



Tools to Sustain Our Missional Congregations

A topical newsletter for Pilot Series teams

Presbytery of Genesee Valley

Know Christ ■ Live Christ ■ Share Christ

Roderic P. Frohman & James S. Evinger (Eds.)

#3 in a series (March, 2018)

“Lord, when was it that we
saw you...?”

Matthew 25:37 & 44



*Eichenberg, Fritz. (1950).
Christ of the Breadlines.
[Wood engraving; Detail]*

Twice the disciples ask Jesus the same question: When did we see you? They use “see” in the sense of perceive, as having the capacity of sight. Jesus, however, uses “see” as taking notice of a person and recognizing her/his distress. For Jesus, to “see” the one in need is to be relational and responsive, to act with love for a neighbor.

Have you seen ALICE?

Some of our readers know of Rod Frohman’s involvement in RAIHN (Rochester Area Interfaith Hospitality Network). Most don’t know that RAIHN began with a simple phone call.

Nancy Frank, a social service lay employee of St. Paul’s Episcopal Church in Rochester, called Rod in 2001, and asked, “Hey, Rod! Have you ever heard about the Interfaith Hospitality Network?”

“You mean the program where churches house homeless families in church buildings,” Rod replied. “My father-in-law, a pastor in Philadelphia, has homeless families living in his office once in awhile.” “Yes!” said Nancy, “that’s the one!”

Rod next called his colleague up the street, Margie Mason at Asbury First United Methodist. The three had coffee, and the rest is history. Since RAIHN opened in 2004, 360 families have been helped to permanently move out of homelessness. It all began with a phone call – by one person – who excitedly shared a good idea. This Newsletter is about taking a good idea and translating it into a missional project. Let us introduce you to **ALICE**.

Covington United Presbyterian Church, *Pavilion*

First Presbyterian Church, *Batavia*

First Presbyterian Church, *Pittsford*

First Presbyterian Church, *Chili*

Central Presbyterian Church, *Geneseo*

ALICE: The Big Picture

Who is **ALICE**? You have met **ALICE**. We encounter **ALICE** every day – hard workers who keep our local economy running, but aren't sure they can put food on their tables or pay a utility bill. Each day, **ALICE** stands at cash registers, fixes our cars, stocks retail store shelves, serves us in restaurants, and cares for our children and frail elderly.¹

ALICE, a United Way acronym, stands for people who are **Asset Limited, Income Constrained, and Employed**.² They work hard, often at more than one job, yet still struggle to make ends meet. Their pay is not a *living wage*, i.e., it is not sufficient to sustain them and their families for the basics of:

1.) housing, 2.) child care, 3.) food, 4.) transportation, and 5.) health care.

They earn **above the Federal Poverty Level**, but are one small emergency away from a major financial crisis.³

The New York 44%

A report on New York **ALICE** families was produced in 2016 by the United Way of New York to give these families an identity and voice. Entitled, *ALICE (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed): Study of Financial Hardship*, it introduces us to our neighbors.⁴

<u>A profile of the 44%</u>	<u>Some basic facts</u>
<p>Of all New Yorkers in 2014, 44% were at or below the ALICE income range:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ 29% lived in the ALICE range – above the Federal Income Poverty Level, but below the Basic Cost of Living Level;▪ 15% lived below the ALICE range, at the Federal Poverty Level.⁵	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1) The Federal Poverty Level for a family of four (2 adults, 1 infant, & a pre-schooler) in New York State was \$23,850. in 2014.⁶2) Despite public and private forms of assistance, Poverty Level households were not lifted into the ALICE range.⁷

These 44% of our neighbors did not earn enough to get by on what the United Way called a *Household Survival Budget*. The budget included the expense categories of:

1.) housing, 2.) child care, 3.) food, 4.) transportation, 5.) health care, 6.) taxes, and 7.) miscellaneous. [Note: The category of savings was omitted. After the other categories, this one was unaffordable.]⁸

Using conservative estimates of monthly expenses, the United Way reported the *Household Survival Budget* for every New York county.

The *Household Survival Budget* varied slightly across counties due to different regional costs of living. Here is the report's 2014 data for our Presbytery's geographic area.

County	Report page	Annual Income: Single Adult	Annual income: 2 Adults, 1 Infant, & 1 Pre-schooler	% ALICE Households & % Poverty Households
Genesee	232	\$18,660	\$58,320	35%
Livingston	239	\$20,280	\$59,592	46%
Monroe	242	\$20,640	\$57,852	48%
Ontario	249	\$20,280	\$63,864	37%
Orleans	251	\$20,280	\$59,592	45%
Wyoming	276	\$18,216	\$56,676	38%

Many families which our Presbyterian congregations serve, are ALICE families. Indeed, some members of our congregations could be ALICE families. Notice how close is the total percentage of the ALICE households plus, the Federal Poverty Level households from county to county in our Presbytery. Are there any surprises in this data for you?

Why are there so many ALICE households in our Presbytery?

- 1) Low wage jobs dominate the local economy.
 - More than 55% of all jobs in New York in 2014 paid less than \$20 per hour.⁹
 - Of those jobs, more than half paid between \$10 and \$15 per hour. (Full-time = \$15/hr. x 40 hrs./wk. x 50 wks./yr. = \$30,000 gross income).¹⁰
 - "These jobs – especially service jobs that pay wages below \$20 per hour and require a high school education or less – will grow faster than higher-wage jobs over the next decade."¹¹
- 2) The basic cost of living in New York outpaces wages.
 - The State average *Household Survival Budget* for a family of four (2 adults, 1 infant, & 1 pre-schooler) in 2014 was \$62,472 – more than double the Federal Poverty Level of \$23,850.¹²
- 3) Economic conditions worsened for ALICE households from 2007 to 2014.
 - Coming out of the 2008 Recession, job opportunities started to improve in 2010, but have not returned to the 2007 levels in most of New York.¹³

Why are we introducing the topic of ALICE?

Understanding the ALICE data will help inform your congregational mission projects. But instead of our just rambling on about the information, this Newsletter shows how to integrate this new information with your congregation's current mission projects, or when you're considering a new project.

So... you have just read this introduction. You know intuitively that it is very relevant to your congregation's mission programs, current or future. What do you do next? You could say, "I don't have time for this!", or, "It's just the latest that Jim and Rod are pushing", or, "I am sure as heck not going to read a 300-page report!" (Yes, *ALICE, A Study of Financial Hardship*, is 300 pages long – it covers every county in New York.) These are understandable reactions.

Don't read the full report now! Get it off your "to do" list for today by reading your county's data and the most relevant analyses. Then hand it off to someone else! Share the burden!! (Galatians 6:2). Who else should know about this report? Your pastor!! If you are not the pastor, send it off to her right now! But watch out! What goes around comes around!

If you are the pastor, send it to a couple of lay leaders who might be interested. NO, not necessarily the chair of the mission or outreach committee, but someone who likes to think about this kind of stuff. If that person is you, inform a couple of others that you have received the report and are studying it. The point is, do not respond in splendid isolation. Recall that Jesus sent the disciples out by twos. (Mark 6:7)

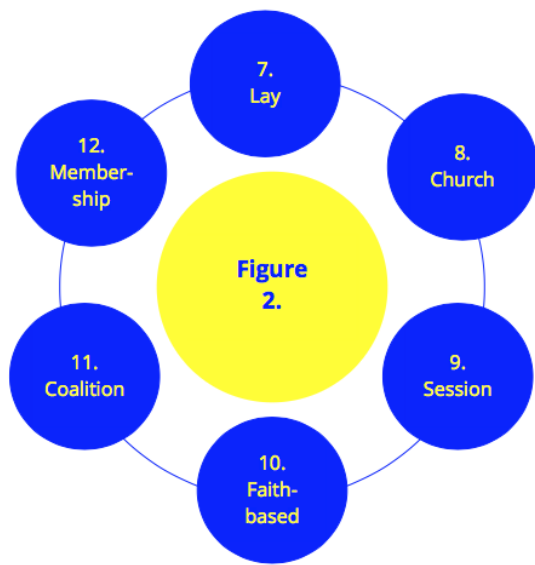
Applying the ALICE data to your social mission

Remember, in Newsletter number 2 we looked at three clusters around the core circles of Why, Who, and How when starting or managing a mission project. Let's revisit those.



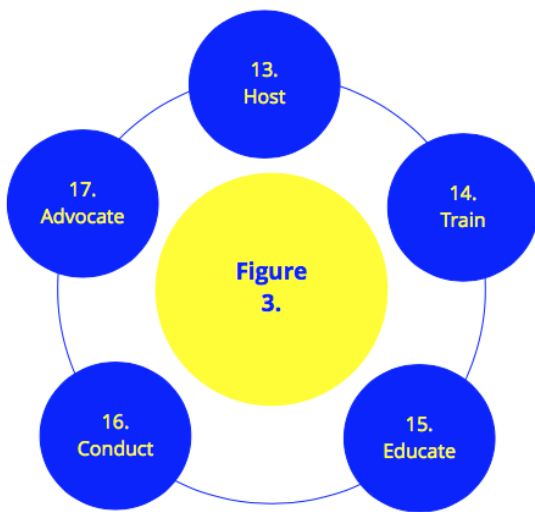
**Figure 1. Why do we do social mission?
(Our project's goals or desired outcomes)**

1. Heal individuals & communities
2. Make peace, make shalom
3. Minister to body & soul
4. Develop our discipleship
5. Witness to powers & principalities
6. Achieve social justice



**Figure 2. Who does social mission?
(Our project's participants by roles)**

- 7. Lay volunteers (project team)
- 8. Church officer, staff, or clergy
- 9. Session acts to support the project
- 10. Faith-based service agencies (FBSA)
- 11. Coalition or partnership
- 12. Membership in secular citizens' coalitions



**Figure 3. How do we do social mission?
(Ways to achieve our project's goal)**

- 13. Host & operate the project
- 14. Train our participants
- 15. Educate & inform
- 16. Conduct social justice ministries
- 17. Advocate for social justice

***Let's start at the very beginning.
A very good place to start.***

We begin at circles # 7 and # 8. Two of your key leaders and your pastor become aware of ALICE data, recognize ALICE families in the community, and see implications for your congregational mission. (As you read this article, you already are moving to the edge of circle # 15, Educate and Inform.)

The three of you decide what will be done: either “Something” or “Nothing.”

1. If “Something,” begin slowly and simply. Reach out to circle # 10, [Faith-based service agencies](#) or [faith-affiliated local colleges](#) to find partners who share your core values and missional vision. Look to the [ALICE](#) report itself to find a local expert on [ALICE](#) families. (Our regional United Way serves the counties of Genesee, Livingston, Monroe, Ontario, and Wayne.¹⁴)
2. You are headed to the middle of circle # 15. At this stage, do not get all excited and start talking with your mission committee or Session about [ALICE](#). Schedule, arrange, publicize, and host a congregation-wide learning event with a local expert as guest speaker. (A speaker outside the congregation is better than an insider. (Outsiders bring no axe to grind about whether the church can or cannot take on a project.) You’re laying a foundation here. Invite a panel of informed people to respond. Set-up displays with handouts. Encourage dialogue.
3. After the event featuring your [ALICE](#) speaker, with the Spirit leading, move to circle # 7, [Lay people](#). [Form](#) a small project team. The team looks at the [ALICE](#) report regarding strategies, p. 133 of United Way report, summarized here:

Short-, Medium-, & Long-Term Strategies to Assist Families below the ALICE Threshold

Source of Help	Short-Term	Medium-Term	Long-Term
Friends & family	Temporary housing, food, rides, child care, caregiving for ill & elderly relatives	Loans	Support to access good employers
Churches & other nonprofits	Temporary housing, food pantries, utility assistance, home repair, tax preparation, caregiver respite, subsidized childcare	Loans & affordable financial products	Support to access good employers
Employers	Paid days off, transportation assistance	Regular work schedule, full-time opportunities, high wages, benefits, flex-time, telecommuting, HR resources for caregivers, on-site health services & presentations & wellness incentives	Career paths, mentoring
Government	See report, p. 133	See report, p. 133	See report, p. 133

Still on page 133, the report observes: “Short-term intervention... can be essential to supporting a household through a crisis and preventing a downward spiral to homelessness. The chief value of short-term measures is in the stability that they provide.” On the same page, the report pointedly states in very large font:

“To permanently reduce the number of ALICE households, broader and more strategic action is needed. For ALICE households to be able to support themselves, structural economic changes are required to make New York more affordable and provide better jobs.”

4. Now your project team of 3 looks at your congregation’s current projects. Your team then determines whether the ALICE data can be applied to a current project or a new one. Remember the 5 possibilities in Workbook 8, Building the Future of Our Social Mission, page 9: Retain, Drop, Combine, Improve, New.
5. Regardless of whether or not the project is new or an improvement, your team needs to know if any similar projects exist in your geographical context to deal with the ALICE issues. Therefore, pay strategic visits to organizations involved in circle # 10, Faith-based service agencies, circle # 11 Coalitions (especially faith-based service organizations), and circle # 12, Secular coalitions. Now, codify your findings in a brief, written report which could include proposals for change (i.e., Retain, Drop, Combine, etc.) If needed or wise, the report can go to your congregation’s mission or outreach committee to secure endorsement before going on to the Session.
6. Finally, your team is ready to go to circle # 9, your Session, to report your findings and secure endorsement to pursue your recommendations. This support is a key to success. In a Presbyterian church, our polity clearly designates that the Session (neither a committee nor the congregation) is the missional agent. This structural feature is a way we hold ours accountable in our covenant with each other to be the body of Christ. (Translation: we don’t go off on our own.)
7. Once the Session is on board, your team can repeat circle # 15, Educate and Inform, with an update to the congregation about your findings and possible action. The point of all this preliminary research – and orderly sharing of data – is to build a broad foundation for the new/revised project. New or revised projects, especially ones which use new data such as ALICE, cannot emerge as surprises to the congregation. Congregations are basically conservative institutions. They do not handle surprises well. Congregational anticipation, however, is what pushes, and pulls, and energizes congregational mission.
8. Now a major shift occurs in the implementation of an ALICE-based project. The idea shifts **from** the Why and Who to the How cluster of work. Your project team

makes a basic decision as to whether to implement your ideas as circle # 13 **Host**, circle # 16, **Conduct**, or circle # 17, **Advocate**, or a combination of the three, or a sequence of the three (such as a sequence of # 13 to # 16 to # 17), over several years. This decision will drive the training of people to operate the project.

9. Your project team now moves into circle # 14, **Train our participants**. What will people be trained to do? Here is where many congregations get sloppy because they are anxious to get started. Remember to “stop, look and listen before you cross the street.”
10. Here we refer you back to Workbook 8, pages 11 & 12, the “Mission Project Planning Model.” Start filling-in the spaces, and give thanks God for getting to this point.

We can already hear the moaning, “But do we really have to do all of this?” Well, no. But if you want to avoid wasting a lot of time and money; if you want to “equip the saints” and not burn them out, then you will need to put in the planning/thinking time and effort before you are ready to effectively serve **ALICE** families in need in the name of Jesus Christ.

Good. Fast. Cheap.
Pick any two.

There is nothing more embarrassing than getting on stage and forgetting your lines, or worse, not knowing what to say or do, or even worse, hurting an **ALICE** family because you did not adequately prepare. When the saints are equipped, then the ministry begins, not before. There are lots of **ALICE** people who need your congregation’s thoughtful and effective mission.

Conclusion

Keep this newsletter article with your mission or outreach committee’s notebook. It’s another handy tool which fits well with Workshop 8.



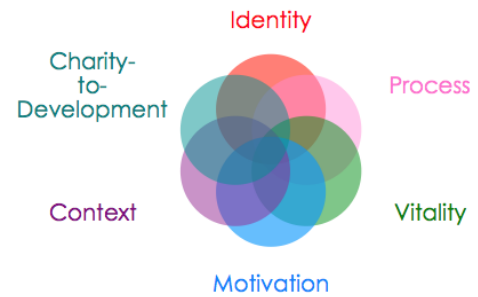
Gather your Team to discuss this topic!

You can connect this to...

Activating Our Missional Congregation

- **Workshop 8 – Building the Future of Our Social Mission**

Ecology of Missional Culture



Do you have a topic you would like to see explored?

Do you have a question other Pilot Teams are asking, too?

Let us know! cityrevRochester@gmail.com 585-727-2676 (cell)

Save this Date!

Saturday, March 24, 2018, 10:00 to Noon

Pilot Congregations Case Study Workshop # 2

Central Geneseo – Case Report

at the First Presbyterian Church of LeRoy

Childcare & 9:30 a.m. continental breakfast are provided.

“...to **equip** the saints for the work of ministry,
for **building up** the body of Christ...”

Ephesians 4:12

Have you seen ALICE? – References

- ¹ United Way. (No date). Do You Know ALICE? [Home page of a United Way web site section dedicated to ALICE.] Accessed 02/15/18 at: <https://www.unitedwayalice.org/home>
- ² Ibid.
- ³ Ibid.
- ⁴ United Way of New York State. (2016, Fall). *ALICE (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed): Study of Financial Hardship*. Latham, NY: United Way of New York State. Accessed 08/28/17:
http://unitedwayalice.org/documents/16UW%20ALICE%20Report_NY_Lowres_11.11.16.pdf
Note: the URL was not active as of 02/19/18. The national United Way is remodeling its website for the state reports. A PDF of the Study is available from Rod or Jim upon request.
- ⁵ Ibid., p. 5
- ⁶ Ibid., pp. 1-2.
- ⁷ Ibid, p. 1.
- ⁸ Ibid.
- ⁹ Ibid., p. 5
- ¹⁰ Ibid., p. 1
- ¹¹ Ibid.
- ¹² Ibid., pp. 1-2.
- ¹³ Ibid., p. 2.
- ¹⁴ United Way of Greater Rochester. (2018). *100 Years: Giving Back & Looking Forward Since 1918*. Accessed 02/19/18 at the United Way of Greater Rochester:
https://www.uwrochester.org/UWGR/media/About/2018_About_UW_Piece_highresolution_spreads_digital.pdf