Barnabas Project How To Guide

"Ho! Everyone who thirsts, Come to the waters; And you who have no money, Come, buy and eat. Yes, come, buy wine and milk Without money and without price. Why do you spend money for *what is* not bread, And your wages for *what* does not satisfy? Listen carefully to Me, and eat *what is* good, And let your soul delight itself in abundance." Isaiah 55:1-2

A Ministry of Mary Craig Ministries, Inc.



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Introduction: What Is the Barnabas Project?

The Barnabas Project is a nondenominational, nonprofit ministry **dedicated** to demonstrating God's grace by meeting the needs of what we call "forgotten-people groups." These may be migrant workers, folks from impoverished neighborhoods, or people from other countries just trying to start a new life. Often, they are the people living in society's shadows who seem to have slipped through the cracks. Society at large may overlook them. But rest assured that God does not. "You have heard that it has been said, 'You shall love your neighbor, and hate your enemy. But I say unto you, Love ..., bless..., do good ..., and pray...that you may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for He makes His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust...Be therefore perfect even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." (Matthew 5:43-46) In Matthew 25:40 Christ says: "I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me."

Why another Ministry? Aren't There Enough Already?

Many churches and ministries find they have a calling that transcends their own community, which helps explain the many national and international ministries and missions that do a wonderful job of helping those in need. Often, however, the groups that need the most help are right down the road from your own church, or a few communities over. Food pantries and church benevolence meet some of those needs, but we have found there are always folks on the local level who could use an additional helping hand. Also, there are always giving souls looking for an opportunity to get engaged and make a difference in their communities. We hope and pray that you will find the Barnabas project just the encouragement you need to put those folks to work for the Kingdom **in your local community**!

How Does It Work?

That's our favorite thing to explain, because it is so easy. A Barnabas distribution begins by inviting everyone you know -- church members, friends, family, neighbors – to clean out their closets and donate things they no longer need.



All of these and more can be used to help those less fortunate and demonstrate God's free grace! Please note the word "free." The Barnabas Project and its affiliates do not charge, or accept charitable **contributions, in return** for anything given away. No one pays anything, because the objective is to provide a modest example in some small way of God's gracious generosity.

Once the collections start rolling in (and trust us, they will!), you'll need a location for the distribution and a local partner. The local partner could be the head of a community association, a pastor or lay officer of a church in a poor community, the people who run the local day-labor center, or the leader of the group of people you are trying to help. We'll talk more about finding a partner and a location for your distribution later. But trust us, we've done dozens of Barnabas distributions, and finding a good site and an effective partner to host the event rarely presents any difficulty.

Is This Very Time Consuming?

Not at all. You'd be surprised: The people donating the items typically drop them off to a central gathering point, **so** Barnabas is a pretty turnkey **ministry**. You will need to find someone with a servant's heart to act as your Barnabas director, and to coordinate your outreach to groups in the community. But that takes only a few hours a month, and once the event is scheduled, it is mostly on automatic pilot. We typically have 10-14 volunteers who help **out** on the day of the event. They travel to the location, unload the truck, **and** display the give-away items on the tables -- these are usually set up and waiting for us when we arrive. **Once the distribution begins, the volunteers** help people sift through the items and find what they're looking for. **Keeping the display tables organized and looking neat makes a big difference!** Not including transportation time, the distribution itself usually takes about three hours. After the **distribution, ministry volunteers** whose schedules permit go **often make arrangements to go out for lunch together at a local restaurant, where we** compare notes, share war stories, and just fellowship. There's nothing like **working together** and putting a smile on people's faces **in service to Christ** -- a great bonding opportunity within your church or ministry.

We're On a Tight Budget. How Much Will This Cost Us?

This is an all-volunteer program that does not involve any bookkeeping or money, other than giving people receipts showing they have made a donation to a non-profit organization if they wish to write their contribution off on their taxes. Our only expense is the 15-foot truck we rent to transport the items from the collection point to the distribution. Because we take a picture of the truck at each distribution and send it out in our newsletter, we've gotten a special rate of around \$100-200 per distribution for the rental and gasoline. That's all we pay.

How Often Are The Distributions?

That depends on the needs of your community, how rapidly your donations come in, and how much time your volunteers are able to commit. Our ministry focuses on international prayer and intercession, and involves a busy travel schedule for our members. **So** we've found what works best for us is to hold two distributions a year -- one on the first Saturday in June, the other on the first Saturday in December. The latter is an especially heart-warming time to hold a Barnabas distribution. Kids and parents are able to pick up gifts, clothes, and household items that bring a little extra joy to their Christmas Season. **It's a great way to refocus everyone's attention on what Christmas really means.**

Why Is It Called "Barnabas"?

That's one of our favorite questions to answer: The name Barnabas means "Son of Consolation." In the New Testament, the historical figure of Barnabas handled imperfections in people, occurrences of offense, and held out the gospel of grace to people who were imperfect, in need of restoration, **and thirsty for** comfort and hope. As the "son of encouragement" and the "son of the power of the paraclete," he encouraged others, especially outsiders. Barnabas came alongside Saul (who became Paul) to help him gain acceptance when so when many of the disciples mistrusted the erstwhile Christian persecutor Saul. Later, when Mark **abandoned a mission trip**, Paul had no use for him. **True to his calling**, Barnabas left Paul **to encourage Mark**, and was used by

the Holy Spirit to restore Mark's standing.

It was in this spirit that The Barnabas Project got its start in 2003. Sponsored by Mary Craig Ministries, Inc., a 501C3 organization, Barnabas is an answer to God's calling. God led us to try to be a "paraclete" to the forgotten, not only in the distant lands that Mary Craig Ministries ordinarily served -- our strategic-prayer ministry has been called to over 76 nations -- but also right here in our own backyard of South Florida.

Our mission **is** to break the strongholds of the curse and remove barriers to the blessing of God by serving as a "paraclete" to those in need of a Barnabas. We seek to achieve this through practical, as well as spiritual, endeavors as guided by the Lord, blessing others through encouragement and hope.

Why Is The Barnabas Project Reaching Out To Us?

Our first distribution was held in 2003 under a gazebo at a soccer field near a poor section of Florida City, not far from the Everglades National Park at the tip of the Florida panhandle. Every year since, we've been doing two distributions annually. We've held distributions at state and county parks, in church parking lots, at day-labor centers, in church community centers -- just about every venue you can imagine.

We typically play worship music, hand out Bibles, pray whenever the opportunity presents itself, share God stories, dialog with pastors about their ministry needs, and always give away as much free stuff as we possibly can. A Barnabas distribution is a delightful half-day of giving, sharing, and praise. Strongholds are broken, souls are saved, and both those who give and those who receive leave the event feeling powerfully blessed.

Several years ago our pastors, Rev. Jim and Dr. Mary Craig, felt the Lord leading us to take Barnabas in a new direction: It seemed to be time to enter a new season. After much prayer, we felt led to take the lessons that we had learned over the years, and create a "How To" manual that other churches and faith-based organizations could use to conduct similar community-outreach ministries.

This guide is part of our answer to that call. It is designed to explain **what** Barnabas **is** and how it works, so **that** any church or ministry can simply apply the principles we have learned to their own local communities and regions. If we can help you to help those who otherwise might go unnoticed and undeserved, we believe we have been faithful to the call that we have received. What is your obligation to us in return? There is none: From the beginning, Barnabas has been and continues to be a free expression of God's awesome grace.

The Purpose of Barnabas:

To glorify God by displaying His goodness and graciousness to all To advance the Christian faith through representation and recommendation To minister to Jesus by serving His people To be in a position of being blessed by God by being a blessing to others

We encourage you to pray about your church's outreach effort to forgotten-people groups in your community. After all, to God NO ONE is ever forgotten!

Step One: Getting Started

During a Barnabas Distribution, we'll often say we're "doing church." The idea is that beyond your faithful attendance each Sunday, the Lord also wants each of us to reach out to those in need, **especially in our local communities**. So in addition to attending church, we also believe it is important to "do church" by working with your fellow volunteers to make a difference in your community.

After praying to seek God's will, your first step is to find a director, i.e., someone within your organization who has a heart for the hurting who can devote the few hours each month needed to make a few calls and coordinate the overall effort. Prayer plays an important role in finding the right team leader. Often your pastor will already have in mind someone who would grow from the opportunity to serve. Feel free to show them this "User's Manual," and if they have questions they can call either Jim and Mary Craig, or MCM Barnabas Director David Patten, whose numbers are available in the appendix to this manual.

Once you have a director, there are two things that need to happen to get a distribution underway: You need donations, and you need a local partner to help you with the site selection and logistics for the distribution.

Getting Donations

- Begin by letting all of your church members know that you are collecting items.
- You can hand out a flyer to your members, listing the types of items you are looking for (clothes, books, school supplies, shoes, toys, etc. While we do not generally give away food during a Barnabas distribution, that's up to you and your ministry leaders).
- Encourage your members to talk with friends, relatives, and colleagues who may have closets they need to clean out, or estates **they need to downsize**.
- Ask people to start dropping things off at the church or another central collection point. Some people will box up their donations, and some will put them in bags. For ease of transportation, have your donors place any loose objects or belongings in either a box or a clean garbage bag.
- Note that your local dry cleaners often toss away clothes that go unclaimed. Why not introduce yourself and explain how their unwanted items can be a blessing to someone else?
- Donors often request a receipt for tax purposes, verifying their donation.

Once you have some donations coming in, it's time to find a location for your distribution. That's where the fun begins!

Site Selection

- Ask your pastor and the board of your church to consider what types of groups -ethnic minorities, the poor, people for whom English is not their native language
 would most benefit from receiving free goods that others are willing to give
 them.
- Study your local newspaper and newscasts for stories that suggest which groups need a little encouragement.
- Talk with social workers in your area. Find out the less prosperous neighborhoods and where the areas of needs are.
- Pray for guidance!
- Create a list of communities whom you feel led to reach out to. Then identify the leaders in those communities you may wish to speak with.
- Get on the phone and start calling people to introduce yourself, and to explain the straightforward opportunity Barnabas represents.

Don't assume, however, that a single phone call will suffice to line up a partner and a site. Say you've identified a poor community that would benefit from a distribution. Then you search the web and make up a list of churches who serve that particular area. You may have to call two or three organizations before you get the contact information for that most invaluable of resources: The unsung person behind the scenes who is able to get things done. They in turn may need to present the distribution opportunity to the pastor, or ministry team, or department head in charge. Sometimes this will require follow-up calls. Occasionally, they may ask you to drop by on a weekend so they can meet you in person and show you their facility.

Once they realize you're really just trying to help them serve their community, you'll be surprised how the doors will open up for you. But you shouldn't expect just a few calls will suffice – like anything else, it takes some follow-up! Sharing the stories of past distributions helps them visualize how the program will work. Trade contact information -- phone numbers and e-mail addresses – so that everyone can communicate going forward.

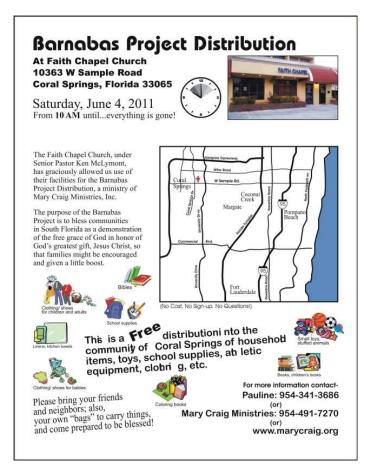
One of the first things they'll always ask you is: "What do you need from us?" It's a perfectly reasonable question: No one wants to make a commitment until they're sure what they're getting into. So here's the answer:

What's needed to host a Barnabas Distribution?

■ You'll need a little help with promotion. With each distribution, you'll create a simple flyer or bulletin using Word or PageMaker, to be used in promoting the event. You e-mail the flyer to the event partner, who then prints out as many copies as they need. It may be 10 copies or it may be a thousand – it is up to them.

But it is a good idea at a minimum to post it on the church bulletin board, so people have a chance to see it as they pass by. Any promotional help the event partner can give is much appreciated -- but how much is totally up to them. Be sure to have them review and approve the flyer before it is finalized.

A large space or room. Keep in mind that over the three-hour distribution period perhaps 200 to 300 people will file through -men, women, and children. So you'll need enough space for parents and their children to rummage through the items on the tables and stuff their selections into their shopping bags as



they move through. The shape of the space does not matter however. Rectangular or square, long or wide, we can work with it regardless.

- Tables the more the better. The first thing that happens when the truck arrives is that volunteers start spreading out clothes and other items on the folding tables that are available. About a dozen to fifteen tables are needed, but really the more tables that can be set up without restricting traffic flow, the better. More tables mean more space to lay out clothes individually, rather than in stacks or mounds. Just like in a store, the presentation matters.
- A coordinator. We need a contact to work with in the weeks leading up to the distribution, and when we arrive, we'll want to say hello to the kind soul who will

be supervising our activities.

- Volunteers. Especially when the event is held at a church, it is very helpful to have the site provide volunteers familiar with the community and how things work there. This speeds the process of getting the clothes out of the truck and out of individuals' cars, and onto the tables. If volunteers are not available, that's not a show-stopper. It may just take us a little longer to set things up.
- A little crowd control. It is good to have a few volunteers to help people find shopping bags, and get through the line to the tables. We generally find that everyone is well mannered, but it is useful to have some structure and organization.
- Music. If you're considering keeping people entertained while the crowd gets the things they need during the distribution, be sure to check to see if the partnering organization and distribution venue are ok with a worship team performing songs. Determine if a stage or sound system is available, or if you will need to provide a sound system and mics, assuming you have access to such equipment. But if you don't want music or the space does not permit, don't feel like this is an essential element of a successful distribution.
- Storage space. This last one is flexible. But our rule is we bring nothing home. The reason is we know we'll soon be filling up the garage with another massive load of give-away items. So for the sake of the sanity of the people who store the items for us, any leftovers stay with our event partner for future distribution by them to those in need as they see fit. Of course, some sites lack storage facility for the 8-12 bags of leftover items we usually have. When that is the case, we contact other ministries or charities in the area who can take the remaining items off our hands. We know they will bless someone later.

Step Two – Communicate!

There are a few things you'll need to know from your event partner as the event draws near:

- Confirm whether it will be an indoor or outdoor event. At the very least, there should be a Plan B for moving everything under a gazebo, tent, porte-cochere or other cover if it begins to drizzle. You need a contingency plan.
- Reiterate the need for at least a dozen banquet-style tables.
- If possible, sweep the site prior to the event to make sure it is reasonably clean. Or a volunteer can take that task when the group arrives on site.
- If possible, do a site inspection of the location in advance. Visiting the site is the best way to get a feeling for how the traffic will flow, where the band will set up if you're providing music, the best table layout, and so forth. This can help head

off any unwanted surprises later on.

- Make sure they understand that the truck with the bags and boxes of items will arrive at least 45 minutes before the event is scheduled to begin.
- Check and see if they will have any volunteers on hand to help.
- Verify that playing music has been approved.
- Check and see how they have distributed the flyer, and how big a turnout they are expecting.
- Hand out copies of the flyer and a map with directions to the location to the volunteers participating in the Barnabas distribution.
- It's also a great idea to set up a prayer team to pray for the success of the event, beginning weeks or even months in advance.

Step Three – The Big Day Arrives!

The event will probably go off without a hitch if everything has been done properly in advance. A few suggestions:

- You'll want to reserve the truck rental about a week before the event. The first time you rent a vehicle, ask to visit with the manager or owner. Introduce yourself; tell them about your ministry, and how it helps the community. Mention that everything is free and no one makes money from it. Ask if a discount would be possible.
- It's a good idea when feasible for everyone to meet at a central location, such as your church, before they begin the drive to the distribution site. There are several advantages to this approach. A caravan makes it less likely someone will get lost. And it enables you to have a prayer together to consecrate the event, before you hit the road.
- When everyone arrives, begin unloading the truck. Those who will be filling up their bags with goods need to be patient while everything is arrayed for them no early shoppers! Once you're ready for the doors to open, invite the local coordinator and/or volunteers to join you in a prayer, asking God to bless the event and be glorified by all that is done and said. Then open the doors!
- Train your volunteers to show God's grace throughout the event. If a problem comes up, they should ask a director or pastor for assistance. Much of the joy of the event involves interacting with the people being helped. Try to find out their needs, and to match the items available with their specific needs.

- Volunteers should continually "groom the tables," by arranging clothes and other items to look nice and to be easily seen and presentable.
- During the event, take a good group photo of all the workers in front of the side of the truck, so that the rental company's name is prominent.
- Return the truck as soon as possible after the event. Let them know that their truck helped bless others. Show them the picture and thank them. We have even left behind a high resolution color image on 8 x 10 photo paper suitable for framing, with a message "Thank you for your part in our recent Barnabas Distribution."



It is wonderful after the event to invite all the volunteers to go out for lunch for Example of "Thank You" picture fellowship and sharing.

Giving Away the "Barnabas Box"

This is a tradition we have started that we would like to see other ministries carry on. For each distribution, **the spiritual high point for us is when** we give away a Barnabas Box. Inside are items the Lord has led us to include. Some of them are useful: A loaf of bread, for example, for Jesus Christ is the bread of life. A bottle of water, for Christ Jesus is the Living Water. A vial of anointing oil or small bottle of olive oil, which represents the healing power of the Holy Spirit. A pocket-sized U.S. Constitution, which represents the need for people to operate within the law in order to receive God's full blessing. A small stuffed animal to promote kindness to all God's creation. A Bible, the Word of God. A map to represent that life can change direction.

We find an individual or family in need, with whom we feel God is leading us to share the Barnabas Box. We invite them to receive it on behalf of their community. (We have already prayed over it, asking God to vanquish any strongholds or obstacles negatively impacting that community). The goal is to be a blessing to both the individual and the community, by removing any spiritual adversity to their healing, well-being, and peace (Shalom). When we present the Barnabas Box, we explain the significance of each item contained therein. As we do this, we give a clear presentation of the Gospel, using interpreters if necessary. We then invite them to pray with us. We have seen how giving the Barnabas Box helps break strongholds for individuals and for disadvantaged communities. Many have received Christ, wept, expressed their gratitude, and felt especially blessed to be chosen to receive the Box. One woman launched a ministry, using her testimony of being a Barnabas Box recipient and how it changed her life. Not all, however, accept; once a recipient listened with apparently rapt attention but later threw out the contents of the Box except for the Bible and the Constitution. As always, the results are in God's hands.

What Happens After A Distribution?

You may wish to follow up in a couple of weeks to see if the organization that provided the distribution site was pleased with the event. (We have yet to encounter anyone who wasn't).

It's a good idea to get feedback from volunteers in terms of what went well and what could have gone better during the event: Where there enough tables? Enough volunteers? Enough donations? Was the balance of attendees and donated goods about right? We've found each distribution is unique, and every one offers valuable lessons we can incorporate going forward to help the next Barnabas distribution go even better.

All those who donate to Barnabas receive a post-distribution report **in the form of an email letter, complete** with pictures, a Barnabas Project brochure, a receipt for tax purposes, and a personal "thank you" from Dr. Mary Craig for "touching lives through their gifts to the Barnabas Project of Mary Craig Ministries, Inc." When they receive their receipt, donors fill in they gave and the estimated value of their donations. **This becomes important for their tax records.**

How Can I Learn More?

We invite you to read below some of the typical questions about how Barnabas works, and to look over the sample flyer we have included. Also, our contact information is provided in the appendix. We would love to interface with you and your team leaders to help make sure your first distribution goes off without a hitch. **If you wish, we'll also attend your distribution to lend a hand, schedules permitting.**

Frequently Asked Questions

Can we host the Barnabas at our own church if we want to?

Yes, of course. The recommended requirements (a dozen folding tables, cover to keep you out of the rain, etc.) would not change if you choose to host the distribution at your own facility. Keep in mind, however, that folks in poor communities can't always catch a bus or a taxi ride in order to travel to a distribution point. Not all churches are located in impoverished neighborhoods -- that's why we tend to look for local partners and venues very close to the communities we want to serve. Basically, Barnabas goes to them!

Is traffic congestion an issue on the day of the event?

It can be if your distribution is in a particularly busy location. We once had to turn down a distribution because the facility was on a busy one-way street with zero off-street parking: We were concerned that people stopping to participate in the give-away might cause a traffic hazard. It's not unusual to have more pedestrians and bike riders at a Barnabas distribution than automobile traffic. Handy tip: If you examine your prospective site and envision how folks will arrive, park, and file through the room to select their items, your distribution should flow smoothly.

What's the best pattern for the table layout?

It really depends on the space you have to work with, and how many tables you have. Tables can be in one long line, or they can be set up in two parallel lines, or they can be arrayed in an oval around the room. The main point is to not let them get too bunched up, to the point that passing through becomes crowded.

How do we preach the gospel during the event?

That's up to you and the site hosting the distribution. We generally state upfront that we may hand out Bibles, and will pray with them if asked. People witness as they are sensitive to the leading of the Holy Spirit. Generally, we try to better understand both the material and spiritual needs of the people we're there to help, and we share the gospel when the opportunity arises.

Suggestion: MCM has partnered with Child Evangelism Fellowship (CEF) over the years. CEF sets up their own table, and ministers the gospel to the many children coming to the Barnabas Distribution. They do an awesome job!

Can we offer food during the event?

That's up to you. Keep in mind, food tends to attract people who are there for a meal, and not necessarily to participate in the actual distribution. We avoid combining the distribution with providing food, but that's your choice depending on the resources you have at your disposal. We have on occasion had tables of donated can goods and foodstuffs. When donations of food come in from grocery stores and elsewhere, MCM's normal practice is to distribute those items to area food pantries.

How do you know you'll have enough stuff to give away?

The challenge is to get the number of attendees to approximately match up with the amount of goods being given away. We have been very blessed that this always seems to just about work out right, although there are always items left over. But certainly we do worry about making sure the goods and the demand for the goods are matching up. There are no guarantees! \bigcirc

Appendix Barnabas Testimonials

"It was awesome. It was so spirit-filled, and it was just a joy to see the people shopping as if they were in a store. And the kids, I was surprised to see the kids picking out toys. They were excited. The spirits that's here is just awesome and I thank God for the Barnabas Project, that you all were able to come to St. Luke and bless the people in the church and the community. We had a couple of large families. At least one family had four kids. I think they got enough toys for Christmas as well as decorations for their home. Thank God."

-- Rev. Jackie Clanton, St. Luke's AME Church, West Palm Beach, Fla.

"The Barnabas ministry, meeting the Craigs and their staff, it's been just overwhelming. Our community needs this type of ministries in the Glades. The Barnabas Project came along when I was at my lowest. I was working with another organization, and they discontinued helping, and we had people set up to get things for Christmas, and it was a no-show. When I got a call from Pastor Mary Craig about Barnabas, it was like heaven opened up. I just believe God knew what we were doing things like that in our community, and he opened up a door for us to continue. I really believe nothing is too hard for God. Their ministry staff has been excellent to continue doing what we're doing in this community to help the under privileged and even those who just need things. It's brought folks together in the community.

"It seemed unreal because you're saying, 'They're not going to charge? They're going to give all this stuff away?' Then they bring that U-Haul full. So the Barnabas project has been well accepted in our community. It fills a need. People try to be friendly to one another, we have prayer. "We do have underprivileged kids here in the Glades. There's an overwhelming number of books they can read, educational for them as well, that's good for the kids ... they got something too and their mothers didn't have to pay for it.

"The ministry is all about helping those who are lost and that's what Jesus did, He helped the poor, and that's what Barnabas did -- for nothing in exchange."

-- Sandra Daniels Stewart, church-school superintendent and outreach coordinator, Mt. Zion A.M.E Church, Belle Glade, Fla

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