENT OF PEOPLE RESOURCES

On the Self-Development of People website, [pcusa.org/sdop](https://pcusa.org/sdop), you will find stories about SDOP community partners, and a variety of resources, including:

- Sermons and liturgy (which you can use to plan your Sunday worship service)
- PCUSA Policies on Poverty:  
<https://www.presbyterianmission.org/ministries/compassion-peace-justice/acswp/topics/>

The following print resources can be ordered by calling the Presbyterian Distribution Center at 800-524-2612:

- SDOP Trifold Brochure PDS #25422-17-001 (includes basic information needed to apply for a grant and stories about SDOP partners).
- Wallet card PDS #25422-07-001 (includes basic information about SDOP in a wallet-size card).
- Poster Celebrate Hope PDS #74350-05-005 (colorful SDOP poster)

Call the national office for for additional electronic or print resources: 800-728-7228, ext. 5781/5782/5790/5792.

### LINKS TO SDOP VIDEO RESOURCES

“The Struggle is Real” on Vimeo:  
<https://vimeo.com/showcase/9083159>

Questions?  
English – 800-728-7228, ext. 5781/5782/5792/5790  
Spanish – 800-728-7228, ext. 5781/5790  
Email: [sdop@pcusa.org](mailto:sdop@pcusa.org)  
Fax: (502) 569-8001

## **“THE STRUGGLE IS REAL!” A WEBINAR SERIES ON THE INTERSECTION OF POVERTY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE ISSUES**

### **SAVE THE DATE!**

Join SDOP'S 2022 Learning  
Opportunities/Webinars:

Topic: Rural Poverty

When: March 10, 2 p.m. Eastern time

To Register: [https://](https://sdopstruggleisrealpoverty.rsvpify.com/)

[sdopstruggleisrealpoverty.rsvpify.com/](https://sdopstruggleisrealpoverty.rsvpify.com/)

### **Other webinars (dates to be de- termined) will be on the topics of:**

- Poverty and Disabilities
- Poverty, Young Adults and Child Advocacy
- Intersection of Poverty and Mass Incarceration (Part 2)

### **Each webinar will feature:**

- Poverty Engagement and Intentional Action by churches stepping outside their walls to form relationships and live out loving their neighbors
- Best practices about relationship building and developing partnerships with communities
- Presence and activism, explore & learn ways to take concrete actions to eradicate poverty.

Further details will be available online ([pcusa.org/sdop](https://pcusa.org/sdop)) in the spring. You may also email [sdopevents@pcusa.org](mailto:sdopevents@pcusa.org) after Feb. 15, 2022, if you are interested in participating in any of the above webinars.

<https://www.facebook.com/SelfDevelopmentOfPeoplesdop>

*Rev. Larry Low*



## SERMON

By Rev. Rebecca Barnes

Coordinator, Presbyterian Hunger Program

2 Samuel 11:26–12:13a, Ephesians 4:1–16

Scripture is full of our human desire for a sense of home, belonging, security. This scriptural longing for home, or family or safety — it can be seen in a mother lovingly placing a basket in the reeds in hopes of protecting her infant son. Or a faith community's very long journey through wilderness in the eventual hope of a promised homeland. It is having a place to lay your baby's head when there's no room at the inn. It could even be a borrowed tomb for the body of your beloved teacher when he's crucified. God's people desire freedom from isolation, poverty, oppression — to have instead a sense of home, belonging, safety.

In this story today from Samuel, there's a calling out of the sin of taking someone else's home, family or security. The prophet Nathan tells King David a story: how cruel it is for a rich and powerful person to carelessly take the one thing that provides a sense of home for another. This goes against cultural rules of that time, so King David judges this selfish behavior with condemnation. The irony of course is that this precious lamb in Nathan's story represents the home that Uriah and Bathsheba had before their family was unraveled by King David taking Bathsheba for himself. Their loss is a result of a king's unthinking acceptance of the power afforded a king, his unchecked privilege of the way things are. He's only shocked and personally grieved after Nathan spells it out: "Uh, my story was about you!" King David did not have an intuitive "aha!" moment, possibly because the air he breathed/the water he swam in tells kings that kings can take what they want. Nathan reminds him: not those who are serving in God's kin-dom. Those who have positions of privilege in God's community are to still care for the vulnerable and provide security for all.

From the hiding of baby Moses to the suffering of Uriah and Bathsheba, from Jesus' faithful disciples at his death to a fractured early Christian community in Ephesus, God's people have had either physical or spiritual displacement from home — time and time again. And it isn't just individuals who get harmed or even only individuals who are perpetrators. This isn't just a single example of an accidental unfairness from one wealthy king. It resonates because it fits in a larger story of ongoing, structural injustice. King David did what he did because it was unsurprising in a world and culture that created an upward spiral for the special few and a downward spiral for many others. If the people of God are not careful, they may get caught in a complex system that encourages everyone to just accept "the way things are." They may forget to listen for the way God desires things to be.

God had discouraged the people from having a king in the first place, but they wanted a king like other nations. And so,

they have one — but Israel's king is still to be checked by the community and by the Scriptures. It should not be "anything goes." Ephesians echoes this also, many, many generations later, as it instructs the people: Speak the truth in love, build up the entire community, make sure all can live whole lives and be appreciated for their gifts. God intends something more in God's kin-dom.

And yet, we are here in 2022 and still things aren't right. We, like King David, may accept — or at least resign ourselves to — the reality that some of us might have more privilege and wealth while others have very little. Without much thought, we may find ourselves playing out our assigned roles and reaping the benefits (or penalties) of wherever life has placed us along the economic-social stratum.

We sort of get used to hearing about billionaires and the multiple huge homes they amass. We get used to looking the other way as police move homeless encampments from visible roadways and underpasses to places we are less likely to witness how many people in our own community have no home.

We know we have a problem, just as our ancestors of faith did. We grieve that in the United States, 1 in 5 children live in poverty. We lament that nearly half a million Americans do not have a safe home and more than 65 million people worldwide have become refugees, displaced from their homes. Life is unraveling for so many.

Even harder, let's take an uncomfortable minute to recognize that here in Louisville, the land we call home had been traditional homeland for the Adena, Hopewell, Shawnee, Osage and Shawandasse peoples. Homelands were taken; treaties were broken.

Also here in Louisville, racial injustice is clear and ongoing in particular ways for African American siblings — as we witnessed the lack of justice for Breonna Taylor and so many others. Across our country, people of African descent who were enslaved have had generations of broken promises reinforced by systemic discrimination. That discrimination has just become "the way things are" to such an extent that now the thought of reparations seems radical rather than simply being the economic recovery promised at the end of slavery and denied for hundreds of years since.

These realities are hard to hear. Probably as hard for us to hear as for King David to hear Nathan's parable. And these harsh realities are not going to be a quick or easy fix. Yet God calls us to know what's going on around us, to sit in the discomfort, to evaluate how we might benefit or participate, to repent and then to be transformed so that we can get on doing God's work.

With God's help, we can examine these hard realities, and

rather than being paralyzed with guilt or reacting with defensiveness, we can follow the encouragement of the Ephesians text. In humility, we name the truth in love and then we use the many and diverse gifts with which God has equipped us. Together, we can promote the rebuilding of our community and world as one body, all parts flourishing, each one safe, each one home. The Rev. Dr. Jean Kim, a tireless advocate for the unhoused, died last summer at age 86. I was one of many people blessed by crossing paths with her when I was in college. She always wore this great purple shirt that said, “end homelessness.” She was born in North Korea in 1935, had to flee to South Korea a decade later, and then came to the U.S. in 1970. In her early childhood, she was forced to learn Japanese, and many Korean rights got lost. But even once Korea got independence from Japan, around when Jean was 10, the communist regime settled in. A new level of displacement became real. Her own family’s home and lands were seized, and eventually her family had to flee south to survive. They each got to take one backpack. In South Korea, they became refugees and were homeless. From a horrible fire that covered the whole area of Seoul where she was, all her remaining family photos and possessions were reduced to ashes. Somehow, from these ashes, her ministry to the vulnerable arose. She became a presbyterian minister when she moved to the U.S. and she founded the Church of Mary Magdalene in Washington state, a nondenominational church for women experiencing homelessness. It continues today as Mary’s Place, which last year provided more than 141,000 overnight stays and more than 424,000 meals. She created a women’s choir, gave women clean clothes, and otherwise provided connection, belonging, dignity, home. She worked on root causes doing public policy advocacy and pursuing racial justice. I give thanks to God for Jean and for others we’re blessed to know who show us how to face harsh realities of poverty, hunger, homelessness, injustice — and still to live lives worthy of the calling to which we are called.

And I’m also thankful that we have a variety of “Nathans” around us — people and organizations and communities willing to call us to account. In Louisville, CLOUT is an organization that continually advocates and works alongside metro government to fund an Affordable Housing Trust Fund — and calls to account as needed when budget commitments get shaky. In D.C., Washington Interfaith Network is one of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)’s CBCOs — Congregation-Based Community Organizations. They have rehabbed and protected over 500 affordable apartments from being torn down or converted to condos and have worked for the construction of over 2,000 other affordable rentals while also getting funding committed for their affordable housing trust fund.

Community organizing and advocacy efforts are the “Nathans” of our time and help us both to hear the message of what’s

wrong and give us some ideas of how to make amends.

So, where do we find ourselves in these biblical stories — and how does that help us find how to live out our own story? In what parts of our lives do we feel displaced from home, unraveled, or mistreated like Uriah or Bathsheba? God hears us as we grieve our losses and as we then feel our way back toward community and home.

In other parts of our lives, we may be trying to do some truth-telling like Nathan. It takes practice, might be messy and uncomfortable, and sometimes we might not do it well. But we are lifelong learners and can seek ways to do this kind of humble truth-sharing that Ephesians names, promoting a unified community where all are valued.

In still other parts of our lives, we may be King David — easy to see privilege, greed, misdeeds when someone else is the focus, but harder to see when we ourselves might be hoarding or consuming an unfair share. We still can use our gifts and skill, our creativity and humility to help deconstruct the unjust systems that keep people poor, unhoused and hungry.

Wherever we might see ourselves in the biblical stories, God does have a call on our story right here, right now. This call from Ephesians is to live lives worthy of the calling to which we are called. Part of that calling is to restore a common home, God’s people empowered and all sharing, all thriving.

So, what is your unique gift? What could your commitment be? What might we do together so that all people can feel at home, to feel connected and a sense of belonging, to feel safe in our city, our country, this world? May God continue to call and guide us and may we indeed pursue lives worthy of that call.

### SDOP HYMNS

Two hymns celebrate SDOP’s ministry. The first was written in 1996 by Jane Parker Huber; the second in 2008 by John A. Dalles. Both are included here, with permission to reproduce for ONE-TIME worship use. They are Justice is a Journey Onward and Celebrate Hope.

### OTHER SUGGESTED HYMNS

*Help Us Accept Each Other* (Page 754)  
*When the Poor Ones* (Page 762)  
*May the God of Hope Go with Us* (Page 765)  
*Called as Partners in Christ’s Service* (Page 761)  
*The Lord Hears the Cry of the Poor* (Page 763)  
*For The Troubles and the Sufferings* (Page 764)  
*Canto De Esperanza/God of Hope* (Page 765)  
*The Church of Christ Cannot Be Bound* (Page 766)



John A. Dalles

DUKE STREET

Cel - e - brate hope! Come, — ga - ther near!  
 With Christ our friend, whom — we a - dore,  
 The work at hand, is — hea - ven — sent;  
 By the re - turn of — dig - ni - ty,

The spi - rit of the Lord is near! For Christ has  
 We shall be - friend and bless the poor! Bind up the  
 Our mis - sion is em - pow - er ment! In one great  
 May we build up com - mu - ni ty, With a con -

come — good — news to — preach: Good news for  
 wou - nds of — bro — ken — ness! Bring li - ber  
 ho - ur, — may — we — share, An off - er -  
 cern — for — hu - man - kind, Till we are

all! Good news for each!  
 ty to the o - pressed!  
 ing of las - ting care!  
 one, as God de - signed.

© 2008 John A. Dalles

Jane Parker Huber, 1994

AUSTRIAN HYMN 8.7.8.7 D

Franz Joseph Haydn, 1797

1. Jus - tice is a jour - ney on - ward, up - ward e - ven  
2. When we hear a cry for jus - tice, from the depths of  
3. Em - pa - thy with - out firm ac - tion turns to emp - ty  
4. Jus - tice is a jour - ney on - ward, up - ward, out - ward,

through the pain, Jour - neys have their hills and val - leys;  
hu - man need, Our re - sponse puts love in ac - tion,  
sen - ti - ment, But the call to free God's peo - ple  
spread - ing still. Christ has set us on this jour - ney,

still the dreams and goals re - main. We are peo - ple  
fol - low - ing our Sav - ior's lead. Where we see op -  
leads to self - de - vel - op - ment. When the struc - tures  
claim - ing us for God's own will. Let us share our

freed from bond - age by our Mak - er's will and power.  
pres - sive sys - tems, peo - ple hun - gry, crushed by fear,  
need re - shap - ing, or our neigh - bor is down - cast,  
neigh - bor's bur - dens far a - way or face to face.

We must now re - spond with ac - tion, in this place and for this hour.  
We must be the voice of jus - tice, and the hand to help and cheer.  
Let us seek a bright - er fu - ture, fair - er than the days gone past.  
So may we, by tak - ing ac - tion, be a part - ner through God's grace.