

2024-2025 Prayer & Action Guide

Let them see

# JESUS

STATEWIDE MISSIONS OFFERING EMPHASIS

## **JESUS SAID...**

"When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate them one from another, just as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on the left. Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.

"'For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat; I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink; I was a stranger and you took me in; I was naked and you clothed me; I was sick and you took care of me; I was in prison and you visited me.'

"Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and take you in, or without clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick, or in prison, and visit you?'

"And the King will answer them, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.'

"Then he will also say to those on the left, 'Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels! For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat; I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink; I was a stranger and you didn't take me in; I was naked and you didn't clothe me, sick and in prison and you didn't take care of me.'

"Then they too will answer, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry, or thirsty, or a stranger, or without clothes, or sick, or in prison, and not help you?'

"Then he will answer them, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.'

"And they will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."

Matthew 25:31-46 CSB

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## MISSION + METHOD + PROMISE

The words of Jesus in Matthew 25 give us a view into what our interaction with Jesus might look like when we meet Him face-to-face. It should not be overlooked that this teaching was only days before He would be betrayed and crucified. His time on earth was short, but this message to His disciples would impact all of humanity in the

present and future. There was an urgency to the message Jesus was sharing with them through various parables, but this teaching challenged disciples to be sent ahead as representatives of God's kingdom in a broken world.

The brokenness of our world, nation, and communities lives on as the result of sin. Our neighbors struggle through loss and hurt. They have needs that include hunger, thirst, and lack of basic needs just as Jesus shared in His message. But their needs go further making the opportunity that much bigger.

We live as sent people just as the disciples Jesus spoke to as He anticipated what was to come. Our charge is no different.

As we know, a short time later, after His death, Jesus arose and appeared again before His disciples. He sent them out with the Great Commission:

"Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you. And remember, <u>I am with you</u> always, to the end of the age." Matthew 28:19-20 CSB

So Jesus gave us a mission, a method, and a promise. Go, see the hungry and the hurting. He showed us throughout His ministry; compassion was His heart. He told us to share the good news of the gospel as we go. And He promised that He is—in the messy places, when it's hard or scary—with us.

As we go together—in obedience, generous with our time and resources, as compassionate people, sharing the gospel along the way—people will see Jesus.

## **POVERTY EXISTS IN EVERY COMMUNITY IN OUR STATE.**

In 2022, 12.7% of Georgia's population lived below the poverty line, which means their income was below the national level in the previous year. In Atlanta, 17.7% of the population live below the poverty line, which is higher than the national average.

In 2019, the number of people in poverty by race in Georgia were:

· White: 672,464 Hispanic: 222.438 Black: 682,103

In 2019, other poverty statistics for Georgia were:

- · Without health insurance: 13.2%
- Poverty among the employed: 7.0%
- Poverty among adults with disabilities: 20.3%

Source: https://www.statista.com/statistics/205453/poverty-rate-in-georgia/



### FOOD INSECURITY: 1,426,880 GEORGIANS

In 2022, about 12.1% of households in Georgia were food insecure. This rate represents families that experienced difficulty in providing enough food due to lack of resources. Additionally, about 4.3% of households faced very low food security, meaning there were disruptions in eating patterns and reduced food intake.



### **HOMELESSNESS: 10,689 GEORGIANS**

In 2022, Georgia had approximately 10,689 individuals experiencing homelessness on a given night, according to the annual point-in-time count. This figure includes both sheltered and unsheltered populations. Of these, around 21% were considered chronically homeless, and about 7% were veterans.

Source: 2023 Point-in-Time Report. Partners for Home, City of Atlanta.

## **BEGIN WITH PRAYER**

- · Pray for the provision of essential needs such as food, clothing, and shelter.
- · Pray for access to stable and fair employment opportunities that provide a living wage.
- · Pray for financial stability and the ability to manage and overcome debt.
- Pray for access to quality education and training programs that can lead to better job prospects.
- Pray for access to healthcare and the overall health and well-being of those living in poverty.
- Pray for effective interventions and support systems that help break the cycle of poverty for individuals and families.
- Pray for a supportive community that offers help, encouragement, and resources to those in need.
- Pray for mental and emotional strength to cope with the challenges and stresses associated with poverty.
- Pray for hope and faith to remain strong in the hearts of those struggling with poverty, helping them to persevere and find joy.
- Pray for God's guidance and wisdom for individuals to make decisions that improve their circumstances.
- Pray for a spirit of compassion and generosity within the church and community to actively support and assist those in need.
- Pray for the dignity and respect of all individuals, regardless of their economic status.
- Pray for God's provision to flow into the lives of those facing poverty, bringing them relief.

## **WHAT WILL YOU DO?**

#### **Immediate Assistance:**

- · Establish or support food pantries to provide meals and groceries to those in need.
- Organize clothing drives to collect and distribute clothing, especially for winter months and special occasions.
- Offer emergency financial assistance for rent, utilities, medical bills, and other urgent needs.

#### **Long-term Solutions:**

- Provide or partner with organizations to offer job training and skill-building programs to improve employment opportunities.
- Offer tutoring, scholarships, and resources for both children and adults to further their education.
- Advocate for and support affordable housing projects, and provide assistance with finding and securing housing.
- Host financial literacy classes to teach budgeting, saving, and managing debt.

#### **Community Building:**

- Create support groups for various needs, such as single parents, recovering addicts, or those experiencing unemployment.
- Establish mentorship programs where experienced individuals can offer guidance and support.
- Host community events that foster a sense of belonging and provide resources, such as health fairs, job fairs, and family fun days.

## **MATERNAL HEALTH IS A** LONG-STANDING CONCERN IN GEORGIA.

Georgia maternal health statistics include a high maternal mortality rate and inadequate access to care.



Georgia's maternal mortality rate between 2018 and 2021:

### **33.9 DEATHS PER 100,000 LIVE BIRTHS**

(National average: 32.9)

Source: National Center for Health Statistics

Top contributing factors include:

- · Access to pregnancy and postpartum health care
- · Lack of insurance
- Substance use disorders
- Mental health

Source: Emory University/March of Dimes



## MORE THAN HALF OF GEORGIA'S 159 COUNTIES HAVE LITTLE OR NO ACCESS TO MATERNITY CARE.

#### Access to care statistics:

- 34.6% of Georgia counties are considered maternity care deserts.
- 15.8% of women live more than 30 minutes from a birthing hospital.
- · On average, women in Georgia travel 13.5 miles and 19.9 minutes to reach their nearest birthing hospital.
- Some women in the top 20% of travel times may travel up to 63 miles and 75 minutes.
- 16.6% of birthing people receive inadequate or no prenatal care, which is higher than the national rate of 14.8%.

The church can play a significant role in serving and loving mothers in any circumstance. Walking with them and helping with their physical, emotional, and spiritual needs is just the beginning. The relationships built as you serve them will have an impact for years to come, and the opportunities to share the gospel will become more frequent as you show them the love of Jesus.

## **BEGIN WITH PRAYER**

- Pray for the health and safety of both the mother and the baby throughout the pregnancy and delivery.
- Pray for access to quality maternity care, including prenatal, delivery, and postnatal services.
- Pray for financial provision to cover the costs of maternity care and related expenses.
- · Pray for a supportive and caring environment from family, friends, and the community.
- Pray for wisdom and skill for the healthcare providers involved in the care of the mother and baby.
- Pray for the emotional and mental well-being of the mother, that she may feel peace and strength during this time.
- Pray for a healthy pregnancy and delivery, free from complications or health issues for both the mother and the baby.
- Pray for physical strength and endurance for the mother as she navigates the challenges of pregnancy and childbirth.
- Pray for guidance and support for the mother in her journey into motherhood, especially
  if she is feeling overwhelmed or anxious.
- Pray for God's intervention in any specific challenges or complications that the mother may be facing during her maternity care.

## **WHAT WILL YOU DO?**

#### **Practical Support:**

- Provide financial assistance, baby supplies, and other necessities for pregnant women and new mothers.
- Organize meal delivery for women and families during the late stages of pregnancy and the postpartum period.
- Offer transportation services for prenatal appointments, delivery, and postnatal check-ups.
- Provide childcare for older children to give expectant and new mothers time to rest and attend appointments.
- · Host classes on prenatal care, childbirth education, breastfeeding, and infant care.

#### **Emotional and Spiritual Support:**

- Establish prayer groups specifically for expectant and new mothers, offering a space for spiritual support and encouragement.
- Provide access to professional counseling for women dealing with anxiety, depression, or other mental health challenges related to pregnancy and motherhood.
- Create support groups where mothers can share their experiences, challenges, and receive emotional support from others in similar situations.
- Pair expecting and new mothers with experienced mothers in the congregation who can
  offer advice, support, and friendship.

#### **Community Building:**

- Host regular events and gatherings for mothers and their babies to foster community and mutual support.
- · Offer workshops on parenting skills, stress management, and work-life balance.

## LOW LITERACY IS A MULTI-GENERATIONAL PROBLEM.

In an October 2023 report produced by Deloitte, the Low Literacy Cycle states when children in third grade are have low proficiency in reading, the high school dropout rate increases resulting in future parents with low proficiency as well.

The statistics support this concept:

- 56% of Georgia 3rd grade students cannot read proficiently; these students are more likely to drop out of high school.
- The poverty rate for high school dropouts is over 3x higher than adults with a high school diploma.
- Children whose parents have low literacy have a 72% chance of being at the lowest reading level (27.2% vs. 8.4%).

Source: Deloitte. The State of Literacy in Georgia: Action Needed for Georgia's Thriving Workforce and Economy, October 2023



## 34.1% OF GEORGIA'S THIRD-GRADERS ARE READING BELOW GRADE LEVEL.

The importance of reading to learn is of significant importance as children advance in their educational journeys.

Source: Georgia Department of Education. Georgia Milestones 2022-2023 Statewide Scores



Georgia adults without a high school diploma are almost twice as likely to be unemployed than those with a high school diploma.

Source: Deloitte. The State of Literacy in Georgia: Action Needed for Georgia's Thriving Workforce and Economy, October 2023

## **BEGIN WITH PRAYER**

- Pray for guidance and wisdom for those struggling with literacy, that they may find the right resources and support to help them improve.
- Pray for encouragement and increased confidence for these individuals, so they do not feel ashamed or discouraged by their struggles.
- Pray for better access to education and learning opportunities, especially in areas where resources are scarce.
- Pray for patience and perseverance for those learning to read and write, as it can be a challenging and time-consuming process.
- Pray for the emotional and mental well-being of those struggling with literacy, as it can impact their quality of life.
- Pray that individuals struggling with literacy may find faith and hope to carry them through their journey towards improvement.
- Pray for God to open doors and create opportunities for learning and growth in literacy.

## **WHAT WILL YOU DO?**

#### For Children:

- Establish Read Georgia, after-school, or weekend reading programs where volunteers read with children and help them with their literacy skills.
- Organize book drives to collect books for children to take home, encouraging reading outside of school.
- · Offer free or low-cost tutoring services for children who need extra help.
- Conduct workshops for parents to teach them how to support their children's literacy development at home.
- · Host regular storytelling to make reading fun and engaging for children.
- Integrate literacy activities into Vacation Bible School (VBS) programs to enhance learning during summer breaks.

#### For Adults:

- · Provide classes designed to teach reading and writing skills to adults.
- · Offer classes to help adults prepare for the General Educational Development (GED) test.
- Establish English as a Second Language (ESL) classes for non-native speakers to improve their literacy in English.
- Create reading circles or book clubs where adults can practice reading and discuss books in a supportive environment.
- Develop mentorship programs where literate members of the congregation can provide one-on-one support to those struggling with literacy.

#### **General Support:**

- Partner with local schools, libraries, and literacy organizations to extend resources and support to those in need.
- · Provide computer and internet access for literacy learning and practice.
- Create a non-judgmental, supportive environment where individuals feel comfortable seeking help with their literacy challenges.
- Incorporate literacy support into the church's mission, emphasizing the importance of education and learning in spiritual growth and community well-being.

## SEX AND LABOR TRAFFICKING IS A GEORGIA NIGHTMARE.

The state of Georgia is a significant hub for human trafficking in the United States. It ranks high among states for human trafficking cases, primarily due to its large population, major transportation hubs, and significant events that draw tourists and transient populations.



# ATLANTA WAS NAMED BY THE FBI AS ONE OF 14 US CITIES WITH THE HIGHEST RATE OF CHILDREN USED IN SEX TRAFFICKING.

According to Covenant House Georgia's most recent statistics:

- In Georgia, 12,400 men purchase sex with young women in any given month.
- · Approximately 100 adolescent females are sexually exploited each night in Georgia.
- In Georgia, adolescent females controlled by the child sex trafficking trade are sexually exploited by an adult male on an average of three times per night.

Source: Covenant House Georgia. https://covenanthousega.org/Human-Trafficking

### **BEGIN WITH PRAYER**

- Pray for the immediate protection and safety of those currently trapped in trafficking situations, that they may be shielded from further harm.
- Pray for successful rescue operations and the liberation of all trafficking victims, that they
  may find freedom from their captors.
- Pray for physical, emotional, and psychological healing for victims, that they may recover from the trauma they have endured.
- Pray for access to comprehensive supportive services, including medical care, counseling, legal assistance, and safe housing.
- Pray for strength and courage for survivors as they rebuild their lives, facing the challenges of recovery and reintegration into society.
- Pray for justice to be served, that traffickers and those who enable them may be held accountable for their crimes.
- Pray for increased awareness and effective prevention measures to stop trafficking before it begins, protecting vulnerable populations.
- Pray for a compassionate and supportive community that embraces and assists survivors, helping them feel valued and accepted.
- Pray for wisdom, diligence, and protection for law enforcement and organizations working to combat human trafficking.
- Pray for global cooperation among governments, organizations, and communities to eradicate human trafficking and support victims.
- Pray for the reunification of victims with their families, where safe and appropriate, to restore broken relationships.

## WHAT WILL YOU DO?

#### Awareness and Education:

- Host workshops, seminars, and informational sessions to educate the congregation and community about human trafficking, its signs, and how to report it.
- Organize awareness campaigns through social media, church bulletins, and community events to spread knowledge about human trafficking.
- Invite experts and survivors to speak about their experiences and provide insights into the complexities of human trafficking.

#### Prevention:

- Offer programs that support at-risk groups, such as the homeless, refugees, and at-risk youth, who are more vulnerable to trafficking.
- Establish mentorship and support programs for vulnerable individuals, providing guidance and resources to prevent exploitation.
- Provide job training and employment assistance to help people achieve financial stability, reducing their vulnerability to trafficking.

#### **Direct Support to Victims:**

- Create safe havens or partner with local shelters to provide immediate housing and safety for trafficking survivors.
- Offer comprehensive support services, including counseling, medical care, legal assistance, and job training for survivors.
- Establish emergency funds to assist victims with immediate needs such as transportation, medical care, and basic necessities.

#### Advocacy:

- Advocate for stronger laws and policies to prevent human trafficking, protect victims, and prosecute traffickers.
- Work with law enforcement, social services, and other organizations to support antitrafficking efforts and victim assistance.
- Partner with local and national organizations dedicated to combating human trafficking to amplify efforts and share resources.

#### **Spiritual and Emotional Support:**

- Organize prayer groups focused on praying for the victims, survivors, and those working to combat human trafficking.
- Provide pastoral care and spiritual counseling to survivors to help them heal and find hope.
- Create support groups for survivors to share their experiences and support one another in a safe and understanding environment.

#### **Outreach and Assistance:**

- Promote and distribute information about national and local human trafficking hotlines and resources.
- Engage in community outreach to educate people about the risks of trafficking and how to seek help if needed.
- Mobilize church volunteers to support local anti-trafficking organizations through service and advocacy.

#### **Long-term Solutions:**

- Provide educational scholarships and resources to survivors to help them rebuild their lives and gain new skills.
- Develop long-term programs that focus on the rehabilitation and reintegration of survivors into society.
- Support initiatives that empower survivors, such as small business grants, vocational training, and educational opportunities.

## GEORGIA'S FOSTER CARE SYSTEM CONTINUES TO STRUGGLE.

The foster care system in Georgia is currently facing significant challenges. The system is struggling with various issues, including a shortage of foster caregivers, particularly for older youth, sibling groups, and children with complex needs. Ongoing efforts by individuals, churches, and partner organizations aim to improve the situation and provide better outcomes for the children involved.



The church has a significant role to play in loving children and alleviating the foster care crisis.

### **BEGIN WITH PRAYER**

#### For the Children in Foster Care:

- Pray for the safety and stability of children in foster care, that they may find a secure and loving environment.
- Pray for emotional and psychological healing from any past trauma they may have experienced.
- Pray for hope and a bright future, that they may grow and thrive despite their challenging circumstances.

#### For Foster Families and Caregivers:

- Pray for strength, patience, and wisdom for foster parents and caregivers as they navigate the challenges of foster care.
- Pray that they receive the support and resources necessary to provide the best care possible.
- Pray for strong, loving bonds to form between foster parents and the children in their care.

#### For Biological Families:

- Pray for healing and reconciliation within biological families, where possible.
- · Pray for guidance and support as they work towards reunification with their children.

#### For Social Workers and Professionals:

- Pray for wisdom, compassion, and endurance for social workers and professionals involved in the foster care system.
- Pray for their protection and encouragement as they carry out their challenging and often emotionally taxing roles.

#### For the Church and Community

- Pray for increased awareness and a proactive approach from the church and community in supporting foster care initiatives.
- Pray for the church to be a source of resources and volunteers to aid in foster care efforts.
- Pray for faith and trust in God's plan for all those involved in the foster care system.

## **WHAT WILL YOU DO?**

#### For Children in Foster Care:

- Churches can create mentorship programs where adults volunteer to spend time with foster children, providing guidance, support, and a stable adult presence.
- Organize events, camps, or activities specifically for foster children to give them
  opportunities to socialize, learn new skills, and have fun in a safe environment.
- Provide tutoring assistance to foster children to help them succeed academically.
- Ensure that foster children feel special on their birthdays and during holidays by organizing celebrations and providing gifts.

#### For Foster Families and Caregivers:

- Encourage church members to become trained and licensed to provide respite care, offering foster parents a temporary break while ensuring children are cared for.
- Establish support groups for foster parents to share experiences, seek advice, and receive emotional and spiritual support.
- Collect and distribute essential items such as clothing, school supplies, and toys to foster families.
- Organize meal trains for foster families, especially when they receive new placements, to ease their transition.
- Offer help with home maintenance and repairs for foster families to ensure a safe and comfortable living environment.

#### For Biological Families:

- Provide support services such as parenting classes, job training, and counseling to help biological parents work towards reunification with their children.
- Help biological families connect with community resources for housing, employment, and healthcare.
- Host workshops and seminars focused on parenting skills, conflict resolution, and financial management.
- Provide transportation assistance for biological parents to attend visitations, therapy sessions, and court appointments.

#### For Social Workers and Professionals:

- Regularly recognize and show appreciation for the work of social workers and foster care professionals through appreciation events, thank you notes, or small gifts.
- Offer practical support such as providing space for training sessions, meetings, or events for social workers and foster care professionals.
- Regularly pray for social workers and foster care professionals, asking for wisdom, strength, and guidance in their work.
- Offer free or subsidized professional development opportunities, such as workshops or certifications, for social workers and foster care professionals.

#### **General Community Involvement:**

- Raise awareness about the needs of the foster care system within the congregation and advocate for policy changes that support foster children and families.
- Encourage church members to become involved in foster care through volunteering, becoming foster parents, or supporting foster families.
- Launch awareness campaigns to educate the congregation and the broader community about the needs and opportunities within the foster care system.
- Create a central resource hub within the church to provide information, materials, and contacts for foster care-related services and support.

#### **Collaboration with Organizations:**

- Work with established nonprofits that support foster care
- Collaborate with other churches and community organizations on joint service projects to support the foster care community.

## THE PLIGHT OF REFUGEES IS OFTEN MISUNDERSTOOD.

Refugees often flee their homes due to war, persecution, or natural disasters, leaving behind everything familiar. Their journey to the United States is typically fraught with danger, uncertainty, and immense hardship. Upon arrival, they face numerous challenges, including language barriers, cultural adjustments, and navigating complex immigration systems.



They come to the United States legally pursing a path to citizenship as defined by the federal government. Despite these struggles, they strive to rebuild their lives and contribute to their new communities, often bringing with them resilience and hope for a better future.

## **BEGIN WITH PRAYER**

#### For Refugees' Safety and Protection:

- $\cdot\,$  Pray for the safety of refugees as they flee their countries and travel to new places.
- Pray for refugees to be protected from violence, exploitation, and other dangers.

#### For Refugees' Physical and Emotional Needs:

- Pray for refugees to have access to food, water, shelter, and medical care.
- Pray for emotional and psychological healing from the traumas they have experienced.

#### For Refugees' Integration and Resettlement:

- Pray for smooth resettlement processes and successful integration into new communities.
- $\cdot\,$  Pray for refugees to find employment and educational opportunities to rebuild their lives.

#### For Families of Refugees:

- Pray for families who have been separated to be reunited.
- · Pray for strength and support for refugee families as they navigate their new lives.

#### For Host Countries and Communities:

- Pray for host countries and communities to respond with compassion and generosity towards refugees.
- $\boldsymbol{\cdot}$  Pray for wisdom for leaders and policy makers in making decisions that affect refugees.

#### For the Global Community:

- Pray for peace and stability in regions affected by conflict, so that the need for refugees diminishes.
- Pray for global cooperation in addressing the refugee crisis and providing adequate support.

#### For the Church's Role:

- Pray for the church to raise awareness and advocate for refugees' rights and needs.
- Pray for the church to actively support refugees through practical assistance and engagement.

## **WHAT WILL YOU DO?**

#### **Direct Assistance and Support:**

- Organize drives to collect and distribute food, clothing, and other essentials to refugee families.
- Provide temporary housing or partner with local shelters to offer accommodations for refugees.
- · Host free medical clinics to offer health check-ups, vaccinations, and dental care.
- · Provide counseling services to help refugees cope with trauma and stress.

#### **Education and Skill Development:**

- Offer English as a Second Language (ESL) classes to help refugees learn English and improve their communication skills.
- Create opportunities for language exchange between church members and refugees.
- Conduct workshops on resume writing, interview skills, and job search strategies.
- · Partner with local businesses to create job opportunities for refugees.

#### **Community Integration:**

- Organize workshops to help refugees understand local customs, laws, and cultural norms.
- · Pair refugees with church members who can help them navigate their new community.
- Host social events, such as picnics, holiday celebrations, and cultural festivals, to foster community building and integration.
- Establish support groups where refugees can share experiences and receive emotional support.

#### Advocacy and Awareness:

- Conduct awareness campaigns to educate the congregation and the broader community about the refugee crisis and ways to help.
- Invite refugees and experts to speak at church events to share their stories and insights.
- Advocate for policies that support refugee rights and provide better services and protections.
- Collaborate with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that work on refugee issues to amplify advocacy efforts.

#### **Collaborative Efforts:**

- Partner with organizations to provide comprehensive support.
- Work with local government agencies to ensure refugees have access to necessary resources and services.
- Train church members to volunteer effectively with refugees, offering skills in language teaching, job training, and cultural orientation.
- Engage the church community in service projects that benefit refugees, such as building homes or organizing donation drives.

#### **Spiritual Support:**

- Creating a welcoming environment where refugees feel accepted and part of the community is vital.
- Churches can offer pastoral care and counseling services to help them cope with their experiences and find hope and healing.
- Conducting church services, prayer groups, and Bible studies in languages that refugees understand can help them feel spiritually nourished and connected to their faith.
- Churches can advocate for refugees' rights and needs within the wider community and government.
- Provide practical support such as food, clothing, housing assistance, and help with navigating the legal and healthcare systems.



Partnership with MISSION GEORGIA makes it possible to unite local churches and communities to gospel-centered care for neighbors who need it most.

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