

**THE SAMARITAN'S PURSE CHRISTMAS BOX PROGRAM**  
**SOME QUESTIONS FOR GROUP DISCUSSION AND REFLECTION**

Rev. Jennifer Palin, 2004

**Introduction – bring in past boxes, pamphlets, and other promo materials**

(check out their website for current info: [www.samaritanspurse.org](http://www.samaritanspurse.org))

What are the Christmas Boxes? What do they look like? How are they packaged?

Where do they come from? How have they spread among Canadian churches?

How did they come to yours? Why do people (especially children) like to put them together? Who is benefiting? What does it actually cost to mail such a box? How much money does your church contribute to this program every year? How much money do you think Canadian churches contribute to this program every year?

**What traditions and myths do the Christmas boxes remind you of?**

- giving presents at Christmas; the “Christmas” child, Jesus; Boxing Day
- others?

**The Story - “The Rich Family”** – who do you feel closest to in the story? why?

Do you remember similar events in your church? What happened? How did you feel?

How does an imbalance of power between people affect how gift-giving is felt?

Does it make a difference if the people are far away and you don't know them?

Why do you think people engage in charity?

(see attached chart from *Mandate* Nov. 2002, “Moving from Charity to Justice” )

**Political Background** – (see news articles from New York Times, Time Magazine, etc. for an outside perspective) Who are the Samaritan's Purse? Who are the Southern Baptists? – What are they known for in American politics?

What political causes do they fund here in Canada? In other countries?

Who is Franklin Graham? What is his political position?

**So what? How can a little box be harmful?**

- **disempowerment** – the difference between justice and charity (review chart)
- **racism** – powerful self image of donor and weak self-image of recipient
- **western imperialism** – spreading values like materialism and consumerism
- **division** of local communities, division among children, division in families
- **disrespect** for other religions and cultures (it's a missionary tool)
- **warping of donor's spirituality, from justice to charity; from standing on principle to learning to fit in and “be nice”**
- **others?**