

EXCELLENT RESOURCE: HEW#ADM78-722: PARTICIPANT HANDBOOK: VOLUNTEER PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT GUIDE. (NIAAA, 5600 Fishers Lane, Rockville MD 20857)

"Good ol' campmeeting days 40 years ago" was a humorous expression of a professor of mine far longer than 40 years ago. It was his favorite putdown of saints who specialize in hankering for the return of yesterday. Among us liberals now are some who let this mood dominate: good ol' pre-Reagan Federal support for human services. The Gospel's first question is not "How can we get the Federal government to support what we believe in?" but rather "How now are we Christians to act, to associate, to ally ourselves, so as best to express our view of God and our vision for humanity and the whole creation? How now are we to be agents of shalom?" The God who can bring good out of evil (Reaganomics?) can certainly bring good out of good (Reaganomics?): the particular ecopolitics under which given Christians are living should be non-determinative of their behavior: the Christian, who is not above "the world," should live and work and witness underneath and beyond ecopolitics. One way to do this--and this is the point of this thinksheet--is volunteerism (=the giving of self, and helping others give themselves, in human caring on a non-\$ basis). ["Intelligent philanthropy" was an old expression for this.]

The other term in this thinksheet's title is "the poor," to whom our Lord directed the eminent man (*archōn*, "first one," "leader," "ruler") to distribute his wealth as a precondition of becoming a Jesus-follower (L.18.18ff). Did Jesus perceive *this* power-person as needing to surrender his power before he could be useful in "the Kingdom of God," or *all* power-persons? However scholarship answers this, each "I" must face the Lord with my power: that is the situation of Everyone as s/he comes to "volunteer": s/he presents her/his power and powerlessness. In our text, "the poor" means etymologically those who cower before power: "the cowerers." A bag lady; an abused child; a battered woman; a bereaved grief-overwhelmed; the patient who has just be told "Your disease is terminal"; a candidate just defeated for election; anybody in any physical or spiritual storm that seems to threaten life (up against some force uncontrollable or even irresistible), plagued (like Job) with pains or losses or both, all inexplicable within the paradigm that life is good, God is good; one who, having done his best, is soul-weary with the heavy truth that it is just not enough; the despondent, who despair of discovering one more ground of hope--none of these need to be told what "cower" means. Ministry to them? Helping them to "stand upon thy feet" (Eze.) and "take off thy shoes" (Ex.) only face-to-face with God. Heart and vote. Individually and collectively. The Scott Nearings' 4/4/4 Formula: daily, 4 hours each of "bread" (the world's work), vocation (professional activity), community (civic responsibilities, local and larger)...Loree's work turned up this graphic of needs-differences among individual volunteers (and among those they try to help). I've related it to Tom Oden's Transactional Awareness Game (in this type-font).

