

Discussion/Action

This document contains ready-to-use suggestions for discussion and action based on the comic book *Hope at Work*. Gather and adapt these ideas to construct a learning experience that fits your situation.



Front and Back Covers

1. Based on what you see here, what do you predict (or expect) from this book? Why?
2. Which of the emotions on the characters' faces most matches yours as you begin reading this book?
3. On index cards, write your major reason for wanting to read this book. Share your cards with one other person, circling words or ideas that are similar.

Page 1

1. Of the possible uses to which this comic book can be directed, which most closely matches your hopes? Explain your answer.
2. What's the connection of the Isaiah text with the concept of "congregation-based community organizing"?
3. Construct the facsimile of a bulletin board by writing or finding your own definitions, descriptions, Scripture references and introductory comments. Place the bulletin board in a place where possible readers might notice.

Pages 2-3

1. Name the emotions that are evident on these two pages. What might be under them – causes, experiences, spirituality, personal agendas – and how might they show themselves in your congregation?
2. React to Robert and Elena's idea of "putting Band Aids on broken legs." Where (else) in the life of your congregation does this occur?
3. How does your clergy leader get to share her/his deepest concerns about the "usual behaviors" of your congregation?
4. Talk about a time when you (or a friend) talked with your clergy leader about an important-and-uncomfortable matter. What approach was taken? What were the results?
5. Role play these two pages with the presumption that the pastor did NOT understand or agree with the questions or problems presented. What would happen next? Why?



Pages 4-5

1. What made the “kind of survey” work? How do you know?
2. What do you notice about the kinds of questions asked in these visits? How do they compare with the kinds of questions you’ve asked in surveys in your congregation?
3. Why do you think Pastor Kathy put Robert and Elena in touch with a community organizer right away?
4. What makes conversations like the ones here easy or difficult? How do you know?
5. What other names would you give to a “listening campaign”?
6. Find “Mishpat” in the Hebrew Bible or Bible dictionary. What’s significant about this word or concept in terms of community organizing?
7. Using a search engine or phone book, find the name of a nearby community organizing enterprise. Find the name and background of the organizer (or equivalent).



Pages 6-7

1. How would you characterize one-to-ones?
2. How are one-to-ones “conversation” and how different?
3. What small-but-significant detail did you notice on the drawings and dialog of these pages?
4. Imagine together what would happen if something like one-to-ones began every meeting in this congregation. Present your ideas to team/committee chairpersons!

Pages 8-9

1. Why do you suppose there is so much debriefing and evaluating in the community organizing process?
2. What if the one-to-ones at Hope Church had stopped with what happened on Page 8?
3. What barriers to one-to-ones do you notice here? What already available assets do people bring to these conversations?
4. How is this process different than a “needs” analysis? A “SWAT Analysis”?
5. What important detail(s) on these pages might the rest of us have missed?
6. Label the drawings and dialogue on these pages with the names of members of your congregation who might match the characteristics or reactions of the book’s characters.

Pages 10-11

1. What would be the advantage of sending a lay leader to the training? Why?
2. Why would you send your clergy leader to national training for community organizing? Why not?
3. What’s the significance of the youth on Page 11 who wonders about switching to another table?
4. What does “Can we please move beyond just charity?” mean to you?
5. On Page 11, why is “NEEDS” crossed out and the word ASSETS substituted for it?

6. What does Carl mean when he says, “Now that’s what I call church”?
7. Make a list of the most personal (or most difficult) questions you’d want to ask the people who are reading *Hope at Work* with you.

Trade your lists and ask each other one or more of these questions.

AND SO THE PEOPLE
PRACTICED ASKING QUESTIONS
AND REALLY LISTENING.

Pages 12-13

1. If you were Pastor Kathy at this point, what other deep-down matters would be starting to nag at your soul? Why?
2. What do the drawings and dialogues on these pages suggest about what may be coming next (or down the line)? How can you tell?
3. The confirmation class seems a little squirrely here. But what’s also hopeful about that class?
4. Look at the people in these drawings—or looking at what you’ve seen and read so far—and make a list of the kinds of people who seem to be interested in community organizing. What do you notice about your list? How does it match the people in your congregation? How can you be sure?
5. Go back over the pages you’ve read thus far. Find and name as many spiritual traits or themes as possible. With two other people, think about Bible stories or passages that exemplify those discoveries.

Pages 14-15

1. Why wouldn’t Mishpat try to deal with ALL the issues raised in the assembly?
2. Why such a wide range of votes on these matters? (See bottom of Page 14.)

MISHPAT ISSUES ASSEMBLY

3. “Food availability” surfaces as an issue. Go back through the book and find the place where this matter was first mentioned. What’s the significance of that situation?
4. Why might food availability be a good matter to pursue in your locale, in these times?
5. What are the qualities that “researchers” need to possess in order for the research visits to be worthwhile? How do you know?
6. Why do the research in person, when good data is available online or elsewhere?
7. Debate this statement: We don’t need to do “research” because we already know our community (locale) well enough. Write salient points on newsprint; discuss what you notice.

Pages 16-17

1. The process of choosing actions to take begins with “brainstorming”. What’s good and not-so-good about brainstorming? How do you know?
2. How is the matter of food availability in your locale similar to that portrayed here?
3. What adjectives or adverbs would you use to describe the process of choosing the actions, or the actions themselves?

EAGER TO GET STARTED, HOPE LEADERS BRAINSTORMED SOME ACTIONS TO CALL ATTENTION TO THE UNAVAILABILITY OF LOCALLY-GROWN AND FAIR TRADE ITEMS AT THE LOCAL GROCERY STORE.



4. Why would Mr. Schumacher, the grocer, be puzzled and annoyed? What else might he be feeling?

5. Compare and contrast “letter-writing campaigns” in which you have been engaged with the style and direction of the actions on Page 17. Talk about your experiences.
6. On newsprint, list what it would take for the process on Page 16 to work well. (Example, people who can deal with abstract reasoning.)

Pages 18-19

1. What other possible reactions (to the actions on page 17) might also have occurred?
2. Why could Carl the organizer have predicted these outcomes?
3. Besides those noted and implied here, what other errors did these folks make?
4. Why, though, would one character’s daughter have thought the actions were “awesome”?
5. Community organizing is always public. Talk about your congregation’s public profile.

Pages 20-21

1. What evidence of “working smart” do you see on these pages?
2. What DID happen to Esther in the King’s court? (See the Book of Esther in the Hebrew [Old] Testament of the Bible.)
3. Invent your own cartooned one-page insert that answers this question: “What (inside Hope leaders) changed between Page 19 and Page 20?”
4. Invite a local organic farmer or market manager to your next meeting. Ask the same kinds of questions of these people.

Pages 22-23

1. Analyze the thoughts of each of the three pew-sitters in the middle of these pages: What’s going on in each case? How significant are their thoughts? Why?
2. What kind of community did Nehemiah organize? (See the book of Nehemiah in the Hebrew [Old] Testament of the Bible.) How similar is that situation to your own? What can you learn from his example?
3. Why might community organizing appeal to teens and young adults? How do you know?
4. For each of the preliminary outcomes listed in the yellow box on Page 23, give some reasons for these results.



Pages 24-25

1. The Farmer's Market seems to be the major result of the organizing efforts. What do you notice on these two pages that's significant? (HINT: Look at the apparel of the various characters.)
2. Whose self-interest is being fulfilled in this situation? How do you know?
3. What might the story of Jesus' Feeding of the Multitude have to do with this situation? (See the book of Mark, Chapter 8, in the Newer Testament of the Bible.)
4. Use your best cartooning skills to insert into this two-page spread some characters YOU think might be here. Explain your answers.

Page 26

1. Why a big, public thank-you event?
2. Who else would you have thanked or noticed? Why?
3. Pretend you are the newspaper reporter assigned to this event. What's the story? What's your headline?

Page 27

1. What other results (effects) of the organizing effort are NOT listed here?
2. Why didn't Robert know that he had these capacities for leadership?
3. Trace each of the Organizing Effects back to some conversation, emotion, event or Scripture earlier in the book.

Page 28-29

1. Which of these results surprised you? Which did you kind of expect? Why?
2. What questions would you like to ask any of the five-years-later characters?
3. What are the benefits to Hope Congregation? (HINT: Include those NOT listed here.)
4. How do the outcomes here match any of what you know about "transformation" programs or efforts? Which seem significantly different? Explain your answers.
5. For each of the reported outcomes for the characters here, give some possible reasons why the five-years-later results occurred.



Page 30

1. Which of these possible actions most appeals to you? Why?
2. Why is conversation still at the heart of most of these possible actions?
3. Visit the Web address listed on this page and talk about what you find there.
4. What ARE your ideas?