

# THEOLOGY OF THE POOR

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**A Biblical Review Concerning Ministry to the Poor and the Implications  
for Church**



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## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 The Purpose of This Review

The purpose of this review is to:

- i. Determine the responsibility, according to scripture, that the church has towards the poor.
- ii. Review the work of Hope Trust against the framework provided by scripture as set out in (i).
- iii. Revise or confirm the vision for the work of HCF among the poor, depending on outcome of (ii).
- iv. To explore how such work should be carried out (eg through a separately registered legal entity such as Hope Trust, or, through some other arrangement) and what the boundaries for such work should be for HCF.

### 1.2 What is Poverty?

Howitt (2012) offers a working definition of poverty as: “... a complicated multifaceted state which has at its very core the word “lack” in terms of all things essential for material security – particularly in regard to numerous resources leading to physical deprivation.” This focuses on the material aspect of poverty because in most conversations about poverty that is the element uppermost in mind.

At the outset, as a church we absolutely recognise that poverty also has spiritual and mental (emotional) dimensions to it. It is also true to affirm, however, that the result of assisting people physically tends to produce positive results on mental and spiritual poverty scales. In other words salvation alone (becoming a part of God’s family through spiritual re-birth) does not necessarily automatically translate into material well-being. It is often a necessary element, but not sufficient, to move someone from poverty to well-being. This is one reason that the scriptures speak so much about care of the poor beyond purely proclaiming the good news of the Gospel.

### 1.3 Ministry to the Poor is Part of Gospel Proclamation

Timothy Keller (2008), a well-known theologian and church leader in New York situates ministry to the poor as a vital component of gospel proclamation. He dispels the idea of **only** proclaiming the gospel and seeing that people are saved through the Cross of Jesus. He summarises a quote from Jonathan Edwards’s discourse on “Christian Charity” with the following:

“According to Edwards, giving to and caring for the poor is a crucial, non-optional aspect of living out the gospel.” (Keller, 2008). He further establishes that the ministry of the gospel is not at the expense of the poor but rather that the pattern and logic of the gospel will move us to love and help the poor. In this passage from Galatians Paul brings out several important

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elements that must impact upon the way we think about the poor.

*Galatians 6: 1-10 Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted. **2 Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.** 3 For if anyone thinks he is something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself. 4 But let each one test his own work, and then his reason to boast will be in himself alone and not in his neighbor. 5 **For each will have to bear his own load.** 6 One who is taught the word must share all good things with the one who teaches. 7 Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap. 8 For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life. 9 **And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up.** 10 So then, as we have opportunity, **let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith.***

In particular, verse 2 refers to bearing one another's burden and so fulfilling the law of Christ. Paul also differentiates verse 2 (burdens) from verse 5 which speaks of us each having our own load to carry. Keller points out that Edwards understood that the "do good to everyone..." especially referred to material provision. But, 'bearing one another's burdens' could only come from being moved by the gospel to give to the poor in ways that are **significant, remarkable and sacrificial**. I think that this is relevant to the fact that the poor often have a load (vs 5) to carry that they cannot carry alone, viz. it becomes a burden. The point is clearly made that fulfilling the law of Christ speaks of sacrifice (even when we may not have the material means), at cost to ourselves, because that is what Jesus modelled.

This element of sacrifice is important upfront in a document dealing with the poor. God will not let us slide over the challenging demands of His gospel when it cost His own Son His life, that we may have life in abundance.

### **1.4 Human Rights and Ministry to the Poor**

Derek Morphew (2015) in his *tour de force Kingdom Theology and Human Rights* makes an extraordinarily strong case for the church to be deeply involved with ministry to the poor which includes justice issues (which are human rights issues). Indeed, he argues that just as signs and wonders are an integral part of the Kingdom of God, so are mercy ministry and ministry to the poor, central to the Kingdom of God. The Gospel message intersects with the kingdoms of this world. In so doing, when the gospel is preached there are signs and wonders following. When the poor are the gospel target and the love of Christ is shed abroad among them, **salvation and empowering interventions** that equip them for life change may be part of the signs and wonders. Keller quotes Edwards again as follows:

*"The famous verse Micah 6:8 required God's people to "do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with your God." Edwards concludes that this requires the godly person to be involved with the poor.<sup>9</sup> Bruce Waltke says that both "do justice" and "love mercy" mean to be kind to the **oppressed and marginalized and active in helping people who are financially and socially in a weaker condition.**<sup>10</sup> But this emphasis is not limited to the Old Testament. Care for the poor is "a thing so essential, that the contrary cannot consist with a sincere love to God" (1 John 3:17–19).<sup>11</sup> From this (and 2 Cor. 8:8) Edwards concludes that **doing justice and mercy** is not a meritorious reason that God will accept us.<sup>12</sup> **Rather, doing justice and***

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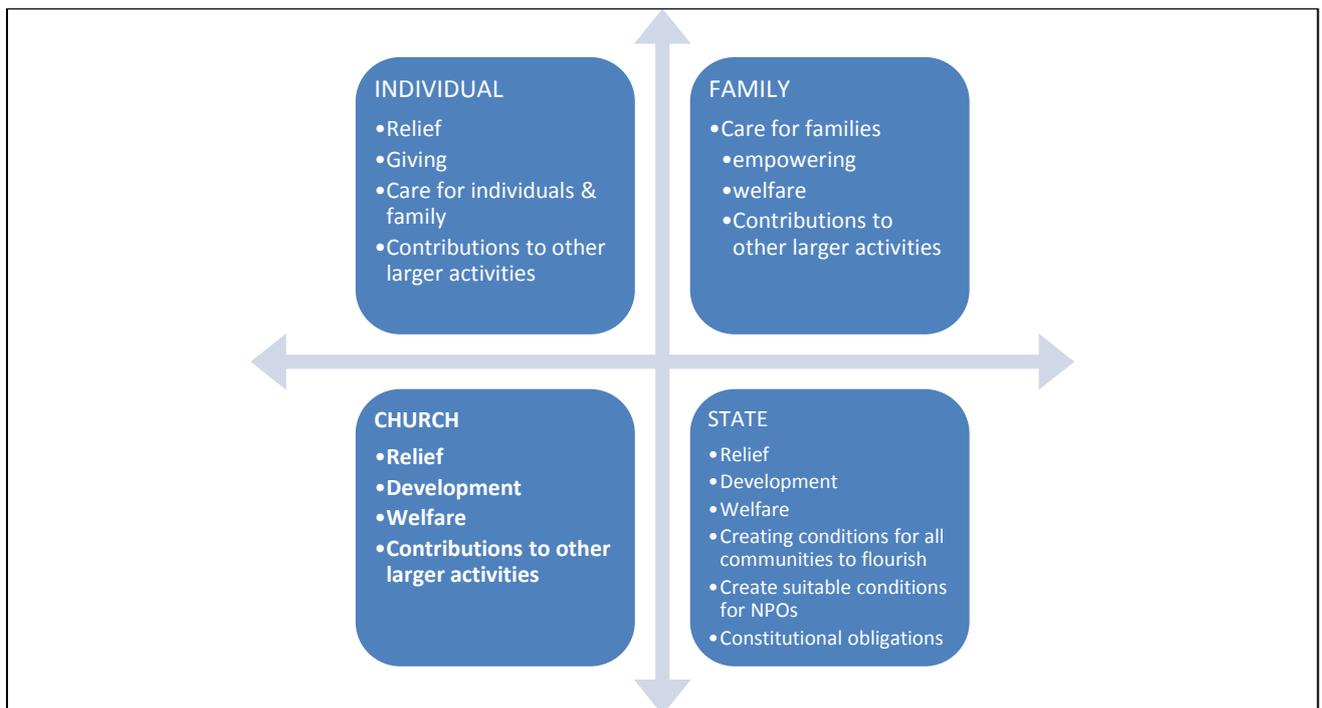
**mercy for the poor is an inevitable sign that the doer has justifying faith and grace in the heart.” (Keller, 2008) (my emphases)**

In this quote we see the concern for “love and mercy” toward the poor, as well as “doing justice” for the oppressed and marginalised. This brings material issues of poverty together with human rights issues, the latter being the responsibility of the State (because of what lies in the national Constitution), but the church is to hold those responsible to account, while also assisting the oppressed and marginalized as may be necessary because of the failures of the State.

### 1.5 Who are the Parties to Minister to the Poor?

There are four groups, the individual, the family, the church and the State that are interrelated in what the Bible speaks about responsibility in regard to the poor. The differentiation between these elements is a convenience since God sees them as interrelated on a continuum from individual (the reborn individual) through the family, the church and ultimately the State (or body politic).

The diagram in Figure 1 illustrates the continuum and alludes to the responsibility that each element can have to the poor. These are not comprehensive nor prescriptive, merely illustrative.



**Figure 1: Care for Poor lies in a Continuum from the Individual to the State**

#### 1.5.1 The Individual (John 3: 7)

The individual is personally responsible for choosing to respond to Jesus through faith and repentance. In turn the individual receives forgiveness, imputed righteousness, new life in Christ and eternity with Him at the end of his earthly life. *John 3:7 Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.'* This scripture supports the responsibility of the individual

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in choosing Jesus through re-birth and following him. The obligation of individuals is to choose to follow the leading of the Holy Spirit, allowing our lives to be changed from one degree of glory to the next. There is a daily sanctification process by which we are, at one and the same time, holy and are being made holy. In our society we are all confronted by the poor among and around us. The gospel, as spelled out so clearly by Keller, clearly demands sacrificial responses from us. However, there clearly are structural aspects of poverty in which the individual cannot be engaged alone and that a family, a church or the State may be better equipped to engage. The difference would logically be one of scale but not of intent. Thus there may be material assistance given to an individual or a family, as one off events or over longer periods of time, through relationship. When the individual gives (in any of a myriad of ways) to an individual or a family, to be doing so through relationship will be more rewarding than throwing a coin to a street child while stopped at a traffic light.

### **1.5.2 Family (Acts 16: 14- 16 and 40)**

A family that develops their heart for the poor and inculcates such a heart in their children can enjoy a hugely rewarding experience. Using HCF as an example, there are whole families that are already serving the poor in a variety of ways – some financially, some through acts of service and some through prayer. The impact of a family expressing the gospels heart of love for the poor multiplies the impact. The Body of Believers (the church) has a *corporate* witness that goes further than what is achievable by people in isolation and that this is true for families too. The scriptures also specifically give the family responsibility for caring for family members such as widows and orphans. In Acts 16: 14 onwards we read the account of Lydia. She was a dealer in cloth and by the lead she took and the role in hosting the disciples (see verse 40) when they were discharged from prison she seemed to be a woman of means and was able to host others, poorer than herself, in her family home.

### **1.5.3 Church (1Peter 2: 9-10; Acts 4:35; 1Cor 16:2)**

The church can be involved in many different ways with ministry to the poor. There must always be evangelism because that is the means of addressing the primary spiritual causes of poverty. However, the church, depending upon its calling, conviction and budgeting of resources, may be involved in different levels of engagement with the poor, depending upon their calling. Church leadership have a first responsibility for their church family.

### **1.5.4 State**

The State is not a Christian entity. Depending upon its national Constitution and depending upon its resources, it will address the needs of the poor in many different ways or in no ways at all. Indeed, the State may have many good intentions but may also harm the poor through disempowering them. This has been a significant experience in the USA since they declared war on poverty in the 1970s. Similarly in South Africa, the array of social grants has created a generation who do not have to work to survive. The State should be creating an enabling environment in which the maximum number of people (poor or not) are able to engage in productive pursuits which meet their own needs, as well as contribute to the State *fiscus*.

## **2. ALLOCATION OF RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE POOR ACCORDING TO SCRIPTURE**

### **2.1 Background: The Origins of Poverty**

The origins of poverty are to be found in the fall of man when Adam and Eve ate of the forbidden fruit. The privileged physical, emotional and spiritual position Adam and Eve held in paradise (characterised by no sin, no disease, no lack or poverty, perfect justice, equitable access to all basic needs and harmonious loving relationships) was forfeited when they rebelled against the one word of instruction they had been given: "Do not eat the forbidden fruit!" (see Genesis 3). This led to proliferation of all the vices we know as common to man.

### **2.2 The Hebrews (Jews): God's Chosen People**

The relationship between Father God and the people He created in His image focussed on families (Adam and Eve and on down the generations till Noah and his sons and their families). In Genesis 12 we read of Abram being called by God. Abram is called and responds by faith to follow the call. This obedience by faith together with the promise of descendants (seed) point forward to the Israelites and ultimately to Jesus the Son of God – the Christ-through whom all the promises made to Abraham would be fulfilled. In this God was creating a 'called out' people for Himself – first the nation of Israel; then the Church of Jesus Christ.

### **2.3 Poverty, before the Law**

During the period between the patriarchs (Abraham, Isaac and Jacob) and the Israelites (before leaving Egypt) it becomes clear in Genesis chapters 12 through 50 that obedience to God led to spiritual and material prosperity even in the midst of drought and famine (see Genesis 26:1- and the story of Isaac prospering in a foreign land during a time of famine as a consequence of his obedience to God's instruction).

The nations that were not part of Abraham and his descendants (such as Philistines) envied Isaac and his prosperity and created the potential for conflict over water-wells and suitable grazing land (see Genesis 26:13-33). In essence this demonstrated a perfect correlation between relationship with and obedience to God and material wealth. Poverty or lack was only born out of failure to put the God of the Hebrews above all others.

### **2.4 Poverty during the Period of the Law and the Temple System**

#### **2.4.1 Who are the Poor?**

Gary DeMar (1989, pg 185) summarises scripture's definition of the poor in one sentence: "*God directs Christians to offer relief for the oppressed, the hungry, prisoners, the blind, strangers, widows and orphans. Such help is not to be indiscriminate. The Bible clearly states that there are many poverty-stricken because they failed to follow God's laws regarding work.*" *2Th 3:10 If anyone is not willing to work, let him not eat.* Demar continues with some important injunctions concerning the need to evaluate the poor and their

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condition by considering the reasons they find themselves in the “straits of poverty”. For example, it is necessary to ask the following questions: “*Have they been debilitated because of illness? Has natural disaster wiped out a family’s savings? Is a family poor because of debt? Do governmental policies inhibit the poor from being productive citizens? Has the poor man been oppressed because of his race or station in society (human rights issues)? Does a nation’s religious ideals prohibit economic growth?*” (pg 185). These issues touch upon personal characteristics of poverty but also upon issues of justice (human rights in today’s language).

Each of the categories of the poor identified by DeMar were found among the Israelites during the Exodus and later during the period of the Kings)

### **2.4.2 How Should the Poor be Helped?**

Scripture provides extensive guidance on how the poor were to be assisted during the period following the giving of the Law to Moses at Mt Sinai. DeMar suggests that any attempt to help the poor without detailed application of the biblical laws that deal with poverty will ultimately fail.

- i. **Tithes** (Numbers 18:24; Deut 14: 28,29)  
One of the uses of the tithe during the time of the Law was to provide for those who are listed among the poor. In the third year the national tithe was used to assist the Levites who were without inheritance as well as the alien (stranger or foreigner), widow and orphan.
- ii. **Gleaning** (Leviticus 19: 9, 10; 23: 22; Deut 23: 24,25; 24: 19-21; Exodus 23: 10,11)  
Grains were left on the margins of the harvest fields that could be harvested by the poor. The poor were even permitted to glean during the sabbatical years when the land was rested. This privilege was granted to the deserving poor. (See Ruth 2: 4-16). Determining who are the deserving poor was a responsibility of local land owners who knew members of their community could vouch for the character and condition of the poor. Gleaning was hard work and mitigated against a welfare state in which benefits accrue without effort.
- iii. **Lending** (Exodus 22:25; Leviticus 25: 35-37; Deut 15: 1, 2, 9)  
Lending laws to help the poor are separate from business loans. Lending to the poor assumes that there shall be no interest charged, whereas loans for business can levy interest. In the 7<sup>th</sup> year all interest free loans to the poor are to be cancelled by the lender, even if the loan is not repaid. Lenders were not to refuse loans to the poor when there was only one year left in the seven year cycle in which loans would be cancelled!
- iv. **Strangers** (Exodus 22: 21-24; Numbers 9:14; Leviticus 24: 22; Deut 10: 18,19; Jeremiah 7: 3-7; Zechariah 7: 9-14)  
Strangers were to be accorded the same rights and privileges as Jews in the nation of Israel and they were not to be oppressed, in the same way as the widow and orphan were not to be oppressed. Zechariah specifically adds the

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poor into the list of those not to be oppressed.

- v. **Widows and Orphans** (Exodus 22: 22-24; Deut 27: 19; Isaiah 1: 17)  
Just as strangers are not to be oppressed so widows and orphans are not to be afflicted. God asserts His anger will be kindled and He will rise to the defence of widows and orphans.
  
- vi. **The Jubilees Principle** (Gen 13: 15; 17:8; Leviticus 18: 24-29)  
Seven year cycles were important in Israel. Debts were cancelled every seventh year. The Jubilee year was the 50<sup>th</sup> year, the year following the 49<sup>th</sup> year, after a series of 7 seven year cycles.  
God promised the land of Canaan to Abraham and his descendants. In Galatians 3: 29 Paul applies the land promise to Jesus. Those who are Christ's receive the promise made to Abraham of an "everlasting possession" where Jehovah will be their God. The perpetual possession of the original inheritance signified the relationship a believer has with Jesus Christ; therefore, to possess the land was to possess Jesus Christ. In terms of this the Jubilee required that the land could not be permanently alienated from Godly heirs. This was a symbol that God would never leave or forsake His people; that by His grace, His people would remain in the land, instead of getting kicked out as Adam and Eve were and as were the previous heathen inhabitants of the land. (See also Luke 4: 18, 19, 21 and Isaiah 61: 1, 2; Leviticus 25: 9)

**Jubilee was not a means of wealth redistribution.** The reason for the sale of land in the first instance was most likely because of ineffective use of the land by the custodian. It was then sold in order to get out of debt. They would also lease land to another more productive land user. The lessor had use of the land up to the 50<sup>th</sup> year. He retained his profits from earlier years.

Land laws were inherited laws. Land reverted to the **family** of the **original** owner. Immigrants did not benefit by the Jubilee. Their interest bearing debts were not cancelled. Non-Israelites could not benefit from the year of release. The Jubilee which existed for a limited time and in a limited geographical area called for 'restoration' not 'redistribution' or equalization. This law cannot be applied outside of Israel. It also cannot be applied after Christ's resurrection. It is not a smoke screen for socialism.

## **2.5 The Poor in the Church Age**

### **2.5.1 Who are the Poor?**

Scripture in the New Testament does not differentiate the poor in this age from the poor as defined in the Law. There is a continued affirmation of the oppressed, the hungry, prisoners, the blind, strangers, widows and orphans.

In Luke 4:18-21 we read about Jesus initiating His public ministry with this quote from Isaiah 61:

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*(18) "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has chosen me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free the oppressed (19) and announce that the time has come when the Lord will save his people." (20) Jesus rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. All the people in the synagogue had their eyes fixed on him, (21) as he said to them, "This passage of scripture has come true today, as you heard it being read."*

In this passage Jesus clearly identifies the materially and spiritually poor, the captives, the blind and the oppressed.

Paul, in 1 Corinthians 16: 2, speaks of collections to assist the poor in other Churches, notably Jerusalem at that time.

### **2.5.2 How Should the Poor be Helped?**

The pattern in the New Testament is similar in some respects to that advocated in the Law (Jesus, after all, came to fulfil the Law – Matthew 5: 17). However, as with many of the precepts in scripture those concerning the poor go further. The following discussion seeks to illustrate how this is so.

- i. **Tithes** (Hebrews 7: 11-28; 1Peter 2: 9-10; Acts 4:35; 1Cor 16:2)  
In the Old Testament the priesthood oversaw the distributions for the Levites, the poor, the orphans, widows and discharged the responsibility for the Law including overseeing the observance of the Law by the Israelites. **In the New Testament** there is no national priesthood. Rather the tithes and offerings are brought into the storehouse (local church) where the Elders of the local church have the responsibility to distribute portions to those who are truly needy.
- ii. **Private giving** (Luke 10: 30-37; Acts 4: 32-37; 11: 29)  
In cases where there are emergencies amongst the brethren, assistance should be given. Each born again believer has a responsibility to be generous toward those in need occasioned by some sort of emergency. In scripture we read how some of the wealthy land owners in the fledgling church in Jerusalem sold land holdings additional to their needs and gave generously to meet the temporary needs of the infant church. The freedom and flexibility of private giving is well illustrated by the story of the "good Samaritan". He responded immediately and did not seek assistance from any government agency or from the Church.
- iii. **Gleaning** (Matthew 12: 1)  
Jesus endorsed the gleaning from the wheat fields. In the 21<sup>st</sup> Century circumstances are different but gleaning continues. Many people survive off the discards from the capitalist system. At the lowest end of the spectrum are the gleaners at 'waste' dumps. Many people donate clothing to Hope Trust. This is distributed to the most needy (usually widows and orphans) free of charge. The clothing additional to this need is sold via a monthly jumble sale at very low

prices<sup>1</sup> (R10 for adult clothing with no stains, tears, missing buttons or malfunctioning zips; R5 for boys and girls items and two items of baby clothing for R5.) Finally, damaged clothing is donated to a programme supporting the community in Tugela Ferry where items of any quality are readily passed on. Modern gleaning may involve the collection of discarded goods (not just clothing) and the repair, distribution and sale of such items may provide employment for the unemployed and/or handicapped. The rise of welfarism in South Africa (covering the many social grants such as Child Grants etc) has adversely affected the markets for such programmes since people may be sitting at home drawing a grant with no imperative to work.

#### **iv. Lending**

This is not something that is readily undertaken by the individual or the church in the present age. This is not because scripture does not speak of lending (albeit in the Old Testament) but rather because *welfarism* and social grants have provided alternative sources of income for the poor. The State in South Africa makes available an array of social grants. Furthermore, as part of redress necessary from the apartheid era is the extensive land reform programme which provides restitution as well as provision of land which may not be restitution.

#### **v. Strangers** (1Tim 5: 8 and John 14:15)

The care of strangers (aliens or foreigners) is likened to the care of widows. Paul makes it clear that Christian families have a duty to care for their own. At first this may appear as being the care of blood relatives. While that is true, it may also be extended legitimately to the stranger, especially if the stranger is a fellow born – again believer.

#### **vi. The Widows and Orphans** (Matthew 15: 4-6; 1Timothy 5: 3-16; James 1: 27)

Family are the first line of responsibility and the primary provider for members who are orphaned, widowed or otherwise in need. When there are no family members able to take up such responsibility (they are too young, are unemployed themselves, are ill or disabled) then the Church of Jesus Christ must assume the responsibility. Orphans are in particular need of assistance, especially when they are under working age. DeMar exhorts the church to make every opportunity to care for the orphan and to find willing families able to provide such needed care and support, for example, through fostering. Scripture differentiates, in the case of widows, between those young enough to re-marry compared with those unable to. Support for widows is firstly a family affair. Furthermore, widows should only be eligible for support if they are or have been engaged in charitable service, have brought up children, have shown hospitality to strangers and have been servant hearted in assisting those in distress and have generally devoted themselves to good work (1Tim 5:10). If the widow is able-bodied and able to work, but fails to do so, no charity should be extended (2Thess 3:10; 1Thess 4:11).

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<sup>1</sup> The sale of these goods enables poorer people the dignity of choosing the items they wish to spend their money on as distinct from being given items they may not wish to have.

### 2.5.3 General Principles in Helping the Poor

- i. **There is to be a distinction made between Covetousness and Envy** (see Genesis 26: 12-15; (Demar 1989, pg 224); Proverbs 14: 30 (NLT))  
Socialism and communism work on the principles of envy. Under these ideological systems the rich are blamed for the plight of the poor! The wealth of the rich is confiscated and divided among the masses. The long term effects are non-productive workers, discouragement to work beyond the requirements of a job description, a lack of thrift and wise investment, social and economic non-cooperation, increased “class” hostility, crimes of envy, hostility against those of superior ability, education and socio-economic status. In the light of these points: The poor are to be assisted with understanding (Deut 8: 18; Genesis 26: 12,13; Amos 8: 4-6)  
Wealth is not evil in itself. God gives power to generate wealth. The poor are not to blame others for their condition **unless theft and corruption have placed them in such a position.**
- ii. **The poor must be evangelised like any other group.**
- iii. **The poor must be instructed** in what the Bible teaches about diligent work (Exodus 20: 9-11; Proverbs 24: 30-34)
- iv. **Scripture instructs us all “to bear our own load”** (Gal 6: 5). Generally the materially poor should only be recipients of charitable gifts as a way of relieving a temporary burden (Gal 6: 2).
- v. **God promises that “the wealth of sinners is stored up for the righteous”** (Prov 13:22). See also Prov 23: 17; 24: 19; Psalm 37; Psalm 73: 3-9)
- vi. **Scripture teaches us to be content** with what we have and not to covet what we do not have (1Tim 6:8).
- vii. **There is an obligation on the church to teach the poor** that in a Godly society in which Godly economic principles are followed by individuals and civil governments, the blessings of God in the form of Christian Economic Liberty will allow for both the best possible provision for the poor and the greatest probability of advancement for oneself and one’s children.

### 2.6 What Should This Mean for us in 2016?

- i. Howitt (2012) sums up some thoughts on the purpose of the Jubilee Year. *“The year of Jubilee imagined an institutionalized structure that affected everyone automatically. It also allowed for self-help and self-development. With his land returned to him, the poor person could once again earn his own living. The Biblical principle of the Jubilee emphasized the significance of institutionalized devices and structures that encourage justice.”* (Howitt, 2012). A key statement Howitt makes is: *“With his land returned to him, the poor person could once*

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*again earn his own living.*” This is an empowerment principle. In essence a poor person could be rescued from poverty and even slavery with the return of their family’s land, which at the time was the only means of making a living. In the world today this cannot be implemented in the same way, but we are most likely all aware of believers that have fallen on hard times and have been offered employment (means of making a living). Perhaps employment openings have even been created for people. This, perhaps, is the heart of this provision in scripture.

- ii. The sabbatical year, when debts were cancelled, slaves<sup>2</sup> could be redeemed and lands left fallow to rest and be refreshed for future productivity, was another means of achieving justice (rather than charity) so that the gap between rich and poor did not keep on and on expanding. In *Deut 15: 11a* “*For there will never cease to be poor in the land. Therefore I command you, . . .*” is an interesting scripture because it reflects the realization that God has that the poor shall always be with us but that we are commanded to open our hand towards them, implying to be generous. *Deut 15: 11b* “*You shall open wide your hand to your brother, to the needy and to the poor, in your land.*”. These provisions, while addressing matters of justice were also of an empowering nature, enabling those overtaken by hard-times (even if their own fault) to make a come-back if they would start afresh and work hard. In the New Testament this provision might be more stringent in that it may be applied to all people, not just believers because of their common humanity and being made in the image of God. Therefore they deserve the utmost levels of respect and dignity. As support for such a statement one can examine the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10: 30-37); Jesus teaching on true righteousness being revealed through love (Luke 6: 27-38); and the metaphor of inviting the outcast (Matt 25: 1-14; Luke 14: 12-24).
- iii. Howitt (2012) reports a study by Hanks (1983) in which he notes that ‘oppression’ and ‘injustice’ were the number one cause of poverty in the bible. It is debatable in South Africa whether these are the prime causes of poverty and whether one would express the prime causes in this way. However, oppression and injustice are likely to be up there among the top causes. Therefore, any ministry to the poor in which Christians engage should keep in mind that part of the empowering of the poor is to find freedom (physical and spiritual) from oppression and justice from injustice. The latter, is often simply ignorance among the poor, of the rights, benefits or opportunities that are available to all people in this country to forge futures that are hope filled.
- iv. Jesus lived as one unemployed (once he moved on from practicing carpentry), was identified with the poor and continuously reached out to the poor. An extremely challenging implication of this lifestyle that Howitt (2012) brings to the fore is that “*Jesus preached and taught His disciples how to practice the Jubilee: By living by faith, always trusting that God will provide for one’s needs; by*

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<sup>2</sup> Israelite slaves were mostly sold into slavery as a means of repaying debt. Slavery was not God’s long-term intention for people.

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*remitting all debts and by redistributing wealth. Consider what sort of impact this type of lifestyle (if you or your church lived by it) would have upon society.”*

- v. Finally, Jesus near the end of His ministry on earth concludes Matthew 25 as follows: Mat 25:31-46 "When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. 32 Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. 33 And he will place the sheep on his right, but the goats on the left. 34 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. 35 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, 36 I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.' 37 Then the righteous will answer him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? 38 And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? 39 And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?' 40 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.' 41 "Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. 42 For I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, 43 I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not clothe me, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.' 44 Then they also will answer, saying, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to you?' 45 Then he will answer them, saying, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.' 46 And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."

There is no doubt that following Jesus costs one's 'all' and part of the 'all' is a commitment to ministry to the poor!

## **3 DISTINCTION BETWEEN CHURCH AND STATE IN THE MODERN ERA**

### **3.1 Introduction**

Derek Morphew's (2015) treatise on the **Kingdom of God and Human Rights** provides a historical perspective of how human rights have been addressed through the ages. He brings out the facts of how it is the church and Christians that have influenced the State through the ages especially from the times of Thomas Aquinas ..... who provided the early statements for separation of Church and State and provided much of the framework for our modern legal systems covering such matters as 'innocent until proven guilty' and a myriad of other precepts that we all take for granted. It is not possible to do justice to this wide ranging and important subject for the purposes of this document. However, a brief summary of selected key issues is offered.

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Mackellar (2014) in a course on **Nation Building** deals with the role of the Puritans and the impact they had on the society of their day because they were significantly influenced by the truths of scripture. This included such figures as Wilberforce, Kellogg and many others who changed society for the better through their business activities which were rooted in scriptural principles of justice, love and integrity which affected their dealings in business with their labour force and their customers.

The rise of the great western democracies (Europe, UK, USA) were an outcome of revolutions and struggle but resulted in the hammering out of democratic principles, based upon scriptural injunctions, in which human rights were enshrined. To a greater or lesser extent these have survived to this day. This engagement between the Church (the Kingdom of God) and civil society also continues today.

The 1970's were the decade in which human rights came to the fore more than ever before. This culminated in the United Nations passing the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Its success lay in the fact that the United Nations were able to develop a set of human rights that socialist as well as capitalist states could accept. (Notable exceptions were Russia and China).

However, while the national constitutions of the democratic nations reflected a protection of human rights and while emerging democracies (such as in Africa, Asia and South America) also contained some of the tenets of human rights, the manner in which States actually implemented or respected such rights has varied widely. In South Africa, for example, the *apartheid state* failed dismally in upholding human rights for all people. So much so, that the large evangelical alliance of the Church also failed in its silence, in not condemning malpractice. The silence of the church during the apartheid years was at times deafening! Reparations were made at the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and there was repentance made before God. Despite the new dispensation in South Africa, after transitioning to majority government, the Church today has as many human rights issues to keep an eye over as ever there were in the apartheid years. Indeed, while this is also the responsibility of civil society and the political parties, the speakers of truth to all mankind (the Church) should at the very least speak into such moral and ethical issues from the pulpit so as to equip the flock with the truth, understanding and courage in knowing how to speak against human rights abuses and even to be aware of not inadvertently falling into them.

### **3.2 The Poor: Relationship Between Church & State**

This relationship can be summarised as follows.

- i. In the Old Testament Israel was governed by a theocracy. Church and State were basically part and parcel of the same unit. This meant that both King and Priesthood had responsibility for the poor. However, Grant (1985) makes the point that when the kings of Israel fell into idolatry and took their eyes off God, just as it did not go well for them, neither did it go well for the poor (especially widows and orphans).
- ii. In modern nations the best track record (however imperfect) of dealings with the poor from the side of the State has been in the large Western Democracies. The worst are the Middle Eastern nations and North Korea.

- iii. South Africa has a strong Constitution, but as has been the case in so many nations, this does not necessarily translate into humane and caring treatment of the poor. Grant (1985) points out that that the practice of aiming to rid the USA of poverty (initiated by President Lyndon Johnson in the 1970s) neither helped nor empowered anyone. It simply created an ever growing number of idle people who held their hands out. The social grants system in South Africa has had similar effects for many.<sup>3</sup> The Church has a responsibility to speak out about such things and to reach out to help those who are abusing the grant to recognise it may not last for ever and to make plans towards independence of the State.
- iv. Grant(1985) argues strongly that in the USA, when the church was the prime instrument for helping the poor, many more were helped in beneficial ways and less harm was done to people. The States engagement and decision to throw money at the problem missed treating the root issues and caused a whole bunch of others. Grant also argues that scripture only speaks of the church caring for the poor, especially in the New Testament. Paul raised money from churches to help the poor in Jerusalem (see 2 Corinthians 8: 1-9) arguing that because Christ became poor for our sake we should also be sacrificial givers – this being the pattern and heart of the Gospel message.
- v. So where does this leave us in South Africa today? Keller argues so eloquently that part and parcel of the gospel is to be giving to the poor. This implies that whether or not the State may be effectively or ineffectively engaging with care of the poor the Church is compelled by the love of God to be participants in ministry to the poor. The question of how widely such care is thrown open will be dependent upon the specifics that God shows a specific group of believers.

## **4 CHURCH AND THE POOR TODAY**

### **4.1 Keller suggests three levels and spheres of giving to the poor:**

#### **4.1.1 Relief**

*“This is direct aid to meet physical, material, or social needs. Common relief ministries include temporary shelters for the homeless, food and clothing services, medical services, crisis counselling, and the like. A more active form of relief is advocacy, in which people in need are given active assistance to get legal aid, find housing, and locate other kinds of aid.” (Keller, 2008)*

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<sup>3</sup> It is also acknowledged, however, that there are many widows, orphans, disabled and elderly who have benefited from such grants. The problems have arisen, in particular, with young girls falling pregnant in order to access child grants which are then not used for the benefit of the child, or in adults misusing the funds for satisfying drug and/or alcohol addictions!

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### **4.1.2 Development**

*“This is what is needed to bring a person or community to self-sufficiency. In the Old Testament, when a slave’s debt was erased and he was released, God directed that his former master send him out with grain, tools, and resources for a new, self-sufficient life (Deut. 15:13–14). Development includes education, job creation, and vocational training. Development for a neighbourhood or community involves reinvesting social and financial capital into a social system, such as through housing development, home ownership, and other capital investments.” (Keller, 2008)*

### **4.1.3 Reform**

*“Social reform moves beyond relief of immediate needs and seeks to change social conditions and structures that cause the dependency. In Job we see that Job not only clothed the naked but also “broke the fangs of the wicked and made them drop their victims” (Job 29:17). The prophets denounced unfair wages (Jer. 22:13), corrupt business practices (Amos 8:2, 6), legal systems weighted in favor of the rich (Lev. 19:15; Deut. 24:17), and capital-lending systems that gouged the persons of modest means (Exod. 22:25–27; Lev. 19:35–37; 25:37). These examples prove that Christians should get involved in their particular communities and work for fair and just practices as needed.” (Keller, 2008)*

## **4.2 Keller Concludes**

*“As a general rule, I believe the church should be involved in the first of these (relief ministry) and that voluntary associations, organizations, and ministries should be organized to do the second (development) and third (reform). Many would argue that development and reform require an abundance of resources that may infringe upon the church’s ministry of the Word. Others would say that development and reform create unhealthy political alliances within the congregation. And still others would maintain that development and reform are too complex to be included in the mandate or qualifications of church elders. All of these arguments have some merit, and I do not have the time and space to adequately address the issues here. I would only observe that most American churches that are deeply involved in caring for the poor have found the wisest course of action to be the creation of separate nonprofit corporations to handle community development and social reform, rather than to work directly through the local congregation.” (Keller, 2008)*

## **4.3 When Helping Hurts the Poor . . . and Yourself**

Corbett and Fikkert (2009) in their book **When Helping Hurts** talk at length about the things that are likely to do more harm than good when seeking to help poor people. However, perhaps one of the most useful recommendations they make is that the poor, like all people, need to be reconciled in four primary relationships:

- i. Reconciliation with God;
- ii. With Self;
- iii. With others; and

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- iv. With the rest of creation.

The book deals at length with how unless these primary relationships are reconstructed it is very difficult to move people from poverty towards well-being and wholeness. The Gospel is central in such endeavours. **Quinton Howitt in his study of Christianity and the Poor** (Howitt, 2012) provides a detailed analysis of the Greek and Hebrew words used for the poor and the nuances of meaning derived from such study. He concludes his work, however, by summarising a survey of 22 churches in South Africa (representing some 59000 church members) in which he examines what they are doing for the poor here. Table 1 summarises this survey.

**Table 1: Summary of 77 Activities carried out by 22 Surveyed Churches among the Poor in South Africa (Howitt, 2012)**

Activities	No of activities across 22 churches
Giving free handouts	35
Involved evangelism (church planting & spreading the Gospel)	11
Caring for people (the poor, orphans, mentally retarded, sick, or the aged)	22
Empowering & equipping (sewing, cooking, reading, school)	9
<b>Total activities</b>	<b>77</b>

Howitt indicates that the main focus, among the surveyed churches, was upon giving freely to the poor and needy especially clothing, food, Christmas parcels, and monthly collections for the poor. (Howitt, 2012)

### 4.4 Howitt Concludes

**Howitt (2012) concludes his book with the following synthesis:**

*“I would like to begin this section by saying that I recognize the positive contributions and the help these programmes(carried out by the 22 surveyed churches) have been to the poor and therefore, do not demean the actions of the churches. There is undoubtedly some equipping and empowering taking place and giving freely certainly has its time and place in terms of response and involvement with the poor, particularly in emergency situations. However, the quandary is that, in the majority of cases, giving free handouts is seen as the only option, and I wonder whether this is the best method of helping the poor and needy? It does not seem to be working. For example, over the last 40 years, the World Food Programme has fed more than one billion of the world’s poorest people, delivered over 60 million tonnes of food to 100 countries and committed over US \$ 30 billion for relief and development activities worldwide and the hunger problem still remains dire. Common definitions of poverty suggest that it is a condition of groups of people we abstractly describe as the “poor,” those people with lowness of income. However, the issue is that they are not abstract. People have names, and as was mentioned earlier, they are God’s image bearers, and those for whom the ultimate sacrifice*

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was made. The fact is that all people are equally valuable to God. The world tends to view the poor as a group of helpless people. They become faceless and nameless, and this invites the more affluent to treat them as objects of our compassion, people to whom we have the right to act as we believe best. As Christians, in terms of understanding poverty, we must recognize that the poor are people with names, people to whom God provides gifts and people with whom God associates and works – even before we know that they exist. As Dorr states: “To make an option for the poor is not to opt for poverty but to opt for people. It is to commit oneself to acting and living in a way that respects people, especially those who are not treated with respect in our society. It is to proclaim by one’s actions that people are more important than the systems that deprive them of their basic rights – the right to eat, the right to work, the right to participate in decision-making, the right to worship according to their conscience, and even the right to life itself.” As was stated earlier, poverty is a complicated multifaceted state which has at its very core the word “lack” in terms of all things essential for material security – particularly in regard to numerous resources leading to physical deprivation. Myers has some interesting insights which should be added at this point. It is quite evident that the poor are those who do not have sufficient food, water, housing, schools, infrastructure and other amenities, which generally make life worth living. Therefore, we, the affluent, plan to provide those things which are missing: food aid, low-cost housing, etc. We also identify that many of the poor lack knowledge, for example, they do not understand nutrition, the importance of proper child spacing, how to save money, or run a small business. Consequently, we provide programmes which attempt to educate them. Then we assume that when the poor have the necessary knowledge that they will no longer continue in poverty. Then there is a further ingredient which can be added to the pot: the non-Christian poor do not have knowledge about Jesus Christ and the gospel. Thus, to understand poverty holistically, Christians add the gospel to the “list of things” the poor lack. These notions about poverty are true and to some degree helpful: the poor do require provisions, knowledge, and the opportunity to hear the good news. Nonetheless, restricting our comprehension of poverty to these parameters presents some serious problems. For instance, by restricting our understanding of poverty in this way we see ourselves as the providers. This implies that the poor become passive beneficiaries, incomplete human beings which we make whole. This unintentional mind-set has two negative repercussions:

*First, this mind set humiliates and devalues the poor. Our view of them, which promptly translates into their opinion of themselves, is that they are defective and inadequate.*

*Second, our way of thinking about ourselves can become messianic. We are enticed into believing that we are the liberators of the poor and that we make their lives complete. So, in light of what has been said, what possible methods or means might be used to help the poor and needy, besides sharing the Christian gospel?*

*I would like to suggest that whatever these methods or means are, that they not only aim to alleviate hunger, but also aim to ensure a balanced nutritional diet, improve the general quality and quantity of the family, enhance the individual’s level of health, restore dignity, self-worth and respect to both the individual and household and improve the relational quality amongst family members.”*

**Howitt ends with the following exhortation:**

*“My word to the church is that denominational structures and local church boards should*

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*urgently and deliberately follow the biblical model of taking a more active role in assisting the non-Christian and Christian poor on a long-term basis. This should be done by **educating and training, equipping, empowering and building ongoing relationships with those in need.** I would like to conclude with the following verse, which also serves as a challenge to all Christians with regard to poverty and hunger: Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thine understanding -- this is a first and great command; and the second is like to it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself; on these -- the two commands -- all the law and the prophets do hang.” (Matthew 22.37-40 YLT) (Howitt, 2012) (Emphases are mine)*

## **5 REVIEW OF HOPE TRUST**

### **5.1 Origins of Hope Trust**

In 1998-99 Richard and Avvy Pratt were in the UK exploring the future ministry relationships for Hilton Christian Fellowship (HCF). In the process they met and received a prophetic word from Graham Cook in Southampton, UK. The word to them, amongst a number of other elements also being fulfilled in HCF at present, was that ‘*HCF would partner with the poor*’.

Several years later (circa 2002-2003) Linda Ambler and Dave James raised the issue of the need for some sort of response to the poor in Sweetwaters. In particular it was felt that there was a need for a feeding scheme. Dave James and Richard Pratt travelled to Mpumalanga where they met with people known to them who were already running an NGO with an outreach programme into the rural areas around Nelspruit, White River, Hazyview et al. The decision reached was that a Trust should be formed and that this would be the vehicle through which an outreach to the poor would be launched.

Hope Trust was born in 2003. It was finally registered by 2005 as a PBO and NPO in terms of the South African Revenue Act and the Non-Profit Organizations Act respectively. The Elders of HCF were the Trustees of Hope Trust.

Initially, through the introduction to Sweetwaters via known people, a start was made to connect with families in desperate need of food. This, as far as possible, was limited to families in which no one was earning monthly income and one or more of the family members were HIV/AIDs positive.

Dave James left South Africa for New Zealand in 2004-2005. In November 2005 Dave A’Bear was brought onto HCF Eldership with the portfolio of running Hope Trust, supported by Linda Ambler who was a part-time worker but who carried the vision close to her heart.

In 2006-2007 the feeding scheme was reviewed and it was found that the beneficiaries were mostly (19 of the 20 households being supported) eligible to obtain pensions, disability grants, child care grants or foster care grants. Phyllis Zondi was employed to assist with educating and helping families to secure the grants for which they were eligible. The feeding scheme as a fixed programme was brought to an end as families got onto the grants system provided by the State.

### **5.2 From 2008 to Present**

Dave A'Bear felt strongly that Hope Trust should be doing something which addressed root causes of poverty and could produce long term benefit (in addition to the gospel which has always been a central element in the work being done in Sweetwaters). Partnerships were explored with other churches in Hilton, recognising that the scale of the problems of poverty, culture and associated oppression were larger than could be readily addressed by one church. The outcome of that exploration process was that the Baptists (Ithemba) elected to continue working alone in education; the Methodists were working in Mphophomeni although there was a lot of synergy with what they were doing; the Anglicans wanted to work in Mafakathini (quite a bit further out towards Elandskop), further afield than we could work at that stage. The Assemblies of God agreed to work with us. Through that agreement ACAT also became a partner giving guidance on food gardens, small enterprise development and savings. Later, **Give a Child a Family** were discovered and led us into a fruitful and productive means of addressing the need for training and equipping in the fields of parenting and fostering.

With financial support for half a salary, the Crossways AOG contributed to employing David Mokoena. Following some large donations that came into Hope Trust over a period of several years we cautiously expanded the staff toward the vision of having a balanced welfare and development approach. The former addresses relief issues while the latter addresses empowerment issues of a longer term nature.

During this phase of Hope Trust's growth and maturing we received a grant from Lotto of R200 000.00. I have no moral or ethical problem with receiving money from secular sources because the use to which we put the money is, in a way, redeeming that money because it is honestly used and contributes toward a long term empowerment process in our target poor communities. However, Hope Trust currently sits in a position of being cash strapped – even to the point of only just making the payments of salaries. However, despite these difficulties a clean audit has been received for each of the past 5 years (since audits were initiated).

There are several reasons for the financial situation:

- i. Pressures on the national economy translating into people being cash strapped and many NGOs in the past five years or so have crashed.
- ii. Politically the Trust is a 'white' body and most of the management are white. The whole BBBEE situation makes it difficult for such entities to be considered for funding by some of the donors.
- iii. The pool of Donor Finance (about R15-20 billion pa) is spread across about 70 000 NPOs in South Africa.
- iv. Clearly new ways of securing donor money have to be found or appropriate changes have to be made: in the scale of the work being done, or the racial composition of the organization so that it becomes more eligible for donor finance.
- v. Dave Williams volunteered a supply of glycerine soap at cost price to Hope Trust to be on-sold. We explored getting it into the cash and carry wholesale market. But for one product the costs were too high and the risk also too high. However, steady sales are moving between 10 and 20 boxes a month at present. This brings in about R2400 to Hope Trust but is also establishing a number of individuals who are selling the soap at considerable profit. This is a service to

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help establish people with micro-businesses.

During 2015 it was agreed by the HCF Elders that a new board of Trustees should be nominated for the leadership of Hope Trust. These men or women should be drawn from among those with a calling of service in HCF. The new Board of Trustees was announced at the AGM in June. Once appointed by the Master of the High Court they took office. There have been three meetings of the new Trust to date.<sup>4</sup>

### **5.3 The Principles that Guide Hope Trust's Programme**

Family is the most important social unit in God's creation. It pre-dates even the nation-state of Israel. It is the foundation upon which all other institutions grow. Families contribute to church, business, sport, politics and the list is endless. Families and family life are scarcely discernible in many of the poorer communities of our nation. This is where life skills should be being learned, guidance should be provided on sexual behaviour, the value and indeed necessity of purity for ongoing stable family life, discipline should be inculcated and children equipped for wise life choices. If the family was fulfilling its role and the church was fulfilling its role of spreading the gospel to the poorer communities too, South Africa would have the cheapest solution to HIV/AIDs, effective counters to the spread of drugs and a culture of hope so that education of the next generation prepared them for a successful life of faith rather than failure.

Therefore the mandate that Hope Trust has sought to honour, is laid out below.

#### **5.3.1 Staff & Volunteers**

The workers (staff and volunteers) must be willing and capable of living and sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We seek to facilitate cross-cultural ministry and engagement.

#### **5.3.2 The Ministry Programmes**

All the programmes (welfare, economic empowerment, youth empowerment, foster care etc) should be empowering, whether economically, socially and spiritually and should have direct and/or indirect benefits for the strengthening of family life and Christian family values.

#### **5.3.3 Social Entrepreneurship**

In the medium to long term social entrepreneurship and sustainable empowerment programmes should be developed so that they are self-sustaining both for the communities being assisted as well as for Hope Trust.

### **5.4 Future Programme**

Hope Trust has not been able to give full expression to the training and empowerment activities envisaged (training in healthy living, parenting and foster parenting) nor the

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<sup>4</sup> Larensia Rabe (Chair), Lesley Peiser, Richard Currie, Rick Phipson, Vaughan Coulson, Richard Pratt. Dave A'Bear was moved to position of CEO.

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establishment of a safe house (or houses in the community) as being advocated and implemented by **Give a Child a Family**<sup>5</sup>.

**The desired future that Hope Trust has promoted since 2012:**

### **5.4.1 Continue existing programmes**

Continue the welfare and developmental empowerment activities. These provide doorways into the community and will facilitate drawing people in for training once we are able to implement the training programme.

### **5.4.2 Develop a training programme**

Develop a full training programme in the following spheres:

- i. Small business skills
- ii. Savings and credit groups together with financial literacy
- iii. Healthy living (encompasses basic domestic family skills needed for healthy living and includes modules on HIV/AIDs, the gospel of salvation and basic hygiene)
- iv. Parenting skills
- v. Foster parenting skills

### **5.4.3 Establish Safe Houses**

The establishment of as many 'safe-houses' as are needed and that are recognised by the Department of Social Development for the accommodation of orphaned, abandoned and/or abused children on a short-term basis until the department is able to place the children in a foster family that has been evaluated, trained and equipped for fostering.

### **5.4.4 Support Groups**

Training staff would train two weeks of a month and spend the other two weeks establishing and mentoring support groups for trainees that have been through the healthy living, parenting, small business and fostering training. Such groups would be a conduit for ongoing discipling in the Kingdom of God. These 'connect groups' can become the nuclei for future church plants.

## **6 THE CHURCH PLANT – SWEETWATERS CHRISTIAN CHURCH**

In January 2004 Dave James together with Richard Pratt committed HCF to supporting a crusade in the Sweetwaters area. An evangelist (Jeremiah) had initiated and ran the crusade for 3 weeks. He worked with a group of young born again young men – mostly still school boys. After the Crusade Nkanyiso Malevu (Manka) was the only young man who kept coming to Sweetwaters to visit the new converts. A relationship developed with him and after he completed matric at the end of 2004 HCF offered him the choice of a bursary to study in

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<sup>5</sup> The approach to the orphan and fostering issues in South Africa by GCF has been endorsed by UNICEF as an example of world best practice.

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subjects of his choice, or to study part-time towards a Diploma in Theology while starting to work with Dave and Jean and the newly placed church plant. (The church met in a house for a while, then in the school hall, then in a tent, and now land is being acquired for the church next to Manka's house.)

Today Manka is married, has two children, completed a certificate in Biblical Studies and has pastored the church as the leader since 2007.

David Mokoena who heads up the Development section of Hope Trust's work, also pastors a small church in the Bhobhonono area about ten kilometres into Sweetwaters. Dave A'Bear and Elliott Sonjica meet with them weekly to relate and discuss the ministry. A vision is developing for the pursuance of a "church planting" vision pushing towards Elandskop. The area has between 160 000 and 250 000 people living there. There are other churches but it lends itself to a "Home-Group" approach to evangelising the area. This could lead to more churches being planted and new leaders being raised up as necessary.

This would be good for the Kingdom of God and it could be vital for an expansion of the influence of Hope Trust/HCF among the poor. As the gospel changes lives so there needs to be an empowering process (parenting skills, fostering skills, healthy living, small business, savings and credit groups etc) to equip those converted (and others who are willing) for productive family living and economic performance in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

## **7 HCF's CALL TO PARTNERING WITH THE POOR**

### **7.1 Introduction**

There is a clearly discernible match between what Hope Trust's vision is and what scripture advocates as ministry to the poor and oppressed. While the **current empowerment role is limited by funding**, that is the direction we should be targeting. The relief work (welfare) and economic empowerment activities are a **vital entrè into the community** and provide direct care for many widows and orphans. The relief/welfare and economic empowerment activities build relationship earn credibility and create a platform from which other elements of ministry to the poor (viz. the empowerment through training component) may be launched.

### **7.2 Hope Trust Staff**

Employing Hope Trust extension staff drawn from the culture of the target group is essential in ensuring that:

- i. doors can be opened for volunteers from HCF to work relatively safely in the area;
- ii. doors can be opened for community members to attend training courses because trust relationships exist with the staff;
- iii. issues of language and meaning can be interpreted by Zulu staff to those working in the ministry who may not be of the Zulu culture;
- iv. having our own staff from the community smooths the understanding of cross-cultural nuances and protects against misunderstandings.

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### **7.3 Partnering with the poor**

Some thoughts on partnering with the poor are listed below:

- i. That in all we do they are treated equally and equitably before God as bearers of His image.
- ii. It demands that mercy and grace be extended in both directions as part maintaining the unity of the faith. This implies that the relationship with the poor is not one of beneficiary and benefactor even if the direction of flow of material goods is mostly in one direction.
- iii. The empowerment issue is vital because the ideal (as with one's own children) would be that many of those who are empowered through the activities and relationships with Hope Trust would go on to reach greater heights of achievement and service;
- iv. That they (who were once poor) would bring glory to Jesus – whether in business, soccer, education or in strong family roles and go onto become role models for their own families and communities.

### **7.4 Outstanding Issues**

The issues that remain to be answered and which cannot be answered by this document are as follows:

- i. Does HCF leadership see partnering with the poor in the same way as has been described? Should the role for HCF be limited to **relief**, should it include **development** (how much?); should it include **reform** work of a longer term nature? What is the Holy Spirit speaking about these matters?
- ii. If partnering with the poor fits with what Hope Trust is currently doing and/or aspires to develop into, where do the boundaries lie, if there are boundaries, aside from those imposed by budgetary provisions?
- iii. Depending upon the decisions about 1 and 2 should there be any change made to the structuring of the ministry? For example, should it continue to run as a Trust, separate from, but under the auspices of HCF; or should the Trust be closed and a separate bank account in HCF be opened and the ministry run from funds entirely administered through the HCF? If the latter course of action was chosen would the Trustees still be asked to fulfil an oversight role (supporting and holding the ministry leader accountable while also accounting to the Eldership) or would the Elders of HCF fulfil such a role.
- iv. What role should HCF play in contributing funding to the ministry? Should HCF have a direct funding role or should HCF simply encourage those wishing to contribute?
- v. What approach should be used in seeking to raise up new leadership for the ministry? Prayer is necessary to ensure finding someone with the right heart, but does one advertise or invite applications based upon a carefully developed job description, or does one approach suitable people etc?

## 8 RECOMMENDATION

- 8.1 That this document is reviewed by the HCF Eldership & the Trustees.
- 8.2 That clarity should be sought on areas that may be unclear either from the author or from the scriptures.
- 8.3 That the Trustees and the Elders have a combined discussion to reach unity of vision, to work out a way ahead and to identify, where possible, answers to the questions raised.
- 8.4 That the outcomes of i-iii should be documented and people tasked with implementing the decisions made. These decisions need to be communicated to the whole church.

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