

# Marching Toward Christian Social Justice

The march toward justice in society requires two steps. One is the step of direct service, which addresses the immediate needs of victims of injustice. The other step is social action, which addresses the causes for injustice. The march to justice is incomplete if only one step is taken. Direct service and social action can be seen in the following types of activities.

## **Direct Service: Helping People Survive Their Present Crisis**

- Organizing food collections
- Stocking food shelves
- Delivering food baskets
- Running clothing centers
- Sheltering homeless people
- Providing transportation for the elderly and people with disabilities
- Visiting the elderly, shut-ins, and prisoners
- Tutoring
- Delivering meals-on-wheels



## **Social Action: Removing the Causes of Crises**

**Advocacy:** Speaking on behalf of groups of people to legislators, corporations, churches and so on (this can mean sending letters or visiting people regain human services, peace, employment practices, hunger); or speaking on behalf of individuals to government agencies and others (for example, helping with Medicare and welfare forms or voter registration)

**Empowerment:** Helping people develop the skills and power to gain some control over their lives and communities (for example, organizing tenants or workers, or providing treatment for chemical abuse)

**Consciousness-raising:** Making people more aware of issues and the suffering of people (for example, through letters to the editor or public events and actions)

**Accompaniment:** Developing an attitude that empowers—being with rather than doing for victims of injustice.

### **Preferential option for the poor**

- Looking at unjust situations from the perspective of those who suffer the injustice most directly
- Giving priority to the needs of those who do not have the basic rather than to the wants of those who already have the basics.

Many ways to promote justice are useful, but be especially attentive to actions that do the following:

- Establish or strengthen a relationship with those who suffer injustice
- Address causes (including structures), not just symptoms
- Create justice, not just protest injustice