

Together for Hope

Free Lending Library Project



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www.cbf.net/tfh

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Introduction

CBF's Together for Hope (TFH) was formed in 2001 as a 20-year commitment to the 20 poorest counties in the United States. At the outset, it was thought that some of the poorest counties in our country would be urban and some would be rural. However, all 20 of the poorest counties were revealed to be rural. Currently, Together for Hope has 18 partners across the rural landscape of the United States and continues to focus on four priorities of hope: education, health and nutrition, housing and environment, and social enterprise.

As TFH's Rural Development Coalition seeks to move forward into the next 20 years of asset-based community development work, we are shifting scale to include the 301 counties of persistent rural poverty as identified by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Persistent rural poverty occurs when 20% of the population of a rural county lives below the federal poverty line for 30+ years.

In order to make an impact within our priority area of education, we turn to Hosea 4:6, which states, "My people perish for lack of knowledge." The words imparted by the ancient prophet to the Israelites regarding their lack of knowledge in the law of their God, also hold true today when we consider an overall lack of knowledge. Without access to a high quality education, children have little hope of ever being able to thrive.

Yet if children do receive a high quality education, they are much more likely to be able to find and hold down a job. If they can sustain themselves financially, they can house and feed their families and they have a much better chance of accessing necessary healthcare. If children are well-educated, their potential is exponentially multiplied.

For that reason, Together for Hope has spearheaded a *Free Lending Library* project in which individuals and churches across CBF life are invited to participate. How might better access to books impact a child's education?

Areas with high levels of poverty have long been characterized as "book deserts." Therefore, it is not a surprise that access to books is one of the biggest obstacles in children's literacy. The number of books in a child's home is one of the best predictors of what their scores will be on reading exams. Yet, 61% of low-income families do not own any children's books. The simple act of making books available to children from low-income backgrounds can have a significant effect on improving their literacy skills and academic potential.

We hope you and your church will utilize the following plans to build your own *Free Lending Library* which can be placed in one of the 301 U.S. counties of persistent rural poverty for the purpose of improving access to books and impacting children's literacy. Consider making two lending libraries and place one in a neighborhood that would benefit from better access to books in your own community as well!

Free Lending Library Project

(see the attached Free Lending Library Construction Plan)



Together for Hope Mission Emphasis Material and Sample Order of Worship

Once you have completed the *Free Lending Library* project, you can utilize the following mission emphasis material within worship at your church. Sharing about the project is a great way to allow those who participated the opportunity to educate the entire congregation about the important task of making sure children have access to books. A sample order of worship is included. Feel free to use it as is or adapt it for your setting.

The Worship of God

WELCOME

PRELUDE

HYMN

“Gather Us In”

GATHER US IN

INVOCATION

HEBREW LESSON

Micah 6:8

LITANY

When Children Have Access to Books

HYMN

“Children Are a Gift from Heaven”

HARLAN

MISSION EMPHASIS

Together for Hope Free Lending Library Project

PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING & INTERCESSION

(Choose someone who participated in the Free Lending Library Project to lead the prayer)

NEW TESTAMENT LESSON

Matthew 25:34 - 40 or Matthew 19:13-15

CHOIR ANTHEM

“Offertory” (Nesbeck) or
“What Does the Lord Require?” (Schutte)

SERMON

OFFERTORY PRAYER

OFFERTORY*

At this time church members are encouraged to come forward and place the children’s books they brought to support the Free Lending Library Project in the baskets surrounding the altar table and a special offering can be taken up to support Together for Hope work in the region.

HYMN

“Teach Me, O Lord, I Pray”

DIADEMATA

FRANCISCAN BLESSING

POSTLUDE



Litany - When Children Have Access to Books (can substitute the term students for children)

Narrator: When children have access to books . . .

Student 1: We score well on reading exams

Student 2: We improve our literacy skills

Student 3: We strengthen our academic potential

Narrator: When children have access to books . . .

Student 1: We learn to see life from differing perspectives

Student 2: We broaden our knowledge base

Student 3: We learn about history so we won't repeat it

Narrator: When children have access to books . . .

Student 1: We develop the ability to use our imaginations

Student 2: We expand our vocabulary

Student 3: We experience the beauty of cultures different than our own

Narrator: When children have access to books . . .

Student 1: We are given the tools to prosper

Student 2: We can see beyond what is to what is possible

Student 3: We dream of who we will be when we grow up and we have hope for the future

Narrator: When the people of God respond to the least of these, the children among us, we walk in the way of Jesus.

Students: "Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these . . . you did unto me." Matthew 25:40

Children's Literacy Facts

- 82% of fourth-graders from low-income families are not proficient in reading. The ability to read by third grade is critical to a child's success in school, life-long earning potential and their ability to contribute to the nation's economy and its security.(Annie E. Casey Foundation <https://www.aecf.org>)
- Inequalities begin early: children from low-income families hear on average 30 million fewer words by age five compared with their more affluent peers. Less than half of poor children show up to school prepared with the early math and reading skills, emotional and behavioral control, and physical well-being needed to be ready to learn, and that disadvantage persists into adulthood. (The Atlantic, Jessica Lahey)
- Only 53% of children in general are read to daily by a family member, but this number is much lower for impoverished children (National Education Association).
- Simple access to books is one of the biggest obstacles—and perhaps the biggest opportunity—in equalizing children's literacy. The number of books in a child's home has been shown to be the best predictor of his or her scores on reading exams. Yet, 61% of low-income families do not own *any* children's books (Bridges; Children's Literacy Foundation).



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- Book recipients have improved reading skills, read more and for longer periods of time, and develop better attitudes toward reading and learning (Learning Point Associates).
- Providing children with books, which has a relatively low cost and a high impact, is thus one of the most promising avenues available to us for promoting literacy among all children and teens.
- Children who grow up as strong readers and writers have many more opportunities available to them than those who do not.
- <https://www.dosomething.org/us/facts/11-facts-about-literacy-america>
- The single most significant factor influencing a child's early educational success is an introduction to books and being read to at home prior to beginning school. National Commission on Reading, 1985
- The only behavior measure that correlates significantly with reading scores is the number of books in the home. The Literacy Crisis: False Claims, Real Solutions, 1998
- Children growing up in homes with at least twenty books get three years more schooling than children from bookless homes, independent of their parents' education, occupation, and class. Evans, M. D., Kelley, J., Sikora, J., & Treiman, D. J. (2010). Family scholarly culture and educational success: Books and schooling in 27 nations. *Research in Social Stratification and Mobility*, 28(2), 171-197.

