

Growing a Foster Care Movement in your Community

your first four critical steps



a tool created by **CAFO** members working together

In 1988,

Herman and Donna Ostry bought a farm just outside of Bruno, Nebraska in 1981. But they had a barn with a BIG problem. Every time it rained, the barn flooded. In fact, at one point they measured 29 inches of standing water. One night, Farmer Herman made a joke at the dinner table, "If we just had enough people we could pick this thing up and move it." Everyone laughed.

To make a long story short, that's just what they did. On July 30th, 1988, a crowd of 4000 people came to watch 344 people pick up the barn by a steel grid that had been installed and carry it 115 feet up 6 feet of elevation, turn it 90 degrees and set it back down. It took about 20 minutes.

Right now, it's likely that the foster care system in your community is flooding. This guide is designed to help you and others in your church and community begin the process of moving the barn to dry ground.

This tool covers four basic principles of moving barns (and building foster care movements). As a group, fill out each section together. Do your best to complete every section - some of it may take some time to think of all the possibilities, but they are there!

Each Principle includes a 'Brainstorming' section to get the juices flowing and an 'Application' section to make sure that your ideas won't just remain words on a page.

Moving the barn for kids and families in foster care in your community will not be easy or happen overnight. However, dry ground is possible and all the people and resources needed already exist right where you live.



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Illustrations drawn by over 20 different illustrators from
the children's book, *Farmer Herman and the Flooding Barn*



Start Here

You care about kids in foster care. You want your church and other churches in the community to take action, but you're not sure where to start.

Start here.

We are living in a unique time regarding foster care and the church. The faith community has always had a significant role in child welfare and it has been more significant at some times than others. However, since the turn of the new millennium, there has been an exciting emergence of newfound passion in the Church for orphans and children in foster care. This has led to the launch of various local and state-wide church-based foster care movements all over the country.

What do You Mean by Foster Care Movement?

There is a difference between foster care “activity” and foster care “movement.”

There is already foster care “activity” in every state in the country. However, church based foster care “movement” has not reached every community . . . yet. While foster care activity is important as a way of steadily attempting to meet needs as they arise, foster care movement can have significant impact on the system in a relatively short period of time. It’s important to also note that “movement” is different than “fad.” Fads come and go quickly.

Movement also comes quickly, but it creates change that endures.

The following 4 principles will provide your first four steps in creating foster care movement in the community where you live. Work through these questions as a team over the course of a few weeks and begin to uncover just how big of a difference a movement in your community can make for kids and families!

Principle #1: If you're going to move a barn, know where you're going.

If you pick up a barn but don't know where to take it to get it to dry ground, the flooding won't stop. In the foster care system, dry ground means "more than enough."

What do you mean by "more than enough?"

Throughout scripture, we see a God of "more than enough." When he provided manna in the desert for the people of Israel or when Jesus fed 5000 on the hillside, God didn't provide "not enough" and He didn't provide "just enough."

He provided "more than enough."

We believe this same God is able to provide more than enough through His church for the kids and families in foster care in your county and state. Here is what we mean by that:

- More than enough foster homes for every child in foster care to have an optimal placement
- More than enough families for every child that needs to be adopted
- More than enough help for biological families trying to stay together or get back together
- More than enough support in the Church for ALL these families

More than enough.

The Vital Role of Vision

Local foster care movements that have been successful around the country have had a clear and specific vision: "No More Waiting Kids in Colorado" or "300 new foster families" are a couple of examples.



Often in foster care, the tendency is to gravitate toward a “more, better, faster” approach. The problem with that approach is that it might tell us what to do next but it doesn’t paint a clear picture of where we want to end up.

Ultimately, our desire is that some manifestation of “more than enough” would be the vision in every community in the country.

The great thing about that is that there are specific numbers of kids in care, waiting kids, bio families and adoptive families in every community. Through just a little bit of investigation and asking the right people the right questions, those numbers can be found. And once you know these numbers, “more than enough” can become a very clear and attainable vision for the churches and organizations in your community.

The other great thing about a clear vision is that everyone can easily see the part they need to play. If the vision in a county is adoptive homes for all 75 waiting kids, then the 25 churches involved in the movement there clearly know they have a responsibility to help find permanency for 3 kids. A church armed with that kind of clear goal will be much more effective than one that is simply asked to do “better.”

Getting to Dry Ground in the Community Where You Live

On the previous page, you read the 4 “more than enough” vision statements. These represent dry ground and will help you know where you are aiming to move the barn. In the pages that follow, we will explore those four vision statements and work to identify what the numbers are for each one where you live. When you get done, you will have a clear idea of what “more than enough” is in your community.



More than enough **foster families** for every child to have an ideal placement

	In Our County	In Our State
Current # of Foster Families		
Current # of Kids in Care		
More than Enough Foster Families = # of Kids in Care*		

* because some foster families will take on more than one child including sibling groups, having one foster family for each child in care as a rule of thumb will provide “more than enough” foster families.

More than enough **adoptive families** for every waiting child to have a family

	In Our County	In Our State
Current # of Waiting Children		
More than Enough Adoptive Families = # of Waiting Children + 25%		

More than enough help for **biological families** who are trying to stay together and trying to get back together

	In Our County	In Our State
Current # of Kids in Care		
Current # of Biological Family Units Represented		
More than Enough Bio Family Mentors = Multiply the total X3. (This allows for 3 support families for every family.)		

More than enough **support** for foster, adoptive & biological families

	In Our County	In Our State
Total #'s from shaded sections above (foster, adoptive & bio families)		
Multiply the total X3. (This allows for 3 support families for every family.)		

The numbers in the shaded sections represent dry ground for you both in your county and in your state. Now, we just need to do one more thing...



Pick a Date!

It's time to agree on target dates for getting the barn to dry ground. We're not asking you to predict the future here, but the truth is that actually writing down and committing to a date is an absolutely vital part of making the necessary plans to get to dry ground. And it gives you all an agreed upon goal to bring before the Lord in prayer.

Our milestone goals to provide **More Than Enough**

More than enough...	In Our County mm/dd/yyyy	In Our State* mm/dd/yyyy
Foster Families		
Adoptive Families		
Help for Biological Families		
Support for all Families		

* don't feel like you have to have a statewide vision or goal at the very beginning. In fact the most successful efforts often focus narrowly on one county or region for as long as possible.

Final Date

In most cases your final date for having more than enough in all four areas will be no less than 3 years from now and should be no more than 10.

Month_____ Day_____ Year_____

By the way, you'll want to mark this date on your calendar - you're going to want to plan a party!



Principle #2: If you're going to move a barn, get some extra folks

If you are a little overwhelmed at this point, then there is a good chance you did the math right in the previous section! After all, moving a barn always looks a little overwhelming - especially when you only have the people that are there in the room with you. That's where principle #2 comes in.

First, let's talk about why getting some extra folks is important to Jesus.

Unity

The night before Jesus died He prayed for you:

"My prayer is not for them alone (the disciples). I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message..."

John 17:20

According to this passage, if you believe in Jesus, you are part of this lineage. So what did He pray for you?

... that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. John 17:21

Of all the things He could have prayed for you just hours before going to the cross - peace, safety, morality, obedience - he prayed for unity. He wanted you to be one with other followers of Jesus. And what did he say would be the result of this oneness?

... May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. John 17:22

Unity is really important to Jesus. It also happens to be an extremely important ingredient in effective local church-based foster care movement. Your church could go by itself and approach your county's foster care office. However, you will have much more success and sustainable impact if you come with other churches in the community.

Unity not only makes us more effective when we are trying to solve big problems but it also helps the world believe that Jesus was, in fact, sent by God.

Next, let's talk about actually gathering the extra folks you're going to need to move the barn.



The Usual Suspects

Let's start with the easy stuff. Brainstorm every person, organization, agency, and church you know that has any involvement in foster care. See if you can come up with at least 30.

1.	16.
2.	17.
3.	18.
4.	19.
5.	20.
6.	21.
7.	22.
8.	23.
9.	24.
10.	25.
11.	26.
12.	27.
13.	28.
14.	29.
15.	30.

Now, get outta town!

Bruno, Nebraska had a population of 143 and they needed 344 people to move the barn. This means they had to look outside of their normal parameters to find the people they needed. Finding extra folks means that you will need to go outside of your normal circles. Brainstorm 10 circles where you can begin to search for extra folks. These might not be normal places where you'd partner or even expect to find advocates in foster care. However, they may have influence and resources in your community that could help you get the barn to dry ground.

Four empty circles for brainstorming ideas.

Four empty circles for brainstorming ideas.



Two empty circles for brainstorming ideas.

Application

Now that you've identified many of the key players, let's talk about how to get them together.

Task #1: Master Contact List

Create a master list of contacts and gather contact info (we recommend Google Drive as a great way to create and store documents that everyone on the team can access).

Person Responsible: _____

Due Date: _____

Task #2: Bring People Together

Determine a time and location to bring people together for a local foster care summit, where the vision for more than enough is shared and plans are created.

People Responsible:

Due Date: _____

Task #3: Plan

Plan out the gathering, find the necessary presenters and facilitators and get the word out.

People Responsible:

Due Date: _____

Tips for Hosting Movement-Building Foster Care Events

If you are looking to gather key people together to cast vision and explore the possibilities, here are a few tips from those who've done these kinds of events before:

1. Host collaboratively

It should be hosted collaboratively by a group of churches rather than by the state, a private agency or even a single church. How you set this gathering up sends an important message to the county and state and to other churches in the community. If the state or a private agency hosts the gathering, churches will see it as another program they are being asked to send their people to and won't feel a sense of responsibility and ownership for what comes out of it. If a single church hosts it, the state may feel uneasy about publicly being associated with one particular religious affiliation. However, when a group of churches host it, it sends the right message to everyone. Churches recognize their role in helping to lead the community in this area, private agencies can fill the role of serving the churches well, and the state is put in the positive position of partnering with a diverse group of representatives from the faith community. Win-win-win.

2. Host it at a church

While the event should be hosted by a group of churches, it is usually a good idea for one of those churches to provide the meeting space for the event. Again, this sends a message to everyone involved that churches are taking responsibility to help address the foster care crisis in that community. This is not a government or agency program for churches to jump on board with.

3. Start off on the right foot

While this may be the first event of its type in your community, remember that there is a lot of history involved and it would be wise to humbly acknowledge that. When you select those who will be facilitating and speaking, it's incredibly important that the messaging involves the following: (1) Positive encouragement and gratitude towards the county and state (no matter how many things you may feel are wrong with the system). (2) An acknowledgement and even an apology from a pastor toward the state that the church has not been as involved in these issues as much as it should have been and that you are all there that day to humbly ask what you can do to help. (3) A humble position of service and partnership rather than a rallying cry of "The church is here to take over and fix things!"

4. Get the people involved

We suggest setting up the room with tables rather than rows of chairs. The whole point of this meeting is collaboration, not simply listening to inspiring speakers. You'll want to mix things up so that church representatives and county/state representative are sitting together throughout the room. Make sure there is plenty of time in the schedule for table discussion and brainstorming related to identifying: (1) Things that are working well, (2) Obstacles, and (3) Ideas for moving forward.

5. Feed them well

This kind of event is PERFECT for asking a local restaurant to provide lunch at a discount or even for free. It is a community gathering designed to creatively and collaboratively address the needs of foster care. This is a great opportunity for a restaurant or caterer to contribute to positively to the community and get their amazing food in front of a lot of people who host events throughout the year. Make sure everyone at the event knows who provided the food.

Principle #3: If you're going to move a barn, put the steel grid in place first

Without the steel grid used to support the barn, it would not have gotten very far before everything collapsed. In the same way, no spiritual movement in history has succeeded apart from prayer. This principle is absolutely vital so don't make plans to move ahead with visions, dreams, and events without having this in place first!

Prayer

When we refer to foster care movement, we are not referring primarily to a social movement but rather a spiritual one. And we know that no spiritual movement in history has happened apart from prayer. Spiritual movement is initiated and grown by God.

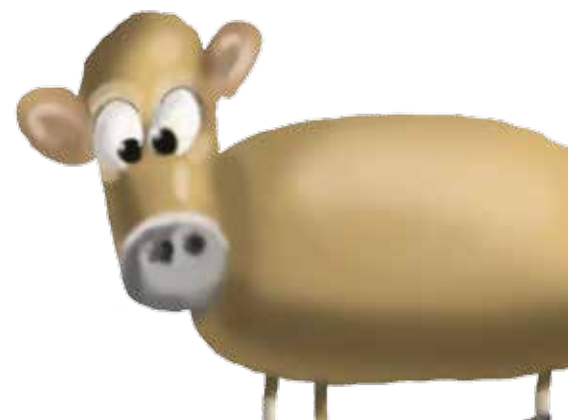
God has chosen to allow his people to be a part of the movement building process – not just the carrying out of the vision but also in the creation of it.

Our primary role in creating movement is to pray for it.

We are to persistently and humbly ask God to make it happen. When He does, we experience incredible joy because (1) we know it comes from Him but also because (2) we realize that He has graciously allowed us to be a part of its creation.

Now, when we talk about prayer, we are not merely talking about a “open up and close down the meeting” kind of prayer (though we should certainly not be discouraged from doing so). Rather, we are talking about regular, persistent, deliberate, and strategic prayer.* As concentration camp survivor Corrie Ten Boom asked, “Is prayer your steering wheel or your spare tire?”

**to see an active example of this kind of prayer strategy, visit cafo.org/nfci/foster-care-15*



Brainstorming

Who in your churches and your community are already praying together?

What things are they praying for?

Would it be possible to introduce the subject of waiting children to these groups and ask that foster care become a part of their normal prayer times?

Brainstorming

Brainstorm ways to make prayer for the foster care system and the kids in it an integral part of all of your efforts. What are 20 ideas:

1.	11.
2.	12.
3.	13.
4.	14.
5.	15.
6.	16.
7.	17.
8.	18.
9.	19.
10.	20.

What are the top 4 ideas?

1.	3.
2.	4.

Application

Now that you've brainstormed, put goals in place to make it happen. Also, be sure to check out the National Foster Care Prayer Guide at CAFO.org/FosterMovement.

Principle #4: Listen to the Guy with the Loudspeaker

Herman Ostry helped to get his barn to dry ground by using a microphone and speaker to give specific instructions to those moving it. It was vital that those moving the barn listened to his voice and responded to it in obedience and in unity. As Christians, God is the one holding the mic and through His word He gives us the directions we need to accomplish big things together.

Read Ephesians 4:1-6

What attributes does Paul encourage the Ephesians to live out?

Why do you think these attributes are important when working with one another to create movement and to provide more than enough for kids and families in foster care?

Why do you think Paul says we should “make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit?” And how does Paul say we should do that?

In what practical ways can your Church or community make every effort to keep the unity while working side by side to build movement?



Read Matthew 18:15-20

Summarize the message of this passage:

As you consider the work of creating movement, how do you think this message can be applied?

Describe a situation, either real or hypothetical, in which conflict related to building foster care movement is handled correctly.

Now, describe a situation, either real or hypothetical, in which conflict was not handled correctly (no names should be named or inferred - unless it is yours of course!).

What efforts do you think could be made either in your church or in the group of people working to move your barn to approach conflict biblically? In other words, what will it take?

Read Genesis 11:1-9

This is a well-known bible story. Did you notice that they were not only building a tower, but they were also building movement. In what ways are your movement building efforts similar to their tower building efforts?

They obviously did something wrong. What aspects of their efforts were not right?

What things should we make sure to include in our movement building if we want to build successful movement that pleases God?

Read 1 Corinthians 12:12-31

This is a commonly quoted passage; however, let's consider it in the bigger picture of churches. Creating movement in your area will require the participation of many different churches, each with a specific role. What is one thing that your church is good at in the context of foster care?

What is one area that your church is not great at in relation to foster care?

Is there a church in your area that is good at something that your church is not great at?

How could you partner with this church in order to provide more than enough in your community?

In Closing

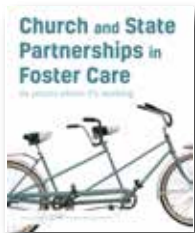
While this tool was not intended to provide all you need to strategically plan for local movement, our hope is that by working through these elements in the context of a team, you will establish a clear vision and determine the most important steps for moving forward.

As we mentioned at the beginning, moving the barn for kids and families in foster care in your community will not be easy or happen overnight. However, dry ground is possible and all the people and resources needed already exist right where you live. It's time to stop scooping out the water one bucket at a time. It's time to move the barn.



CAFO | FOSTER *movement*

You can play a vital role in providing *more than enough* for kids and families in foster care in the county where you live. Here are just a few of the things we've created to help you get there:



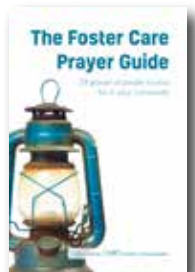
Church & State Partnerships in Foster Care Six Places Where it's Working

This short booklet provides six vignettes of places where church and government partnership is working around the country.



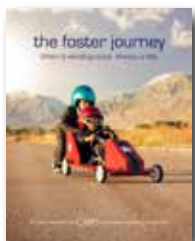
Farmer Herman and the Flooding Barn A story about 344 people working together, to solve a big, big, big problem.

Farmer Herman and the Flooding Barn is a children's book about 344 people working together to solve a big, big, big problem. AND it's illustrated by 344 kids, adoptive and foster parents, child welfare professionals, pastors, organizational leaders, recording artists, and authors who are all counting on the power of unity to bring hope to over 400,000 kids in foster care.



The Foster Care Prayer Guide 24 Groups of People to Pray for in Your Community

Jonathan Edwards wrote, "These is no way that Christians, in a private capacity, can do so much to promote the works of God and advance the kingdom of God as by prayer." The Foster Care Prayer Guide equips you with prayer requests do just that on behalf of kids and families in your community.



The Foster Journey Often a Winding Road. Always a Trip.

The Foster Journey is designed to be your companion as you consider foster care and prepare to be a great foster parent. With wisdom and humor, it walks you through both the initial decision to become a foster parent and provides a road map through the certification process.



The Foster Movement Podcast

The Foster Movement Podcast, featuring the stories of former foster youth, provides powerful insights to help you provide more than enough for kids and families in foster care where you live.

These resources and more can be found at: cafo.org/fostermovement

CAFO | FOSTER *movement*

You can play a vital role in providing *more than enough* for kids and families in foster care in the county where you live. We can help you get there.

To learn more, visit: cafo.org/fostermovement