

A Blessing for Those Who Labor

by Fred Matthew Schobert

“Six days you shall labor and do all your work.”
(Ex. 20:9)

Lord, for those whose labor often lasts seven days,
May Christ be their Sabbath rest.

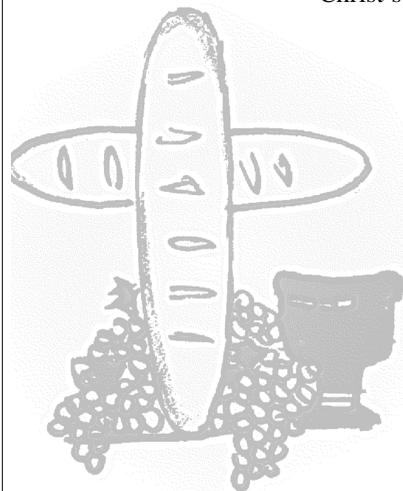
“You shall not muzzle an ox when it is threshing grain.”
(Dt. 15:4)

Lord, for those whose labor often supercedes self-care,
May Christ be their bread and wine.

“For we are God’s fellow workers.”
(I Cor. 3:9)

Lord, for those whose labor often seems lonely,
May Christ be their constant companion.

O Holy Spirit,
you who sustain us,
sustain with a double portion,
those who labor with you,
for the least of these,
Christ’s brothers and sisters.
Amen.



—Matthew Schobert, a native of DuQuoin, Illinois, is a social worker and the manager of a church-run residence facility for international students.

—All of the art on this placemat is by Rebecca Ward, an art student at the University of Texas in Austin.

Responding to Hunger in God’s World

seven steps for churches

1 . Study the Bible. The essential first step for any congregation in responding to hunger issues is to establish, within the worship and study life of the congregation, the connections between hunger and biblical imperatives. This means exploring together how the Bible and other teachings of our faith relate to the world we live in today. Get out your concordances. Look up the verses together. Use the words “poor” and “hungry.”

2 . Find out what your denomination is doing. Most major denominations have channels for donations as well as excellent materials for hunger education.

3 . Study your own community. What are the needs in your city or county? What are local churches and groups already doing? Where can your congregation’s energy best add to the work being done?
(For resources on this, contact the Food Research and Action Center, 1875 Connecticut Avenue NW, Suite 540; Washington, DC 20009; 202/986-2200. They have current information about hunger and poverty in your area.)

4 . Involve the whole congregation. Devise a plan to work hunger concerns into the structural life of the church. What is the role for the official board or body of elders? What about women’s organizations, youth groups, church school leaders, education committees, or missions committees? How can concern for the hungry find an appropriate place in worship? We all need to move from seeing the hunger issue as “belonging” to only a small group within our churches to seeing it as involving everything we do.

5 . Enlist disciples. All of the above steps should lead toward locating those people who will respond with faith and enthusiasm to hunger work. Avoid thinking of the same people year after year. Don’t be afraid to issue a call. It is good news that God calls each of us to the exciting work of building a better, more just world.

6 . Form a planning group. Having done this groundwork, gather your group together to plan goals and strategies. This group can include as few as three people or as many as a dozen. Continue to involve other committees and groups as your work touches their areas of emphasis, but keep the planning group together as a steering committee.

7 . Act! Finally, you’re ready to begin the direct work on the project. Don’t wait until you’re sure you have the “perfect” action. Probably no such thing exists. We learn by doing, and then we study, pray, reflect, and figure out what to do next. Don’t worry about the scope of your first actions. Just begin.

The above is an adaptation from an article in the August 1985 Seeds Reader.
The original concept came from comments made by Rev. Jim Lawson.

A Look at the Numbers



• The world’s farmers grow enough food to provide at least 4.3 pounds of food per day every person. This is more than enough food for

everyone on the planet, yet more than one billion people will go to bed hungry tonight.

- The wealthiest 20 percent of the world’s population consumes 86 percent of the world’s goods and services. The poorest 20 percent consumes one percent of the goods and services.
 - About 31,000 people die every day from hunger or hunger-related causes. This is down from 35,000 ten years ago, and 41,000 twenty years ago. Three-fourths of the deaths are children under the age of five.
 - Seven out of 10 of the world’s hungry people are women and girls.
 - The financial costs to end hunger are relatively slight. The United Nations estimates that the basic health and nutrition needs of the world’s poorest people could be met for an additional \$13 billion a year. Animal lovers in the United States and Europe spend more than that on pet food each year.
 - 34.5 million people in the U.S. live below the poverty line. More than 31 million are victims of food insecurity.
 - The top one percent of U.S. households has more wealth than the bottom 95 percent.
 - Children in the U.S. are more likely to be hungry now than anytime between 1967 and 1980.
 - Children who are undernourished consistently perform poorly on standardized tests.
 - The average age of homeless people in the U.S. is seven.
- for more information, see pp 18-20 of the Seeds of Hope Hunger Emphasis packet for 2000