

2016  
Church Impact  
Report

# 2016

# Church Impact Report

May they experience such perfect unity that the whole world will know that You sent me and that You love them as much as You love me. John 17:23



# Making an Impact.

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God gave the Church a weighty responsibility when it comes to the poor and the oppressed, the lonely, abandoned, and the displaced. While the Church in Greater Dallas is large and strong, unfortunately we find an enormous and growing proportion of our neighbors living on the margins.

We praise God for working in the hearts of hundreds of diverse individuals like you and for bringing us together with intentionality. God designed cities to serve certain purposes, and He loves Greater Dallas. Now is the time for us to bring together all the elements He has put in place for His glory. When our neighbors and the watching world outside of Dallas see the impact the Church is making on not only the spiritual but also the social issues of our city, they will not be able to keep from praising Him. Because of our unity, they will know who He is and that He loves them (John 17:23).

The 2016 Church Impact Report is a snapshot of the effect the united Church is having on Greater Dallas. We hope this report encourages you as you see God working in our communities and equips you to further that work based on models that have proven successful.

*Serving alongside,  
Rebecca and the Unite Team*



# Transforming Our City

This is the Church's scorecard. While it will take time to see these numbers move, the work we've done to identify the right interventions and to set up the necessary systems to make a legitimate impact has us going in the right direction.

86%

**Education:** 86% of students graduating in Dallas County are not ready for higher education.

30%

**Poverty:** 30% of families are in poverty, and we have the highest child poverty rate among large cities (Dallas County).

20%  
25%

**Hunger:** One in five adults and one in four children are food insecure (Dallas County).

## Sources

- [commit2dallas](#)
- Mayor's Task Force on Poverty (at [unitethechurch.org/poverty](http://unitethechurch.org/poverty))
- [dallashungersolutions.org](http://dallashungersolutions.org)



*I was hungry, and you didn't feed me. I was thirsty, and you didn't give me a drink. I was a stranger, and you didn't invite me into your home. I was naked, and you didn't give me clothing. I was sick and in prison, and you didn't visit me. ...When you refused to help the least of these my brothers and sisters, you were refusing to help me.*

Matthew 25:42-45



# Transforming Our City

## What Is the Role of Local Churches?

This is an all hands on deck situation. How do we reach the masses? How can we (1) teach people about the issues facing our community and (2) mobilize Christians toward the most strategic solutions?

Through the God-ordained structure of the local church.

The sweet spot for local churches in terms of city transformation is to teach, disciple, and release their members to serve in ways that match their passions. Churches should also be praying corporately for the specific needs of their city. And by building relationships with other churches in the community and learning about the resources available, churches are demonstrating the unity Jesus prayed for in John 17 which, as Jesus implied, is the only way we are able to accomplish this mission.

## Attendance vs. Engagement vs. Effort vs. Impact

Large numbers of people attending events are terrific, and we can measure and report that. They show interest and are a great first step. Numbers of churches, organizations, and individuals engaged on a basic level is a great next step which we can also measure and report. And putting forth any kind of effort shows a willingness and determination to invest in change. We can measure that by the total number of volunteers, hours, and money invested.

However, none of those things necessarily make an impact. What does make an actual impact, and how can we measure that?

**In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: "It is more blessed to give than to receive." When Paul had finished speaking, he knelt down with all of them and prayed. Acts 20:35-36**

# How Can We Measure Church Impact?



*Methodology based on advice from Southern Methodist University’s Center for Research & Evaluation.*

This won’t be exact or comprehensive.

- » We are not currently asking volunteers and donors associated with organizations not exclusively Christian to identify their faith, so the Christian portion for those organizations is conservatively estimated at 33%.
- » We recognize that we have not yet identified all of the appropriate organizations. Baselines will be adjusted in future Reports to reflect additional organizations so as to not over-inflate growth.
- » One of the characteristics of God’s kingdom is its growth—like a tiny mustard seed or a small amount of yeast. Each life impacted has the potential to change a whole family; possibly a whole community; and likely even generations to come. That can’t really be measured.

## Measured in This Report

The following pages take a look at impact, new initiatives, and projects in development in these major areas:

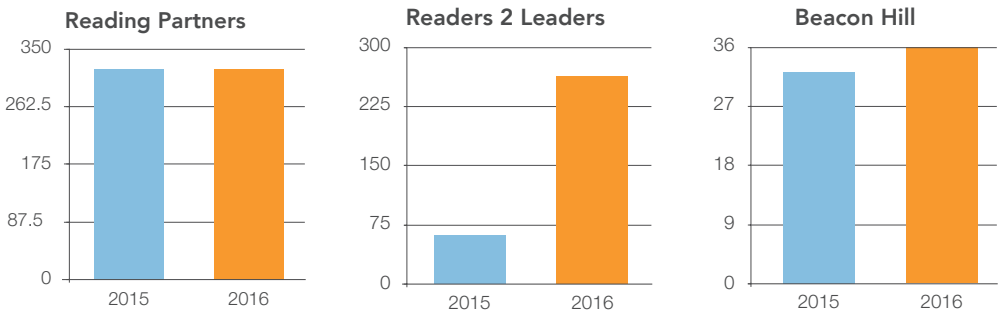
- |                            |                                |
|----------------------------|--------------------------------|
| · <b>Education</b>         | · <b>Hunger</b>                |
| · <b>Poverty</b>           | · <b>Reentry</b>               |
| · <b>Care for Refugees</b> | · <b>Racial Reconciliation</b> |
| · <b>Homelessness</b>      |                                |



# Education

## Impact

» 936 Christian volunteers served students in 2016 through identified evidence-based literacy partners. Comparison of volunteer impact from 2015 to 2016:



» Overall, since 2012, 23,207 more Dallas County students are hitting key benchmarks ([commit2dallas.org](http://commit2dallas.org)).

» **Reading Scholars:** A new program was implemented this spring which filled almost 100 openings at our literacy partners while equipping local high school and college students to make a difference in the city.



## New Initiatives

- » **Priority DISD Schools:** In 2016, Unite and Pastors for Texas Children worked with DISD to identify a handful of schools in need of additional support from the Church.
  - Positions for these schools are posted on [awakenmycity.com/campaign/readingmatters](http://awakenmycity.com/campaign/readingmatters).
- » **Opportunities for these and other schools** are posted on Awaken My City (link above) with the goal of seeing every school being loved by a church.
- » The **Church-School Partner Learning Community** is a monthly gathering of churches committed to improving the academic outcomes of their partner schools. This is important because we know there are 140 churches partnering in some way with 200 public schools across Greater Dallas which reveals an enormous will on the part of the Church to make a difference. Unfortunately, current data shows that actual impact needs improvement in most cases.

## In Development

- » **Reading Matters:** A full-blown citywide effort to increase the number of volunteers serving with organizations proven to improve literacy. It will include videos featuring pastors and city leaders, a companion Bible study, and a pastor's toolkit—all directing Christians and others to the above volunteer postings.
- » **Auburn Study:** Building upon Unite's research comparing the academics of schools with existing church partnerships to the academics of schools with no church partnerships and a 2015 study done by Notre Dame, Auburn University is preparing to do a 2017 study to determine what specific elements of church-school partnerships are and are not impacting academic outcomes.
- » **Movement Day Partnership:** Unite is partnering with Movement Day's education team to mobilize Christian volunteers and leaders to impact Foster Elementary, one of the 20 "priority" schools for which DISD is asking for help from the Church.

# Poverty

Poverty is at the heart of almost every social issue—a cause and effect of sub-standard education and of crime and incarceration; the cause of food insecurity, poor health, and homelessness; and an obstacle facing most refugees, children aging out of foster care, many of our elderly, and more. While it's more complicated than a lack of material things, the rate of material poverty is higher and growing faster here than in almost any other city.

## New Initiatives

### » **Cost of Poverty Experience:**

One of the barriers to Christians getting involved in poverty alleviation is misperceptions about material poverty. To address this, the Cost of Poverty Experience offers participants a glimpse into the lives of low-income individuals and families living in our community—the obstacles



that are faced, the decisions that are made, and the consequences that impact these families every day. This is a two and a half hour experiential event that accommodates 40 to 120 participants and 17 to 21 volunteers. In partnership with the Chalmers Center (authors of *When Helping Hurts*), Think Tank has partnered with Unite to deliver COPE, which was co-designed with low-income individuals who have shared their story so that participants could gain greater understanding. Many organizations and communities across the nation use COPE to work more effectively with low-income families to understand and address the issues of poverty more comprehensively.

- Visit [unitethechurch.org/cope](http://unitethechurch.org/cope) to learn more or to attend or host a COPE.

## In Development

- » **Cost of Poverty Experience Journey:** Unite is working with the Chalmers Center and ABS to curate existing devotional material to serve as a companion to COPE.
- » **Integrated Service Delivery Model:** Up to this point, the Church has done very little in our generation to truly address poverty, but experts have found a model that has been proven to help. The Church will be working with experts, funders, and local service providers to build capacity of a holistic model with four components: financial education, job training and jobs, wrap-around services, and professional and/or volunteer financial counselors/coaches. Relationships are the Church's greatest asset.

## Existing Coalitions

- » **The Anti-Poverty Coalition of Greater Dallas** brings together multiple sectors to boost the financial health of North Texas. They are committed to facilitating impactful conversation and working around the issue of poverty in our community with an emphasis on the fight against predatory lending.
  - Visit [facebook.com/DallasFightsPoverty](https://facebook.com/DallasFightsPoverty)
  - Contact Stephanie Mace at [smace@unitedwaydallas.org](mailto:smace@unitedwaydallas.org).
- » **The Financial Inclusion Roundtable** presented by United Way, the FDIC, the Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas, and the City of Dallas, is a quarterly gathering to equip service providers and others working to improve the financial stability of our neighbors.
  - Contact Greg Mangum at [gmangum@unitedwaydallas.org](mailto:gmangum@unitedwaydallas.org) or 214-978-0027.
- » **Mayor Rawlings' Task Force on Poverty** was formed in 2014 to identify practical policies and procedures that the City of Dallas itself could implement to help alleviate poverty. The Task Force puts together comprehensive research, an annual informational meeting, and an annual briefing to the City Council.



# Care for Refugees

## New Initiatives

- » **What does the Bible say about refugees?** With the national controversy over refugees and policy surrounding them, Unite and our partners took a simple stance: “We love refugees.” American Bible Society and some of our refugee service provider partners pulled together some great Bible resources related to refugees including one for refugees and immigrants called “Heading to a New Home.”
- » **How can we show love to refugees?** Because Unite isn’t an advocacy organization, we can’t take a stance on policy. Instead, we’re simply encouraging Christians to show love to any refugees who find themselves in Dallas by implementing a small group-based integrated service delivery model (ISDM).
- » Find these and many other educational and practical resources at [unitethechurch.org/care-for-refugees](https://unitethechurch.org/care-for-refugees).

## In Development

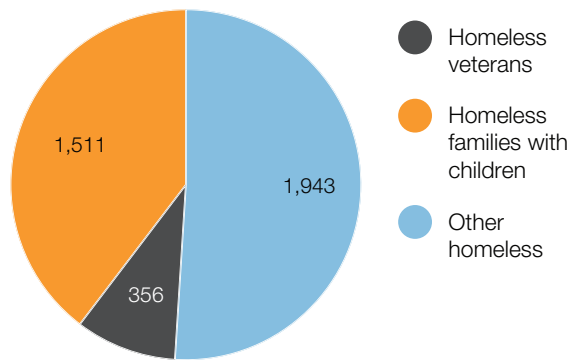
- » **The Refugee Highway Partnership North America (RHPNA)** is a network of Christ-followers who share a common passion to see the Church minister to refugees. Their Ninth Annual Roundtable is scheduled for July 26-28 at Irving Bible Church. Several local churches and ministries are collaborating to plan and implement this event that seeks to connect and mobilize some of the most innovative and active practitioners in refugee ministry.
- » **Speakers Bureau:** Our local refugee service provider partners are exploring the creation of a local speakers bureau to address refugee and immigrant issues, beginning with ‘Refugees 101’ and ‘Loving Muslims’.
- » **Cost of Poverty Experience:** Refugee COPE scenarios will bring better understanding of the refugee experience in America (launching at RHPNA).

# Homelessness

## The Metro Dallas Homeless

**Alliance** has recently formed a new faith-based group that will help the Church more easily enter into relationships with those who want to come out of homelessness. As with poverty in general, relationship is the most important thing we have to offer. In addition, more focus will be put on caring for the veterans in our communities in 2017 which make up nearly 10% of our total homeless population.

2016 Homeless Population



# Hunger

**Dallas Coalition for Hunger Solutions** has created a guide with 10 tested, effective solutions to the problem of hunger that congregations can implement. These solutions take advantage of existing programs and resources in the community. They generally require limited financial commitments from your congregation. But they can make a very substantial impact on hunger.

- Find the guide at [dallashungersolutions.org/hunger-solutions-for-the-faith-community](http://dallashungersolutions.org/hunger-solutions-for-the-faith-community).

# Reentry

Organizations including Unlocking DOORS, Oasis Center, St. Luke Community United Methodist Church, Texas Offender Reentry Initiative (TORI) of the Potters House, and Prison Fellowship have been working together to identify ways the Church in Dallas can best serve those re-entering the community from prison. The hope is to reduce the recidivism rate; the main factors that have been identified are housing, employment, and family support. Watch for updates in future Church Impact Reports.

# Racial Reconciliation

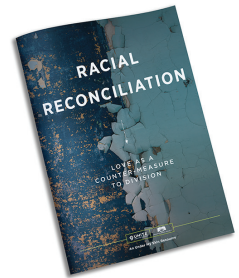
While it will be hard to measure, we believe that two things are going to make an impact on racial unity: (1) relationships and (2) courageous conversations based in the Word.

## Impact

- » **Unity Gatherings:** Hundreds of church, community, and faith leaders and residents attended prayer gatherings at Thanksgiving Square and Concord Church after a series of disturbing national racial incidents.
- » **Pastors' Coalitions:** Clergy groups seeking to evaluate and identify barriers to racial unity and to develop countermeasures to create a more unified Greater Dallas.
- » **Second Annual Pulpit Swap:** Dozens of pastors of different races swapping pulpits.
- » **Project Unity:** A series of events that take place throughout the year that encourage multicultural worship, service, recreation, and fellowship.
  - Visit [yearofunity.com](http://yearofunity.com).

## New Initiatives

- » **Under My Skin Journey:** A 10-Day ABS devotional written by local pastors for the purpose of transforming individual thinking and actions.



## In Development

- » **Under My Skin Panel Event and How-To Kit:** Local pastors' coalitions, Unite, and other partners will be hosting a demonstration panel event for pastors based on an event ABS hosted in Philadelphia last year. Churches can then host similar events in their communities using the How-To Kit to encourage courageous conversations between diverse community members.
- » **Under My Skin Journey Video-Based Small Group Discussion Guide:** Written for people who want to facilitate a courageous conversation about race in a small group setting—whether that's a group within a given community, church, company, or family. Video components, including local pastor comments as well as local and national news stories, can be used to spark deep conversation.

# Additional Issues

The Church is doing great work around many other critical issues. Pray with us for leaders who want to help facilitate collaboration and/or communicate with the Church about the ways we can best use our resources to address these needs. We are praying for “Champions” for the following Issues:

- » **Care for the Elderly**
- » **Domestic Violence**
- » **Families**
- » **Foster Care and Adoption**
- » **Health**
- » **Human Trafficking**
- » **Veterans**

## Featured Issue: Domestic Violence

A diverse group of 33 churches collaborated with KCBI to raise awareness about domestic violence. A radio program was hosted on KCBI airing this cause, and with resounding success, both the Dallas and Fort Worth mayors issued proclamations designating Sunday, Oct. 23, 2016, as #BreakTheSilenceSunday. The next annual event is planned for Oct. 29, 2017.



# Supporting Systems & Resources

- » **A Prayed 4 City:** An ongoing citywide prayer initiative which allows churches and organizations to adopt a day each month to pray through prayer guides written by local experts on a different critical issue facing our communities each month. Together, we're covering our communities in prayer 365 days a year.
  - Visit [unitethechurch.org/ap4c](http://unitethechurch.org/ap4c) to explore the monthly guides or to sign up to receive them.
- » **Awaken My City:** A beautiful new platform specifically *awaken my city* designed to help churches help their members love their neighbors. Because collaborative partners are leading vetted organizations proven to address the city's most critical needs, pastors will feel confident releasing their members to search for opportunities that match their individual passions and giftings. Churches and service providers will have access to training resources, promotional materials, and reporting that will tell them how and where their congregation is making an impact. Churches in the Unite and partner networks will receive major discounts to those and other advanced features.
  - Go to [unitethechurch.org/serve](http://unitethechurch.org/serve) to find the Unite coupon codes or directly to [awakenmycity.org](http://awakenmycity.org).
- » **Bible Engagement Research and Resources:** Over the next 10 years, American Bible Society is investing millions of dollars in a forward-thinking approach to Bible engagement for the purposes of the transformation of our city. Based on research determining barriers to Christians engaging with the Word in a transformative way, collaborative partners will develop Bible resources meant to address our thinking and actions about crucial topics. Resource-specific and citywide research will be

**Also, seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the Lord for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper. Jeremiah 29:7**

done routinely to see what impact this is having on churches and communities as Christians move from Bible explorers and scholars to city changers. Additionally, a social media-driven campaign to give non-Christians a safe place to explore important topics is being piloted in six metro areas including DFW.

- Visit [unitethechurch.org/bible](http://unitethechurch.org/bible) to learn more.

» **Church Engagement Data and Map:** Unite has been collecting information for years about how churches are engaging the community and what issues they're passionate about. To tell the story of what we're collectively already doing and to encourage churches to keep doing more, Unite is publishing an interactive map showing churches we know who are at each of four levels of engagement: **learn, pray, serve, and unite**. Churches in the Unite and partner networks will have access to behind-the-scenes information that will help them work together better.

» **Cost of Poverty Experience:** Across the nation, city transformation advocates have realized that a barrier to Christians getting involved with poverty alleviation efforts is misperceptions about American poverty. This two-hour role-playing experience is meant to give participants an opportunity to walk in someone's shoes to better understand the numerous decisions that have to be made every day, the roadblocks to success, and the consequences of it all.



- Visit [unitethechurch.org/cope](http://unitethechurch.org/cope) for more information.

» **HelpFinder:** A game-changing online platform which makes free and low-cost programs easily accessible to churches, service providers, and the community. Over the next few months, organizations will be updating their listings, and checking programs against quality standards. Customized versions of the same data are available to local veterans, families with young children, community college students, and patients of major healthcare systems. Churches within the Unite and partner networks will have access to behind-the-scenes features such as program "reviews," reporting, and more.



helpfinder

- Visit [unitethechurch.org/helpfinder](http://unitethechurch.org/helpfinder).

# Supporting Systems & Resources

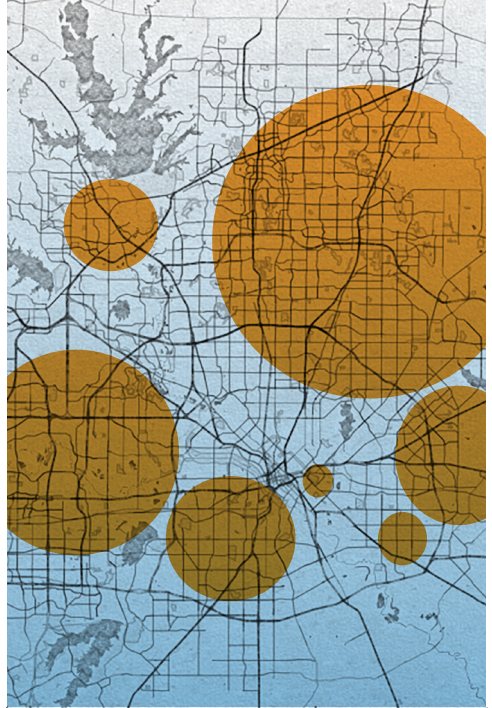
- » **Movement Day:** Each of the last four years, hundreds have gathered to hear the powerful city transformation vision and determine how they can make a difference. Movement Day is an annual opportunity to gather with believers from across the city—a chance for leaders to bring multiple people in their networks who might not otherwise be able to be involved.
  - Visit [movementdaygreaterdallas.com](http://movementdaygreaterdallas.com) to learn more
- » **Transform Dallas:** An annual citywide community service event jointly organized by multiple diverse churches and partners such as Dallas Leadership Foundation. For the past two years, Transform Dallas has given hundreds of Christians a place to serve side-by-side with people from other communities, exposing them to needs and opportunities they didn't know existed.
  - Visit [dlftx.org/transform-dallas](http://dlftx.org/transform-dallas) to learn more.
- » **Voly:** Created by VolunteerNow, [Voly.org](http://Voly.org) is a simple platform used by hundreds of service providers to publicize their volunteer needs. We're encouraging churches and Christian nonprofits to continue to use Voly to promote opportunities that are open to everyone. Voly and Awaken My City are working on ways to share data.



# Regions

Almost 20 communities across Greater Dallas have a group of Christian leaders who desire to collaborate. Unite's primary role is to identify and support the facilitators (see Champion Support on page 15). The role of Champion includes:

- » Helping the group assess the needs and assets of their community
- » Bringing the group back to the Bible to determine priorities.
- » Engaging subject matter experts such as the Issue Champions and appropriate stakeholders from the community.
- » Setting shared goals that coalition members are excited about meeting and measuring progress.
- » Providing regular opportunities for existing and/or prospective coalition participants to gather.
- » Communicating with participants on a regular basis between meetings.
- » Communicating needs and successes with Unite to be shared with the Church across the rest of the metroplex.



Visit [unitethechurch.org/communities](https://unitethechurch.org/communities) for a list of known community-based coalitions  
Email [regions@unitethechurch.org](mailto:regions@unitethechurch.org) to let us know if one is missing.



# Transforming Our City

## Make an Impact

You don't have to go back to your community and figure out how to make an impact. Experts have already figured that out. We hope you will use the resources in this report as a guide for discussions about which specific issues you want to get involved with and will connect with others doing the same.

## Get Involved

- » Please let us know if you would like to help make the annual Church Impact Report as helpful as it can be.
- » Find volunteer needs at [unitethechurch.org/serve](https://unitethechurch.org/serve).
- » Visit [unitethechurch.org/donate](https://unitethechurch.org/donate) to financially support Unite.
- » Connect with us on social media:
  - Facebook: [facebook.com/unitethechurch](https://facebook.com/unitethechurch)
  - Twitter: [twitter.com/unite\\_dallas](https://twitter.com/unite_dallas)



Learn



Pray



Serve



Unite

# Uniting the Church. Transforming the City.

Unite's mission is to connect Christian leaders to each other and to resources needed to address the urgent social challenges facing our city.

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