

The Continuum of Charity • Service • Justice

	Charity	Service	Justice
REALM	Private: personal acts of compassion; individual deeds of assistance; voluntary aid.	Private and public: organized delivery of assistance to families, individuals, and groups.	Public: public policy-making based upon equity; fairness, shareholding, community.
TIME	Quick responses to urgent, emergency needs; can meet immediate needs.	Intermediate timeliness: can be fast responses, but tends to be more deliberate, slow paced.	Long term: does not produce a quick fix; does not serve urgent, immediate needs.
WHO BENEFITS	Direct help to individuals, families, small groups, neighbourhood communities.	Direct help to individuals, families, small groups, and can provide long-term aid to large, diverse populations.	Brings long-term improvement to large sectors of society; challenges oppressed to change basic conditions.
RESPONDS TO	The secondary effects of injustice, social crisis, people in pain and need – food, shelter, clothing.	The secondary consequences of unjust conditions, social upheaval, groups in pain, and emergency disaster situations.	Basic causes of injustice, the roots of injustice, socio-economic and political sources of suffering, group oppression.
PATTERN	Requires repeated responses to meet individual need after repeated requests.	Can deliver dependable, stable, continuous supply of goods and services efficiently.	Changes basic public policy and priorities; changes structures and institutions.
BIBLICAL MODEL	The good Samaritan helps a person by giving emergency treatment, rescue, short-term hospitality, and personal compassion (Luke 10:30-37).	Early Christian church appoints deacons to care for widows, orphans, and the poor. Food and shelter provided with community support (Acts 6:1-7).	Moses leads the nation out of slavery. Appoints leaders to organize self-government under law (Exodus 12:37, 13, 14, 18).
CURRENT MODEL	Soup kitchen feeds hungry people; shelters give overnight housing; donor gives aid to the homeless.	Government welfare program gives aid to unemployed person; aid to dependent children; public housing; emergency health care. Can be a base for recovery.	Community organizes people to create affordable housing, develop jobs, train workers, obtain health care, advocate legislative change.
STRENGTHS	Personal, simple, quick, deals with immediate need; involves volunteers; promotes giving; provides tax deductions.	Organized, prepared in advance, accountable; public tax supported, provides social safety net; serves large numbers of people. Can promote new beginnings.	Engages people in self-development; empowers people to meet their needs, take charge of their lives, form partnerships, take political action.
LIMITS	Does not deal with the basic causes of human problems; is reactive, sporadic; promotes one-way giving, may inhibit responsibility.	May create dependency, apathy; does not deal with basic causes; often expensive/wasteful, and can be dehumanizing.	Requires time, risk taking, hard work, compromise, financial resources; can cause conflict; may fail; no guarantee of success.

From *Urban Churches, Vital Signs: Beyond Charity Toward Justice* by Nile Harper. William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, MI. 1999. All rights reserved.