



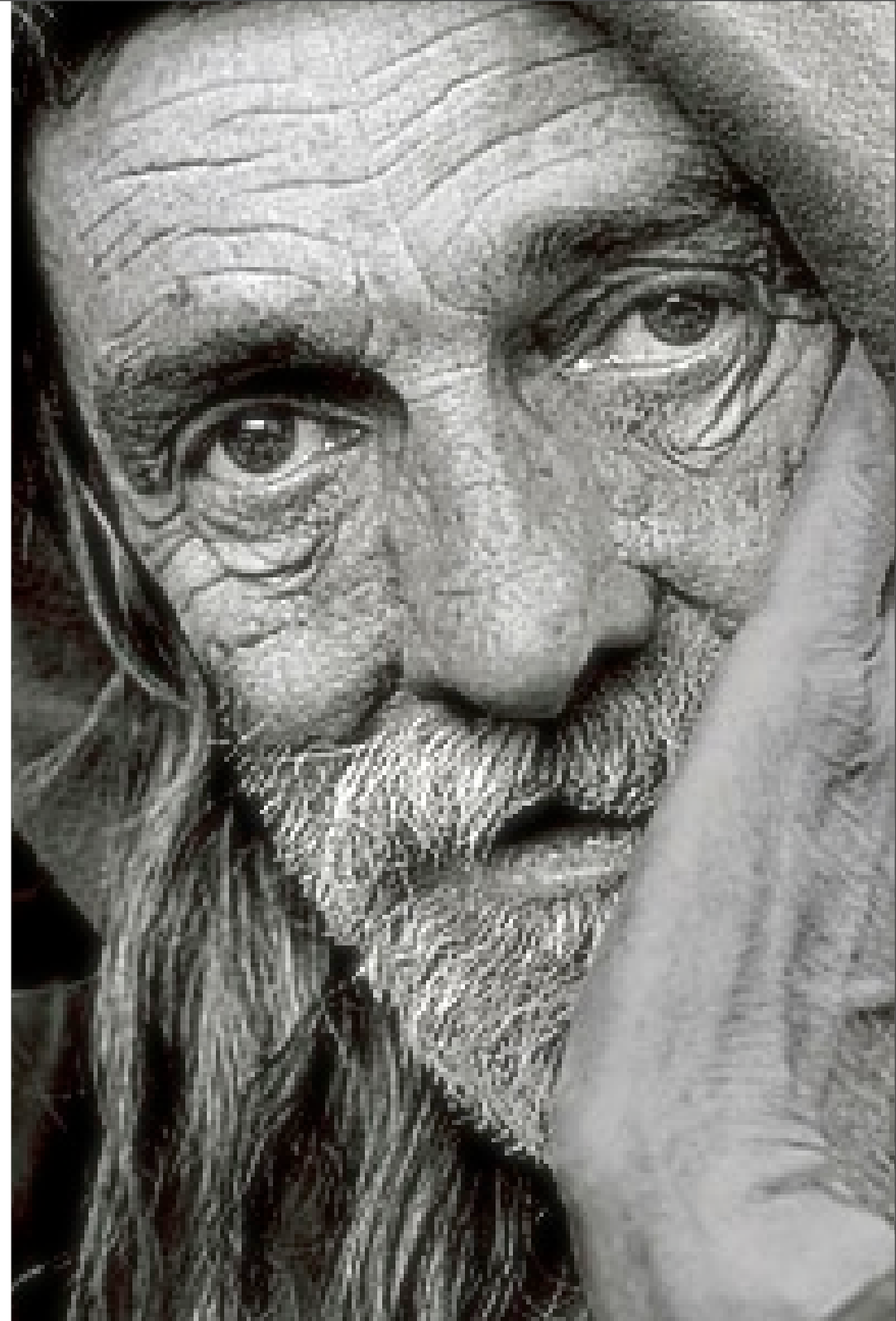
FOCUS on:  
Urban Parish Ministries



# Outline

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- ❖ Introduction
- ❖ Six Leading examples of effective Urban Parish Ministries at various stages of ministry maturity
- ❖ The Poor serving the Poor
- ❖ Six common obstacles:  
3 spiritual & 3 practical
- ❖ Discussion of other obstacles & potential solutions to overcome them
- ❖ Low or No Cost Urban Ministries
- ❖ Conclusion



“It is a better thing to  
**feed the hungry**  
than to raise the dead.”

– St. John Chrysostom

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# What is the NEED in North America?

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- Nearly 10% of the population lives below the poverty line, (US Census Bureau)
- 1 in 50 kids homeless (CBS News)
- 5.8 million Americans out of work (Dept. of Labor)
- Child poverty has risen substantially in the last 9 years after hitting a low in 2000. The largest increases have been seen in the **Midwest, where 2.8 million children live in poverty.**
  - National Center for Children in Poverty (NCCP)

What are we doing to help?







## **Mission of FOCUS North America**

Working especially in the areas of Food, Occupations, Clothing, Understanding and Shelter, FOCUS North America expresses Christ's love through social action in North America for those who are hungry, thirsty, strangers, naked, sick or in prison (Matt. 25:35-6).

## **FOCUS North America's Objectives are to:**

**Serve** those in need, by providing aid through our programs and partners,

**Support** Orthodox Christian social action ministries, agencies, professionals, and volunteers; and

**Supply** parishes and others with the education, resources and training needed to initiate social action ministries in their own communities.

# St. Brigid Fellowship

A ministry of St. Athanasius Antiochian Orthodox Church



“Working with the homeless never felt like a choice to me. My grandfather taught me through his actions which flowed with a deep penetrating love that all human beings were our brothers, sisters, mothers, and fathers. I learned as a child that we are all struggling through this life together most of us doing the best we can. It is our responsibility to care for those who cannot find the strength or resources until they are able to carry themselves again. My grandfather passed away when I was nine, but his prayers have remained with me.” - A ministry volunteer

# Philoxenia House

A ministry of Holy Anargyroi,  
Sts. Cosmos & Damianos Greek Orthodox Church

Holy Anargyroi Church  
703 W. Center St.  
Rochester, MN 55902  
507-282-1529



“I was no longer able to walk. I was around 15 years old. The physicians sent me away to, literally, die within my own walls. I traveled for treatment at the Mayo Clinic – Rochester, MN. I received two hip replacements, and two knee replacements. The last operation was on my ankles. I am especially grateful to Father Nick and to all the parishioners of the church in Rochester, to the sponsors of Philoxenia House such as FOCUS-NA. I am once again able to walk and have been granted a second life. We lived in the Philoxenia House for a year. We had no means to live in a hotel and we simply would not have been able to proceed with my treatment without the Philoxenia House. We would have had to go home...” - House Guest



# Abba Moses Free Clinic

A ministry of St Luke Orthodox Mission, OCA

P. O. Box 1887  
Anniston, Alabama 36207  
256-235-3893



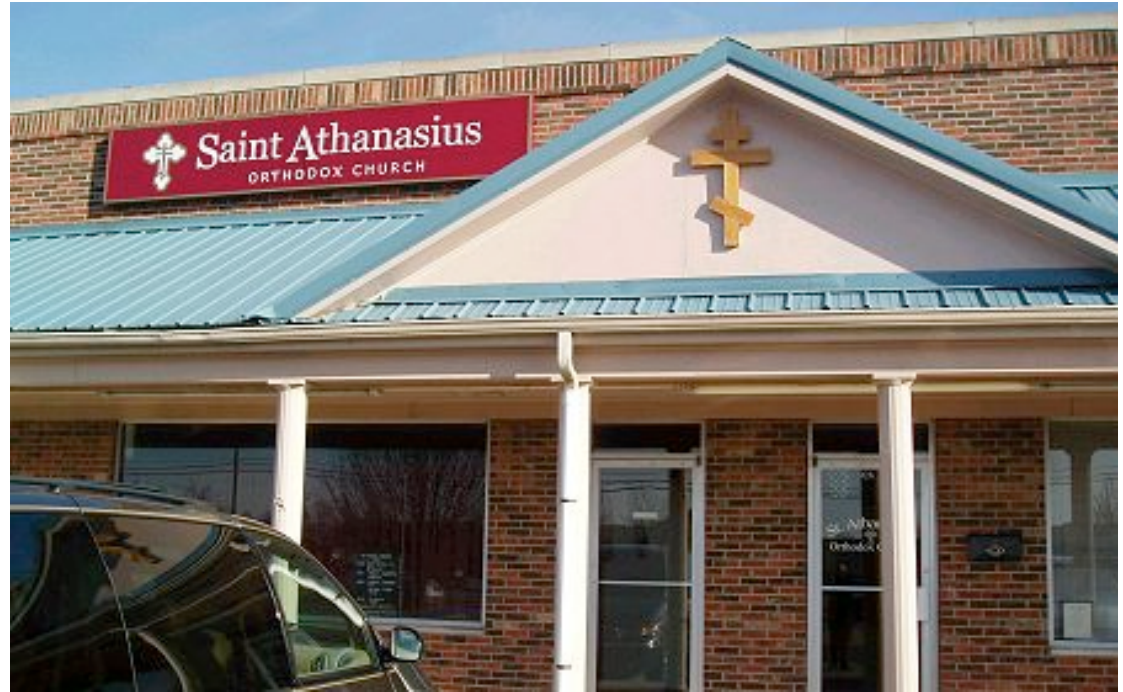
“We sponsor weekday Morning Prayer services, followed by a free medical clinic. Run by an Orthodox physician and nurse, the clinic cares for 1,500 people a year! The people who attend the clinic are uninsured. Without the clinic, they would be without healthcare and medication. By receiving our baseline health services, the people not only attain improved health outcomes but also obtain attention for their spiritual wounds. The waiting room has free Orthodox books and icons. The clinic also serves as a training opportunity for disadvantaged college and high school students who want to enter the medical field.”

- Dr. Carla Thomas

# Project Lazarus Bread Ministry

(partnering with Panera Bread Co.)

A ministry of St. Athanasius Orthodox Mission, OCA



“The name of our bread ministry, “The Lazarus Project,” refers to the poor man in the Gospel of Luke (16:19-31) who is hungry and full of sores. It is our hope that, in undertaking this ministry, people will find the love of Christ in the food we provide. It is also our hope and prayer that, as we extend the arms of Christ out to those who need “daily bread,” the self-satisfied and self-absorbed rich man in each of us will be repeatedly rebuked and converted.” - Fr. Justin Patterson, Priest





2601 E Central Ave Ste 2,  
Wichita, KS 67214  
(316) 686-2600

# The Treehouse

A ministry started by St. George  
Antiochian Orthodox Cathedral



“During the current time of economic strain our mothers are being challenged to somehow make their dollar stretch ever further and it is difficult. The rush of daily life can sometimes make us lose sight of our blessings. One of our greatest blessings is that of our children. Yet, not every Wichita family has what they need to provide even the basic necessities for their families, making life even more stressful. Offering the small things such as a dry diaper, a full tummy and a warm blanket can make an incredible difference in the life of a child. The Treehouse is a sanctuary for mothers who do not have the resources to provide for their newborn baby. The financial support of FOCUS-NA has enabled us to provide these much needed necessities and to ease the tremendous stress felt in so many of the mothers that we serve.”

- Renee Croitoru, Executive Director



# RECONCILIATION SERVICES

3101 Troost Ave,  
Kansas City, MO  
(816) 931-4751  
[www.RS3101.org](http://www.RS3101.org)

A ministry of St. Mary of Egypt Serbian Orthodox Church



"Your support enabled our intensive case manager to help overcome barriers for 40 of the most vulnerable in KC. These are homeless and/or mentally ill clients who had fallen through the cracks of the existing safety net in Kansas City, MO. Without the assistance of FOCUS, North America, there is no telling what might have happened to these suicidal and very needy individuals."

- Fr. Paisius Altschul, Executive Director

# The Poor Serving the Poor...





# Become Part of the Fabric of the Community

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**Our ministries should not Exist FOR the poor,  
but WITH the poor.**



“The poor you will always have with you...” - Mark 14:7

# The Church's Dual Role In Urban Ministry

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**The Church is both the confronting prophet and gentle healer.**

Questions to consider in a needs assessment:

- Are the broken systems of a city being confronted and offered real potential for change?
- Are the poor and marginalized of the city provided the avenues by which they can bring about change in their situation?
- Are the wealthy and powerful given the opportunity to join in common cause with the poor to confront the systems of the city and seek their transformation?

# Three Key Areas of Social Action Involvement

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- Get involved in the neighborhood and participate in community building initiatives. Find out how people living in the neighborhood feel about their community?
  - Advocate and work for community safety - such issues dominate the concerns of those living in urban neighborhoods
    - Work for improved conditions and access to essential resources for children and the elderly. These populations are among the most vulnerable to adverse economic and social conditions.

# Six Common Barriers to Urban Parish Ministry



# Three Common **Spiritual** Barriers

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## **1. We do not want to sacrifice the things we possess (the things that possess us)**

- “Those who cling to worthless idols forfeit the grace that could be theirs.” - Jonah 2:8

## **2. We do not think we have the skills and abilities and are convinced God can't use us**

- “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” - 2 Cor. 12:9
- “God does not call the equipped, He equips the called.”

## **3. We suffer from the “We can't serve *them* here...” syndrome**

- Some will gladly serve the poor “over there” but have serious reservation about serving “right here”
- Hard-heartedness, racism, classism, xenophobia...
- Can't see the icons



# Three Common **Practical** Barriers and solutions

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## 1. We do not know the poor

- Poverty is hard to see when its 20 miles across town, but it is equally hard to see when it is 20 steps from the alter
  - ➡ Simple companion ministries, dependable hours

## 2. We do not know where to begin

- Most of us are not social workers or NPO professionals and the problems of the poor are overwhelming
  - ➡ Build alliances and initiate task forces, provide the space, learn as you grow

## 3. We do not have the financial resources

- We want to serve but our numbers are relatively few and our expenses are significant
  - ➡ Low or no cost ministries, avoid events, look for public funds (weed & seed, CBG's, resource distributer programs)

Discussion ...

# Low or No cost Urban Parish Ministries

# Start with what you are able ...

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- Offer a cup of coffee. Host a meal or provide groceries
- Open up a space (office or outdoors) at a time you can keep to so your neighbors can depend on you. Even for an hour or two a week.
- Outreach. Walk to streets to meet your neighbors. Tell them where you are.
- Offer mail address service at the church. Mail call at the office hours.
- Offer phone number message service. Messages available at office hours.
- Stock a closet of warm jackets, socks, ponchos, tarps, sleeping bags and other life-savers.
- Offer hygiene supplies and, better yet, a place to wash up.
- Don't give cash but offer bus tokens, meal vouchers, and laundry service (look for free community resources)
- Stock a food pantry. Find resources like Second Harvest Food Bank, co-ops. Help get Food Stamps or start a food co-op, or angel food ministries (provides food for small churches)
- Provide lockers if possible
- Computer, internet access with filters and safeguards
- Emergency Micro-bank for specific needs like birth certificates or transition to housing
- Referral to services...Help with the paperwork... Walk through the process with them if you can. Be a companion to the poor and needy

# Urban Ministries discussion ...



Thank You!

