POVERTY HURTS

Victoria works at a hotel near Kansas City International Airport. She can’t afford a car so she takes a series of buses from her mid-town home. What typically is a 20 minute commute by car takes her 3 hours each way. Victoria’s kids are with neighbors, or alone, from 4 am to 7 pm. She tolerates the 6-hour commute because the hotel pays $2.00 more an hour than employers in her neighborhood. Even with the increased pay, Victoria regularly sacrifices one need for another: food, rent, utilities, clothing, healthcare, transportation. There’s not enough money for it all.

Down the street, Daniel lives with his mother and two younger siblings in a run-down house that doesn’t have electricity or water. They spend the hottest days of summer in the MLM orchard where the kids drink cool water from the spigot and play under the trees. Daniel helps carry containers of water back to the house so they can bathe and his mother can wash the baby’s diapers. He doesn’t know what will happen when the city turns off the water for the winter.

Alejandro is on the verge of dropping out of school. The kids make fun of him because he wears dirty clothes and “smells.” He is failing academically; the couch he’s currently sleeping on is in a new school district and he is at least two semesters behind his classmates. Alejandro’s family has been homeless for 3 years.

Iona, a homebound senior, is concerned because roaches and mice are taking over her house. Even if she could afford an exterminator, it would be a lost cause; the neighborhood is full of abandoned and unmaintained homes. Iona is overwhelmed and afraid.
THE POOR
The number of individuals and families in Kansas City who live below or slightly above the federal poverty level (FPL) is on the rise. Currently, the FPL guideline is $24,600 for a family of four...that's approximately $1,641 a month for housing costs, food, clothing, transportation, and healthcare. Working full time, a person earning the minimum wage of $7.25 an hour makes only $15,080 a year.

According to the U.S. Census, the following number of people live at or below the FPL in the metro Kansas City area. These numbers do not include the “working poor” who live at or below 150% of this level.

- 24.4% of Wyandotte County (40,000 people)
- 16.5% of Jackson County (113,000 people)
- 9.1% of Clay County (21,000 people)
- 7.3% of Platte County (7,106 people)

THE HOMELESS
The Annual Homeless Assessment Report (AHAR) to Congress documents the annual homeless Point In Time (PIT) count on one night each January. According to the 2017 report, 1,671 individuals were reported as homeless in Jackson County, Missouri including 371 children.

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THE CHILDREN
Young children are the most likely group to experience poverty among all age groups in the United States. Poverty is associated with a number of toxic stressors such as high mobility and homelessness; hunger and food insecurity; parents who are in jail or absent; domestic violence; drug abuse; and chronic health problems. The adverse effects of poverty shape the brain's architecture in a way that influences learning, health, and behavior for a lifetime.

Wyandotte County, Kansas is one of the highest poverty areas in the state. Approximately 1,400 children were reported as homeless during the 2015-2016 school year. Over 1,700 homeless students have been reported by the Kansas City, Missouri school district and this number does not include students attending one of Kansas City's 20 charter schools.

THE IMPACT ON OUR COMMUNITY
Poverty affects more than the individual or family in crisis; it impacts our community's culture and future growth. Disparities of income, wealth, education, and access to opportunity create a community with unequal voices. It creates division, crime, and an overall undervaluing of human worth.
TOGETHER WE CAN HELP

Metro Lutheran Ministry believes that every person has the right to a life of dignity and a hope for the future. But individuals who have inadequate access to basic human needs face painful, degrading decisions every day. Many have to choose between eating or shelter; basic needs are often sacrificed for other basic needs.

MLM offers relief through a number of high quality and well-developed strategic services that enable individuals to meet the challenges of day-to-day living, resolve immediate crises, and move towards permanent stability.

OUR MISSION
With abiding faith in the intrinsic value of all God’s children, Metro Lutheran Ministry connects those in need with food, housing, health care, education, employment services and other resources in order to nurture greater hope, health, opportunity and peace.

OUR VISION
To be a community that acts justly, loves mercy and walks humbly with God. (Inspired by Micah 6:8)

IN CRISIS VULNERABLE SAFE BUILDING CAPACITY EMPOWERED

MLM closely monitors an individual's progress on a weekly or monthly basis, depending on the need, and then tracks outcomes every six months once he or she has reached the “safe” or “building capacity” stage.

To ensure that solutions are permanent and sustainable, MLM maintains a relationship with each case management family for 5 years. Currently, MLM families have maintained a 90% success rate for housing.

STANDING IN THE GAP
For many families, the downhill spiral from “vulnerable” to “in crisis” is caused by an unexpected hardship such as a large utility bill, car repair, or health care expense. A domino effect often ensues: jobs are lost when transportation is not reliable; homes are lost when rent cannot be paid.

Similarly, a positive, uphill trajectory can be triggered by a single opportunity for assistance. A $400 check may be the difference between “in crisis” and “vulnerable” for a homeless family who cannot set aside enough money for an apartment down payment. A $50 pair of work books may be the only thing preventing an unemployed woman from beginning a new job.

MLM stands in the gap for those who have no other support system in place.

REBUILDING LIVES
The root causes of chronic poverty are varied and complex. For individuals who require more than a basic “assist” to achieve a sense of wellness and stability, MLM tailors a case management program based on their unique set of strengths and weakness.

Additional family support may include personal coaching, job-skills training, educational assistance, financial literacy programs, and coordinated aid from partner agencies.

RESTORING HOPE
Regardless of the level of assistance provided, MLM’s ultimate goal is to see fear diminished, strength revealed, and hope restored for those we serve.
COMMUNITY SERVICE CENTERS

MLM's Community Assistance Centers provide emergency assistance to those in need throughout the metro area. Locations include:

Central Assistance Center
3031 Holmes
KC, MO  64109
816-931-0027

Wyandotte Assistance Center
722 Reynolds Avenue
KC, KS  66101
913-342-8333

Northland Assistance Center
1100 NE Vivion Road
KC, MO  64118
816-454-5295

INNOVATING SINCE 1971

In 1971, Lutheran congregations in Kansas City established MLM with the purpose of ministering to our community's poor, homeless, elderly, and disabled. Collaboration is part of our DNA.

Throughout its history, MLM has been known as one of Kansas City’s pioneering social service agencies, sponsoring new and innovative housing and emergency assistance programs. Several initiatives have spun-off to become successful non-profits in their own right.

MLM helped found:

- **Harvesters Community Food Bank**, the central resource and distribution center for Greater Kansas City's food pantries and emergency food suppliers
- **Sheffield Place**, transitional housing for women and children
- **Parvin Estates**, a low income, affordable apartment complex in North Kansas City
- **Warmth and Light Coalition** (now part of Project Warmth), an initiative to collect new and gently used coats and blankets to help people in need during extremely cold weather
- **Kansas City Community Gardens**, an initiative that provides low-cost gardening materials and education to assist low-income individuals in growing their own food
- **Blessings Abound Thrift Shop**, a non-profit store which sells and recycles donated merchandise in order to support a range of social service agencies

“I had to use your pantry for the first time. I was expecting either judgment or pity but received only kindness. Everyone made our uncomfortable situation bearable. We are so very grateful.”

- Marisa

20,716 at-risk and homeless individuals received assistance from MLM in 2017
FOOD AND BASIC NEEDS PROGRAMS

MLM seeks to help those suffering from the effects of poverty by first addressing their basic need for food, clothing and housing.

FOOD PANTRIES
MLM operates a food pantry at each Community Assistance Center. The majority of the food distributed comes from Harvesters Community Food Bank with support of donated food from the community. The pantries average 50 clients per day, receiving 21 meals per month for their family. Food from MLM pantries supplements monthly budgets, freeing up more resources for bills or other needs.

MOBILE FOOD PANTRY
On the second Saturday of each month, Harvesters delivers 14-16 pallets of fresh produce and perishable items to MLM’s Midtown location. Volunteers assist with the distribution of approximately 80 pounds of food for each of the 175-200 families in attendance. The mobile food pantry is the primary source of fresh fruits and vegetables for many who live in the urban food desert.

SENIOR COMMODITIES
MLM is the largest distributor of USDA commodities in the Kansas City area to older adult households at or below 130% of the federal poverty level. Volunteers distribute 384 boxes each month and deliver food to 21 homebound seniors. The 35-pound boxes contain items such as cheese, canned vegetables, fruit juice, cereal, protein, and flour.

BACK SNACK
Each week during the school year, MLM provides weekend meals through Harvesters to children at Frank Rushton, Faxon, Trailwood, Pathway and Longfellow Elementary Schools as well as Academy for Integrated Arts. These children come from households living at or below 185% of the poverty level.

SATURDAY BREAKFAST
MLM partners with True Light Church of the Nazarene and St. Luke’s Lutheran Church to provide free and unlimited breakfast every Saturday morning in midtown Kansas City, Missouri and northeast Kansas City, Kansas; locations where a quarter to a third of families live with incomes below $15,000. Breakfast is served by volunteers who cook, serve, and enjoy fellowship with the neighbors.

DIAPERS AND HYGIENE
MLM is proud to partner with Happy Bottoms, serving as a diaper distributor to almost 1,000 low-income children, and with Giving the Basics, as a distributor for personal hygiene products. Items such as shampoo, laundry detergent,
diapers, and toilet paper are not covered by government assistance programs and are not often carried by local food pantries. Distributing these items through MLM’s Community Assistance Centers is an important way to preserve dignity for those we serve.

MLM ORCHARD AND GARDENS
The MLM orchard (28th and Highland, Kansas City, MO) is a place of beauty and hope in a blighted neighborhood. MLM partners with the Boston Heights and Mount Hope Neighborhood Association, The Giving Grove, Kansas City Community Gardens, United Way, Kansas City Parks and Recreation Department, and the Kansas City Water Department to provide the community with a 103- tree fruit orchard and community garden. Neighbors are invited to harvest the fruit when in season as well as “adopt” one of the 24 raised beds. MLM provides tools, water, seeds, and assistance from a volunteer master gardener.

BIRTH CERTIFICATES AND IDS
Official documents such as birth certificates and state-issued IDs are necessary for individuals to secure housing, employment, and social service programs. Unfortunately, these documents can be easy for homeless people to lose and costly to replace. MLM helps individuals work through their options to prove and ensures they have the proper identification to apply for copies. To offset the fees, MLM provides vouchers for the state’s Vital Records Department and Department of Revenue.

MLM CHRISTMAS STORE
The MLM Christmas Store is one of the largest gift-giving programs in Kansas City, serving over 903 Kansas City families who are at or below 150% of the federal poverty level. Over 500 community volunteers create a joyful and dignified shopping experience with items such as new coats, housewares, clothes, small kitchen appliances, toys, blankets, grocery gift cards, and homemade cookies. For many people, items from the MLM Christmas Store are the only gifts they give and receive for the holidays.

EMERGING LEADER
Stephen, a single dad, came to MLM in need of assistance with a large utility bill, school supplies for his kids, and furniture for their small apartment.

MLM helped provide for the family’s material needs and then focused on Stephen’s underlying issue: a sense of brokenness and lack of vision for his family’s future.

His case manager said that Stephen felt he wasn’t “cutting it” as a father. In addition to caring for his kids, he also cared for his sick mother and was feeling overwhelmed by the responsibility of both. Adding to his stress was the fact that he made $600 a month, working part-time around his caregiver schedule.

MLM provided intensive one-on-one coaching and access to valuable support services. He successfully completed financial literacy and nutrition classes and responded well to his case manager’s motivating nudges to “take control” of his future. His confidence level continues to rise as he develops a new sense of leadership and direction for his family.
EMPOWERMENT PROGRAMS

Once basic needs have been met, MLM works alongside individuals to determine achievable short and long-range goals that ultimately empower families to break the cycle of poverty and achieve a greater sense of well-being.

EMPLOYMENT SUPPORTS
MLM is one of Kansas City’s newest Financial Opportunity Centers (FOC). The FOC model, supported by Greater Kansas City LISC and the United Way of Greater Kansas City, provides integrated delivery of financial coaching, employment services, and access to income supports to those in need.

MLM’s Learning to Earning program helps unemployed and under-employed individuals gain livable wages to become more financially stable and self-sufficient.

Job seekers work closely with MLM’s employment coach to create a plan of action that focuses on strategic searches for appropriate positions, resume building, on-line application assistance, computer skills training, interview training, follow up calls to employers, and tracking job search progress.

In addition, MLM helps individuals remove barriers to employment by providing bus passes, phone cards, and vouchers for work shoes and clothing. Funds for job training, licenses, and certification programs are also available.

FAMILY EMPOWERMENT
The Family Empowerment program provides holistic, one-on-one case management to homeless and high-risk families in the Kansas City metro area.

Using the Arizona Self-Sufficiency Matrix, MLM assesses an individual’s ability to meet basic life needs without assistance. Each domain within the matrix (such as food, housing, and transportation), is ranked on a scale of 1 (In Crisis) to 5 (Empowered).

Using matrix scores, MLM helps the individual identify and track progress on goals they want to accomplish, with the primary focus on safe housing, affordable access to nutritious food, affordable access to health and wellness resources, and financial stability through budgeting and increased income.

Throughout Family Empowerment’s year-long program, individuals follow a customized plan that includes weekly coaching and classes in financial education, conventional banking, household skills, employment goals, healthy living strategies, transportation plans, and parenting.

After families reach their desired goals, MLM continues to follow up for 5 years to ensure their continued progress. The Family Empowerment program has a 90% success rate in keeping families securely housed.

THE IMPACT COALITION
Because families in crisis often require services from multiple agencies, MLM helped create the Impact Coalition to harness the collective power of Kansas City’s social service community.

This coalition is a group of trusted partners - non-profit agencies, governmental agencies and local businesses - with unique knowledge and resources in their respective domains, such as housing, food, and healthcare.

By combining resources and working together simultaneously, the partners can coordinate targeted, wrap-around care for families in a “one-stop” setting.

Coalition members convene at Avenue of Life in Kansas City, Kansas every Wednesday during the school year. Since 2015, Impact Wednesday has become a critical resource for homeless families referred by the Kansas City Kansas Public School McKinney-Vento program.

The success of Impact Wednesday attests to the power of collaboration: 800 homeless children have been housed since the program’s launch in 2015.

Under MLM’s leadership, the Impact Coalition will implement Impact Midtown at the Linwood YMCA during the 2018-2019 school year to serve homeless and at risk families in the Kansas City Missouri Public Schools and Head Start.
Anna grew up in the foster care system and wants her daughter, Emiya, to have the stable home life she never knew. Her lack of education and low-paying job made this simple dream seem impossible. Every month she failed to make ends meet and constantly worried about losing their small apartment. Anna came to MLM feeling scared, stressed, and defeated.

After providing assistance with a large utility bill, Anna’s case manager assessed her individual strengths and challenges and helped Anna create their plan of attack. Of first priority was a series of financial planning classes which Anna completed with flying colors. She learned effective strategies to manage her resources and gained a new sense of peace and control.

Over the next year, Anna received intense mentoring through MLM’s Family Empowerment program. She enrolled at Metropolitan Community College and is now well on her way to becoming a trained surgical technician - and more than doubling her annual salary. The trajectory of Anna’s future has changed dramatically. The brighter, stable future she dreamed for Emiya is in her sights.

According to her case manager, once Anna received that initial financial relief from MLM, she was able to catch her breath, and begin the process of solving her own problems. According to Anna, knowing “someone was on her side” made all the difference.
HOUSING SAFETY AND STABILITY PROGRAMS

UTILITY AND RENT ASSISTANCE
Evictions and utility disconnects are overwhelming blows to families in crisis. Along with the emotional response of losing a home or access to water, electricity, and heat, families must deal with the practical worries of how a damaged credit rating impacts their future housing (and even employment) prospects.

MLM works with families in crisis to prevent eviction and disconnect notices from becoming a reality. When funds are available, MLM can provide qualified individuals up to $1,000 per an 18-month period to settle accounts in arrears.

With this small investment, many of the families that MLM assists are able to regain their overall stability. In contrast, families without this type of emergency assistance often begin a downhill spiral towards homelessness. In those cases, MLM must pool resources with other agencies and invest $3,000 or more to house an evicted family.

MINOR HOME REPAIR
Kansas City’s midtown area has a high concentration of older adults on fixed incomes who lack the necessary resources to maintain their homes. MLM’s volunteer Minor Home Repair team provides in-depth services to help seniors, as well as the disabled, manage their safety and independence.

Stairs can “trap” the wheelchair-bound, especially those living alone. The fair market value of a permanent exterior ramp is well over $1,500; an expense many homeowners cannot incur.

MLM’s Minor Home Repair team have become specialists in the design and construction of wheelchair ramps, building even the most complicated structures in a matter of hours.

By resolving accessibility needs such as ramps and grab bars free of charge, the Minor Home Repair team often makes the difference between an individual staying at home or moving into a Medicaid nursing facility.

Other common Minor Home Repair projects include the installation of new doors, locks, smoke detectors, security lights, and plumbing fixtures.

PERMANENT SUPPORTIVE HOUSING
MLM operates two permanent housing locations to care for chronically homeless, disabled, and mentally ill individuals.

In addition to receiving a safe, fully-furnished apartment with utilities, MLM tenants have access to a number of individualized supports in the areas of physical and mental health, socialization, alcohol and smoking cessation, and healthy living.

Grace Homes, located in Kansas City, Kansas, serves 9 chronically mentally-ill/chronically homeless individuals. A full-time residential counselor meets and communicates with MLM’s program partners to ensure that each tenant has the opportunity to achieve his or her health and wellness goals.

Project CARE, located in Kansas City, Missouri, provides 14 one-bedroom apartments to support individuals who are chronically homeless and have at least one of the following other co-occurring conditions: disability due to brain injury, recovery from substance abuse, or chronic mental illness.

While tenants are allowed to stay at Grace Homes or Project CARE indefinitely, some are able to “graduate” from the program and secure income and housing of their own.

MLM housing programs are funded by a grant from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

“...If it had not been for MLM getting me off the streets, I would still be a dysfunctional alcoholic or worse...I would probably be dead.”
- Tammy
BE INSPIRED, SHARE OUR PASSION, GET INVOLVED

For over 47 years, MLM has had the joy of helping replace the pain, stress, and sadness of those suffering in poverty with a new sense of hope, peace, and wellness. This joy is not MLM's alone; it is shared with a large network of community partners who share our vision of seeking justice and extending kindness to those in need.

Unfortunately, the cost of poverty will always outpace our capacity to serve. MLM's network of community partners must continue to grow in order for us to implement new programs, expand services, and dream big for the future. You can help make a difference.

“We’re not about charity work, we’re about community work.”
- Brooke, MLM Volunteer

VISIT

• Experience the MLM mission in action by visiting one of our Community Assistance Centers, Permanent Supportive Housing facilities, or Community Orchard. To schedule a tour, register online or call 816-931-0027.

• Meet with MLM’s executive director and learn about new initiatives on the horizon and ways you might get involved. To schedule a meeting, call 816-285-3117.

• Visit www.mlmkc.org or MLM’s social media channels (Facebook, LinkedIn, and Instagram) to stay current on events and volunteer opportunities.

VOLUNTEER

• Help shoppers select food from the MLM pantries or mobile food pantry.

• Deliver boxes of food commodities to homebound seniors once a month.

• Help pack sack lunches to feed hungry people who visit MLM in search of something to eat.

• Serve a hearty Saturday breakfast to our neighbors in Midtown Kansas City, Missouri, and Kansas City, Kansas.

• Prune trees, plant, water, and harvest fruits and vegetables in the MLM orchard throughout the summer and fall.

• Donate gifts, help organize inventory, and assist shoppers during the annual MLM Christmas Store.

• Provide minor home maintenance and repairs for MLM’s elderly and disabled clients.

INVEST

• Become a monthly donor and provide critical operational support for MLM programs.

• Join MLM’s Heritage Society and leave a lasting legacy through your estate plan. Contact the executive director at 816-285-3117 for more information or visit www.mlmkc.org.

• Donate stock, required distributions from your 401k retirement plan, or other fixed assets. Contact the finance director at 816-285-3118 for assistance.

• Thrivent Financial members may allocate their portion of “fraternal dollars” to MLM through the Thrivent Choice program.

• Provide in-kind donations, including food and hygiene items, to MLM pantries or new clothing, toys, and housewares to the MLM Christmas Store.

• Donate a used vehicle to MLM. Contact the finance director at 816-285-3118 for assistance.
“When I was out there, homeless, I felt like an outcast, a reject. Now, that’s all behind me. I feel human again, like my old self.

When I got to MLM, I started healing. I can be somebody again, other than a ghost.”

- Bill, Graduate of Metro Lutheran Ministry’s Permanent Supportive Housing program