

Pastors Use Fashion Choices—or Lack Thereof—to Make Statement About Poverty

On Easter Sunday, when many churchgoers donned new suits and dresses, pastors nationwide preached with one article of clothing noticeably absent: their shoes.

At least 5,000 pastors went barefoot on Easter Sunday to help provide shoes for the 300 million people worldwide who lack them. Sponsored by Samaritan's Feet, a North Carolina-based ministry that has collected 3 million pairs of shoes to distribute worldwide, the event fell on the 42nd anniversary of Martin Luther King Jr.'s death and was designed to also honor his legacy. His children, Martin Luther King III and the Rev. Bernice A. King, president of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, were among those who went barefoot April 4.

Other participants included Bishop Paul S. Morton, head of the Full Gospel Baptist Church; Stephen J. Thurston, president of the National Baptist Convention of America; and Bishop James Ingram of the African Methodist Episcopal Church.

The Barefoot Sunday service kicked off a 10-month campaign to raise enough money to distribute 1 million pairs of shoes worldwide, including in the U.S. In addition to preaching barefoot, the pastors asked church members to give \$10 to support the effort. The initiative will culminate with shoe distribution events in 50 U.S. cities on Martin Luther King Jr.'s birthday weekend in January.

Samaritan's Feet founder Manny Ohonme said the Barefoot Sunday event was meant to show those in need "that there is hope and that Christ has given us that hope."