

## Communicating a Vision for a Church-School Partnership

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For a church to focus its mission and outreach efforts on children in poverty, church staff and key leaders must present a compelling message and cast and maintain a vision for what the congregation should do. This is done in a number of ways.

First, key leaders must make efforts to connect the spiritual life of the congregation to community action and engagement; our actions and our involvement in community efforts of justice, mercy, and compassion matter to our sanctification in Christ. The church must be relevant in the community and the world if we are going to make disciples of Christ for the transformation of the world. Christ was emphatic that serving the poor was, in fact, serving him.

Second, we must share a vision for serving children living in poverty through church communications such as website, social media, and print media, and through the worship experience. Sunday drives success for missions and outreach. For a church-school partnership to be successful, it is very important for there to be conversations occurring during worship regarding children in poverty, poverty in general, justice, and the partnership the church has with a local school. This can be done during sermons, prayer time, and announcements prior to worship, and by inviting school administrators to speak during worship.

Third, we must convey the needs of the children at the school while also offering concrete means for the congregation to respond. At Floris, facts and anecdotes on children in poverty and children in our community are provided to the congregation on a regular basis, along with our hopes of serving children in poverty as a strategic priority. When we have these conversations, we also try to be strategic in offering diverse opportunities for the church to be involved in serving the school and the community. Talking about poverty and offering ways of fighting poverty should be done in conjunction whenever possible. For a school partnership to be successful, conversations about the needs in the school, and our biblical call to serve the community must be a regular part of our communications, almost always paired with an opportunity to serve the school in some form or fashion.

Ultimately, the partnership must become an important part of who your congregation is. For our church, we strive to be known as a church that cares about children living in poverty in our community and abroad. Floris has had a collaborative relationship with a local elementary school that spans more than a decade. In that time, the church and school have worked together on multiple programs and projects to serve the students and staff of the school. Many members of the congregation are able to articulate a description of our partnership and how it impacts the school and their own personal faith journey. This is precisely because we make efforts to communicate a vision of serving children in poverty while compelling our congregation to action.