

RESOURCE GUIDE



Welcome to the *Oliver!* Resource Guide. As we keep saying “this isn’t your grandparents’ *Oliver!*” We wanted to take a cue from Charles Dickens himself, and use the story of this young orphan boy to lean into the facts of childhood poverty, homelessness, and domestic violence that is happening today **in our own community**.

We hope this Resource Guide will help give a little history about the show and St. Luke’s call **to restore hope** grounded in our Methodist heritage. We also wanted to share with you some information about poverty affecting our community **right here in Central Florida** and resources for assistance, as well as ways to get involved.



St. Luke’s History of Social Justice

43 years ago, St. Luke’s United Methodist Church was founded as a new church in the middle of empty orange groves. Starting as a church rooted in our Methodist theology and history, it has from the beginning, been a church serving its community, and committed to making an impact in Central Florida. Rooted in Christ-centered love, lived out in radical acceptance, hospitality, community, discipleship, and service, missions of justice and mercy has always been an extension of our theology and values.

From starting Shepherd’s Hope, a free clinic for the under and uninsured, and having a twenty-plus year connection with OCPS as volunteers in Title 1 schools, to building homes with West Orange Habitat for Humanity, serving monthly with Coalition for the Homeless, and hosting Family Promise families, St. Luke’s has done whatever was needed to fill in the gaps for people living in poverty in our communities. Ten years ago we began a vision of Community Transformation that led to work lifting families out of poverty in a specific neighborhood. That vision evolved into our Restoring Hope strategic vision to ensure children and families have affordable housing and food sustainability in our community. The information in this Resource Guide shows the models by which all of our missions work to help children and families find long term sustainable outcomes, but also provides resourcing to schools, nonprofits, and city and county partnerships to tackle these issues for the entire central Florida Community.

Oliver Twist, or the Parish Boy's Progress (1838)

*Curated by Joseph D'Ambrosi, PhD, St. Luker, and Oliver! Production Dramaturg
Biography adapted from **dickens-online.info***

Charles Dickens was well versed in the poverty of London, as he himself was a child worker after his father was sent to debtors' prison. The defining moment of Dickens' life occurred when he was 12 years old. His father, who had a difficult time managing money and was constantly in debt, was imprisoned in the Marshalsea debtor's prison in 1824. Because of this, Charles was withdrawn from school and forced to work in a warehouse that handled "blacking" or shoe polish to help support the family. This experience left profound psychological and sociological effects on him. It gave him a firsthand acquaintance with poverty and made him the most vigorous and influential voice of the working classes in his age. His appreciation for the hardships endured by impoverished citizens stayed with him for the rest of his life, and was evident in his journalistic writings and novels.

Dickens began writing *Oliver Twist* after the adoption of the Poor Law of 1834, which halted government payments to the able-bodied poor unless they entered workhouses. Thus, *Oliver Twist* became a vehicle for social criticism aimed directly at the problem of poverty in 19th-century London.

Oliver Twist was very popular when it was first published, partially because of its scandalous subject matter. It depicted crime and murder without holding back. While critics often condemned such novels as immoral, the public usually enjoyed them. Because the novel was also published serially, the anticipation of waiting for the next installment (and its many cliffhangers) also likely contributed to its popularity. The inscription on Charles Dickens' tomb reads: "He was a sympathiser to the poor, the suffering, and the oppressed; and by his death, one of England's greatest writers is lost to the world."

Methodist Roots in Social Justice

Curated by The Rev. Melissa Cooper, St. Luke's Minister of Worship and Arts

From its earliest days, the Methodist movement, begun by John Wesley as a revival movement of the Church of England, has been active in justice and advocacy work, especially for the rights of workers and children. John Wesley put action and advocacy at the center of the purpose of the people called Methodist. The early revivals were not just about healing individuals, but opposing broken systems that oppressed people.

Wesley described the situation he saw around him—a deadly combination of spiritual apathy, social complacency, greed, oppression, and alienation—as "complicated evil" or "complicated misery." He called the spiritual and social heartlessness that allowed neighbors to go hungry while others had resources "complicated wickedness."

Wesley was one of the first prominent church leaders to oppose slavery as an institution. The early Methodists opposed unjust tariffs that preyed upon the poor. They offered food, clothing and shelter to those who were most in need and unable to work. They provided materials and seed money to start up small businesses or to help keep businesses from closing. They provided free medical clinics for accessible healthcare.

And one of the most prominent institutions created among the early Methodist movement were "Sunday Schools," which we now think of as places for Biblical instruction as part of a church experience. Then, however, they were an act of justice, as children were part of the labor force as many as six days a week in that early industrial era in the late 1700s. To help break the unescapable cycle of poverty they found themselves in, early Methodists began teaching them on Sundays to read and write, to offer a basic education that might give them a fighting chance to overcome the systems that were stacked against them.

To see how we are living into our Methodist heritage by advocating for the rights of children in our community, visit st.lukes.org/restoringhope.

Resources for domestic violence



Harbor House works to prevent and eliminate domestic abuse in Central Florida by providing critical life-saving services to survivors, implementing and advancing best practices, and educating and engaging the community in a united front. If you need help, or would like to give help, scan the QR code or visit harborhousefl.com.



SAFETY. EMPOWERMENT. HEALING.



Help Now of Osceola provides a temporary safe shelter for survivors of domestic abuse who are in danger and experience fear of abuse. Help Now is committed to supporting individuals as they establish violence-free living. If you need help, or would like to give help, scan the QR code or visit helpnowshelter.org.



Stand Up Survivor is a 501 c3 non-profit organization based in Orlando dedicated to educating, equipping, and empowering domestic violence survivors and their communities globally. Their vision is to see domestic violence eradicated from the world we live in today and for generations to come. If you need help, or would like to give help, scan the QR code or visit standupsurvivor.org.



Childhood poverty in Orlando and St. Luke's response

Reports on child poverty in Florida paint a heartbreaking picture of the struggles a segment of our population face daily.

Depending on who defines poverty and what metrics are used, the numbers of people in poverty vastly varies. At St. Luke's, we rely on Florida United Ways' A.L.I.C.E. (Asset Limited, Income Constrained and Employed) poverty threshold. It depicts a realistic picture annually by state, cities and countries rather than one measurement for all like the federal poverty line does.

Regardless of these disparities, we believe that one family struggling with poverty is one too many!

There are multiple complex causes of poverty on several levels. The minimum wage in Florida at \$11/hours is no where near providing affordable living.



Poverty is traumatic!

Poverty is one of the causes of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) along with abuse, neglect, mental illness and lack of safety. ACE impact physical, mental, and emotional wellbeing for years and generations to come. Severe stress and anxiety caused by financial, housing and economic insecurities has an adverse impact on brain development in children resulting in long-term effects on learning, behavior and health in general.

The impact of poverty is, therefore, not only on the individual or family. It impacts the future of all of us.

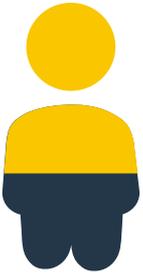
Our calling and commitment is supporting children in crossing the poverty line so they can heal from the trauma of poverty and thrive. Surrounding families with resources and equipping communities for the wellbeing of all has been the focus of St. Luke's.



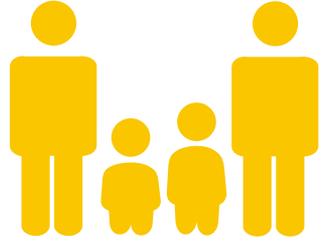
Childhood poverty in numbers

\$93,000

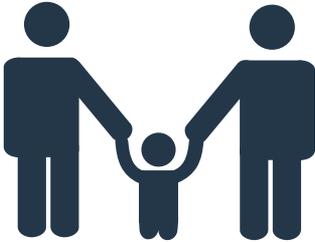
for a family of 4 is needed to afford living in Central Florida in 2021.



55% of children in Florida are in poverty.



\$26,500/year for a family of 4 is the federal poverty line.



In Central Florida, even with two working parents **42%** of families do not have enough to meet basic needs.



\$22,880 is the annual income at the minimum wage of \$11 / hour

4

full time jobs are needed for minimum wage earners to afford living in Central Florida.

51%

of children in Florida in poverty are Black and Hispanic.

Monthly budget to afford living in Central Florida

- Housing: \$1,594
- Child Care: \$1,544
- Food: \$1,605
- Transportation: \$1,501
- Health care: \$803
- Technology: \$100
- Miscellaneous: \$621

RESTORING HOPE

Reducing Family Homelessness and Childhood Hunger

Our vision
To see an Orange County where all economically vulnerable families become food secure, stably housed and economically stabilized.

Our mission
To partner with families who are experiencing housing instability and food insecurity as they work towards food and economic sovereignty.



Stable housing

Supporting precariously housed families at Maxey & Mollie Ray Elementary Schools as they move into their own rental units.



Food Sovereignty

Supporting teens in East Winter Garden and Olympia High School. As part of a community-wide effort to end hunger, St. Luke's is also one of three lead organizations forming the Central Florida Alliance to End Hunger (CFAEH).



Economic Sovereignty

Supporting multiple generations of families through economic stabilization programs, entrepreneurship leadership development and community engagement.

Our Mindsets



Metrics

- Stable Housing
- Food Security
- Family Stabilization
- Social Capital
- Community Engagement

The Restoring Hope Approach

- Human-centered Design Thinking
- Whole-person care for long term solutions
- Multi-generational engagement
- Strategically balance relief, betterment and development
- Addressing multiple barriers simultaneously for sustainable solutions
- Multi-sector partnerships

The Restoring Hope initiative builds on the partnerships and best practices of the Community Transformation Initiative in East Winter Garden.

Consider Yourself...

a partner in making sure everyone has

A Safe Place To Call Home



Give Now



HOPE
PARTNERSHIP



Learn More



Hope Partnership aims to provide a holistic continuum of care in order to end homelessness and poverty in Central Florida.
www.thehopepartnership.org

Follow up your experience and partner with St. Luke's:

Movie Night: The Florida Project - August 19

Join us Friday, August 19 at 6:30 p.m. for a special viewing of The Florida Project, a documentary filmed in the shadow of the most magical place on Earth, followed by a Talk Back session with community leaders. RSVP at st.lukes.org/movienight.

Cost of Poverty Experience (COPE) - September 28

COPE is a learning simulation designed to let participants walk in the shoes of families who struggled with poverty. If you have already gone through COPE, sign up to be a community resource volunteer. Sign up to participate on September 28 at st.lukes.org/cope.

Give to the St. Luke's Restoring Hope Initiative at st.lukes.org/give (select "Restoring Hope" from the drop-down menu)

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