



Palmyra Circles® Initiative of Lebanon County Summary

With nearly 1/6th of our society living in poverty, we must respond to do more than provide emergency assistance that sustains people living there. **We need to minister with people in poverty so they can make progress toward sustaining themselves.** The [Circles Initiative \(www.movethemountain.org\)](http://www.movethemountain.org) does just that. A relationship based anti-poverty initiative of MINISTRY WITH THE POOR it partners persons who want to work their way out of poverty with individuals who want to journey with them as they move toward personal sustainability. Circles also impacts its communities: Early results demonstrate that for every \$1 spent on the program, \$2 in welfare and food stamp subsidies were returned to the state, and \$4 to the community as new earned income.

The Palmyra Initiative is an outgrowth of recent meetings and encouragement that has grown from an informational meeting held in Lebanon in September 2011. Strong support from within Palmyra First UMC and more than \$20,000 of seed money have already been raised. The General Board of Global Ministries has placed one of its 24 Global Justice Volunteer student interns, August Fisher, to work with us. In addition, presentations to hundreds of citizens, community leaders, students and social service professionals have been very encouraging, and three people from Palmyra have already received Circles training. Lee Smedley, pastor Dave Harris and more than 20 committed volunteers continue organizing community informational meetings to share information and gather further support.

The Palmyra Circles Initiative is on track to begin classes for this transformational ministry with families in poverty (Circle Leaders) early September 2012. Held concurrently with training for middle class volunteers committed to walking with the circles leaders, this training will lead to regular meetings of paired allies and Circle leaders by the beginning of 2013. Walking with families out of poverty is the focus of the relationship-based Circles of support.

Funding for Circles of Palmyra includes individual and congregational contributions as well as foundational grants and community support. With God's blessing, Circles of Palmyra can also serve as a support base for other Circles initiatives in our region. While in-kind contributions can reduce costs, up to \$70,000/year is necessary to sustain a Circles Initiative. Costs include staff training and student materials, food gift card stipends for Circle leaders and salaries for two half-time professional staff. Your individual and group contributions will not only support our work, they will also add credibility as we approach foundations and community organizations for their support.

Certainly we covet your prayers for discernment and success according to God's plan in bringing Circles to Palmyra and to our county.

We also want you to learn more about Circles, and the hidden rules of poverty that must be overcome by a family moving towards self-sustainability. Contact Lee Smedley for a one-to-one conversation or an informational meeting with your organization. There are many roles you can play in this community transformation movement.

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