

From volume 3, *People in Purple* – 106 homeless mission ideas

You might have seen the homeless man on the street corner with a cardboard sign or pushing a grocery cart full of their life belongings or asleep on a park bench but didn't know what to do or how to help. Have you ever been asked to serve at a homeless shelter but you were reluctant to do so out of concerns of becoming too involved? Have you ever wanted to open a homeless shelter but didn't have any idea where to start? Or have you just passed up those opportunities simply because you didn't know what to do or how to understand the issue of homelessness.

Pastor Jean Kim outlines simple yet creative, inclusive and comprehensive 106 ways an individual, church/faith community can be involved to combat homelessness in *why, how and what to do* in Volume 3 of her book series, *People in Purple*. Her 106 service ideas were born out of the needs of homeless people whom she has been serving in and through fifteen different homeless mission programs over 4 decades, some of which she herself founded. She has been tirelessly serving homeless people, constantly listening, observing and learning about their needs and the list has grown to 106 homeless service ideas. These are presented on why should we offer each of them (Needs) and why and what we can offer (Mission).

Pastor Kim's 106 homeless service ideas begin with simple tasks/projects such as volunteering, feeding, bicycle program, worship, holiday gift of motel rooms down to more complicated permanent solutions. These are small and large and doable. Pastor Kim says, "the first and foremost important mission would be offering the homeless jobs, job/skill training, education, housing and health care that they may become self-sufficient and end their homelessness." However, the most crucial one of 106 ideas is public policy advocacy asserting that we won't be able to end homelessness unless there is major public policy change at all levels of government. As an advocate working at the national level on combating the homelessness, I concur with her wholeheartedly.

She suggests that individuals, churches/faith communities and homeless service agencies work together as a team. Throughout the entire presentation of 106 ideas she challenges churches/faith communities to open their facilities to welcome the homeless. She suggests those who develop homeless services to first learn what the needs of the homeless are rather than just assuming what they want.

She used to make audiences laugh by suggesting that they go to see a psychiatrist if any church/faith community or individual will not do at least one of the 106 service ideas.

She eases those who are concerned of becoming too involved to courageously say "I CAN DO IT" by sharing her own experience in founding homeless services with empty hands, nothing but commitment and faith in God as her only tools.

While she was on a speaking tour for 6 years on behalf of the Presbyterian Church (USA) she was able to visit 155 homeless programs in 65 cities she preached at. She was amazed to see that most were founded by faith communities and many still support them today.

As a long time advocate at the National Coalition for the Homeless I will join Pastor Kim to say that historically faith-based organizations have played an important role in responding to the urgent needs

of the homeless population. However, I also join Pastor Kim to urge them to move one step beyond from just charity (band aid) toward the goal of ending homelessness. This means that faith communities must be involved more with developing low income affordable housing programs and living wage jobs and actively engage in public policy advocacy and lobbying. As Pastor Kim says, no one organization can do this alone; we need faith-based organizations to be part of the local, state and national conversation, and working on a solution. When we work together, we can end homelessness in this country.

This book also challenges each individual and church/faith community's social responsibility and accountability to the homeless population and illustrates practical methods for people of all ages to jointly solve this crisis. This book should be in every congregation's hands, outreach committees of faith communities, homeless service providers, policy makers and all who wish to end homelessness. This book should also be a resource for trainings at churches/faith communities and educational institutions.

After reading this book, no one will ever ask again "What can I do to help end homelessness for both the individual and in our society?"

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