

Hunger News & Hope

...a Seeds of Hope publication

Deadly Floods Strike Haiti and the Dominican Republic

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art by Sally Lynn Askins

International Team of Rafters Travels Down the Nile

Explorers Navigate 4,000-Mile River to Highlight Realities Along Banks

compiled by Robert Askins with information from Rick Perera

CAIRO, EGYPT—The Nile is synonymous with grandeur. The longest river in the world, it conjures images of ancient Egypt—of long barges filled with wealth from glittering palaces. The present reality of the river, however, is at odds with this idea. The river stretches for over 4,000 miles through some of the poorest and most violent parts of Africa.

Last January, a group of whitewater rafters led by Hendri Coetzee set out from Lake Victoria in Uganda to accomplish the first full descent of the Nile. The mission was part of two expeditions navigating the river's two sources, the Blue Nile and the White Nile. The Blue Nile expedition, coming from Ethiopia, wrapped up several weeks before the White Nile team set forth.

Both projects were sponsored by CARE International to raise awareness about the entrenched poverty that exists on the banks of the renowned waterway. With help from CARE, the team visited isolated communities rarely seen by outsiders and learned how ancient riverside cultures struggle to achieve a better life.

The adventure was not without significant risk on the part of the crew, which included members from Britain,

France, New Zealand, and South Africa. The journey took them through war zones in Uganda and Sudan. On the second night of the journey, in Uganda, the rafters were roused in the middle of the night by guards shouting and waving guns in their faces. They were suspected of being rebel spies trying to infiltrate local defenses, but after some hurried explanations and the flashing of official documents, the gunmen were satisfied and left without further problems.

This would not be the last time the group looked down gun barrels and tried to explain their legitimacy. The problems worsened in Sudan's war-torn countryside. "We had to cross about six different lines," Natalie McComb, a member of the rafting team, wrote in her journal. "Control of the river alternated between government soldiers and the People's Liberation Army rebels." The crew wrote that the spectacle of fleeing refugees—men and women seeking asylum from the violence in neighboring countries—was common.

Along the way, however, the travelers befriended river dwellers from many ethnic groups—from fishing people in Uganda to traditional cattle herders in southern Sudan to girls getting their first chance at a quality education in Egypt.

In addition to these dangers, the crew also encountered bathing hippopotami, hungry crocodiles, and rivers full of papyrus that slowed their progress to a crawl. They braved some of the toughest rapids in the world and a marsh "the size of England." The Nile flows through jungle, desert, and globally known tourist sites.

For the millions of people living along the Nile, the river is a social and economic lifeline. Local communities fish the waters for Nile Perch and Tilapia. Irrigation supports the growth of cotton,

wheat, sorghum, dates, citrus, sugar cane, and other agricultural products. In some places, ferries and barges provide the only mode of transportation.

The explorers visited many humanitarian projects en route—including camps for internally displaced people, orphanages, and hospitals. They met people whose lives have been shattered by civil war and discovered hope. They immersed themselves in the lives of the

On the second night of the journey, in Uganda, the rafters were roused in the middle of the night by guards shouting and waving guns in their faces.

locals, discovering the intricacies of their cultures, meeting tribal kings, observing the cattle-herding Mandari tribes, and challenging Dinkas to wrestling matches.

After four months on the river, they finally reached Egypt and the famed wonders of Cairo. Then they arrived at Rosetta, on the edge of the Mediterranean Sea. They were greeted by a cheering crowd as they coasted toward home. Fortunately, the fanfare did not obscure the original purpose that brought this multinational team together. It was a historic journey, traveled to shed new light on the lives of the people who live along the Nile.

A two-person documentary team accompanied the explorers for much of the trip and are producing a film of the journey, with release, from Quitebright Films, currently targeted for January 2005, —*For more information about the journey, and to read the team's journals, visit www.careusa.org or contact Rick Perera at 404-979-9453 or rperera@care.org. This story is taken from information compiled by Seeds of Hope intern Robert Askins, with information from CARE's Rick Perera.*



Atrocities Continue in Sudan: Millions Displaced by Violence

DARFUR, SUDAN—Barely three months after the signing of the peace treaty that ended the civil war between the north and south regions of Sudan, the country remains in turmoil. However, now all eyes are focused on the western region of Darfur still on the edge of UN-pronounced genocide where the *Janjaweed* (Arab militias) continue to wreak havoc on the Darfur region.

Residents of the region continually report instances of rape, murder, assault, and theft of livestock and land. The *Janjaweed* want to control the precious resources of the region, mainly grazing land, water, and cattle, all in short supply. They pillage, rape, and kill anyone who strays too far from his or her home or refugee camp, raping girls as young as seven years of age in front of their fathers.

1.2 million people have been displaced from their homes, and another 200,000 have fled to neighboring Chad to escape the violence. Residents are afraid to venture far from their homes or refugee camps for fear of attack. Thousands of homes have been destroyed in the region where the black Africans have lived for 2000 years.

In July, the UN and the Sudanese government signed a joint communiqué in which the Sudanese pledged to restore security and end the violence prevalent in the region within thirty days, a deadline that expired August 30.

The report from the Security Council to the Secretary-General stated that the Sudanese government had taken “no concrete steps” toward determining the militia leaders and disarming them.

There is even suspicion that the Sudanese government is supplying weapons to the militias, a hunch confirmed by an August 26 attack on two villages by government helicopters. Thus, the residents of this region have lost all confidence in the authorities, a confidence and a trust that will take years to rebuild.

Further, the Sudanese government has cut off much humanitarian aid to the refugees—depriving them of food, water, and medical attention, creating unsanitary

conditions, and facilitating the spread of disease. Foreign aid workers have been repeatedly prevented from reaching the people, and there are allegations that several were kidnapped.

The government denied these claims and reaffirmed its commitment to disarming the militias, pointing to the conviction of twelve leaders and the condemnation to death of three.

On September 3, UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan called for an expanded “international presence” in Sudan, due to ongoing attacks by Arab militias in Darfur. An increased number of troops from the African Union will be implemented into the country to enforce the disarming of the militias.

On September 9, Secretary of State Colin Powell called the abuses in the Darfur region genocide, and he said both the *Janjaweed* and the Sudanese government are responsible. He based his conclusions on a July visit to the region and interviews with a large number of refugees.

A US report stated that such interviews revealed a “consistent and widespread pattern of atrocities committed against non-Arab villagers.” US findings will further pressure the Sudanese to put an end to all violence.

Peace talks are also underway in Abuja, Nigeria between the Sudanese government and the two rebel groups—the Sudan Liberation Army and the Justice and Equality Movement. International leaders are hoping for an end to this crisis in order to avoid a situation similar to the genocide in Rwanda ten years ago.

The Sudanese already face rebuilding their country due to their seventeen-year civil war, and until these militias are arrested and disarmed, progress will be further inhibited.

—Compiled by Stephanie Tinker.
Source: United Nations (www.un.org/news)

The Life and Times of Sargent Shriver

In 1915, a man arrived in our world who shaped the lives of millions of people. “Sarge” Shriver’s legacy from the past half-century will continue to echo long after he is gone. He is perhaps the most dedicated American public servant of the 20th Century,

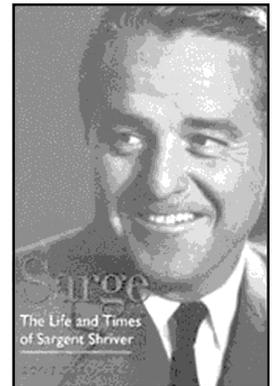
In 1961 Shriver founded—along with his brother-in-law, John F. Kennedy—the Peace Corps, which has sent 150,000 volunteers to work in poverty-stricken countries all over the world. The Peace Corps is still going strong, with workers currently in 76 countries.

In 1963, Shriver and his wife, Eunice Kennedy Shriver, started the Special Olympics program for persons with mental retardation. That program has now spread into 130 countries, drawing in over one million athletes, and consisting of two dozen sporting events.

Shriver also acted as US Ambassador to France during the 1960s. In 1967 he founded what is now the National Center on Poverty Law. He is credited with much of the implementation of President Lyndon Johnson’s War on Poverty. Surrounded by famous family members, Shriver always remained in the background—as one of America’s most deserving, but mostly unsung, heroes.

His life is documented in the new 700-page biography *Sarge: The Life and Times of Sargent Shriver*, written by Scott Stossel and Bill Moyers and released last spring by the Smithsonian Institution Press. This book investigates and admires the energy, integrity, and creativity of this 20th-Century idealist.

—Compiled by
Jonathan Hal
Reynolds.



Good News from Jubilee USA:

G-8 Leaders Propose 100 Percent Debt Cancellation

WASHINGTON, DC—When many Christians hear about the Jubilee movement in 2004, they are surprised: they thought the organization had closed up shop after the year 2000.

The Jubilee USA Network still exists and continues to work for the cancellation of debts owed to the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) by the world's poorest countries. In the next months, the network is calling for people of faith to rally again.

"The Judeo-Christian Jubilee scriptures compel nations and communities to cancel debt in order to build right relationships," said Adam Taylor, a Jubilee board member. "In this world broken by AIDS, war and economic injustice there is no time to waste."

At the June 2004 G-8 Summit, a meeting of the leaders of the world's most powerful countries, the United Kingdom proposed 100 percent debt cancellation. Though they failed to act then, the finance ministers of the wealthiest nations may

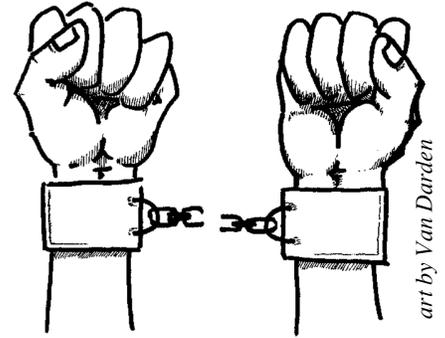
make the decision when they meet on October 1.

For every day on which poor nations' debt is not fully cancelled, 19,000 children die from treatable diseases, 14,000 adults and children are infected with the HIV virus, and more than a billion people lack access to clean water.

With a current debt of \$333 billion, African countries pay \$1.51 in debt service for every \$1 they get in aid. Money sent by churches in the US often pays for services like education, health care, and sanitation, which are too expensive for the average citizen of a poor nation.

When debt has been cancelled, governments have been able to provide services to their people. In Tanzania, 1.6 million children returned to school after user fees, required with World Bank and IMF reforms, were removed.

With government providing social services, money from churches could go to leadership training, peace building, or working with youth.



In response to the current opportunity for debt cancellation, Jubilee USA Network has launched the countdown to freedom from debt, which will focus on October 1 as the possible date for debt cancellation to be announced.

"The people of faith and conscience that are part of Jubilee USA across the country will be turning up the heat on the White House and Treasury," said Marie Clarke, national coordinator of Jubilee USA Network.

In early June Rep. Barney Frank (D-Mass) and Rep. Spencer Bachus (R-Ala) introduced the Jubilee Act (HR 4793), calling on the IMF, the World Bank, and regional development banks to cancel 100 percent of the debt for the 50 most impoverished countries. The two have been joined by an impressive bipartisan group of cosponsors.

"It's the right thing to do for us," Rep. Bachus said. "It's the right thing to do for the countries that are heavily indebted. For us it's a good thing because it makes the world safer. It makes the world more stable. And it is the right thing to do for growing democracies because the greatest threat, I think, to democracy and freedoms is poverty."

In introducing the bill, Rep. Frank said, "Should gold sit wherever the IMF keeps it? Or should the money that that gold represents be used to alleviate some of the most desperate poverty in the world? I don't know how anybody can think that's a hard question."

—from a story by Celeste Kennel-Shank, Jubilee USA

What You Can Do

Jubilee USA organizers say that church mission groups who travel to developing countries can use those opportunities to talk to people in those countries about how external debt is affecting them. Members can report what they find to their representatives and other elected officials. Photographs of church members with friends in other countries can make the message more powerful.



Churches can also help build the Jubilee movement by including debt, and its connection to global poverty, in various education programs. Individuals and groups can help by urging their representatives to join the growing list of bipartisan cosponsors for the Jubilee Act. (For more information, contact Marie Clarke at 202-783-0215 or email marie@jubileeusa.org.)

Jubilee USA says that this could be the year when cancellation of debts for many of the world's poorest countries is achieved. If a decision is not reached at the October 1 meeting, there will be several opportunities in the coming year: the Spring 2005 World Bank/IMF meetings, and the G-8 summit next June.

"This is an absolutely critical moment in the struggle for freedom from debt, which is literally bleeding countries in Asia, Africa, and Latin America of resources they desperately need to fight AIDS, poverty, and disease," said Clarke.

—from a story by Celeste Kennel-Shank, Jubilee USA

Number of US Poor Rises for Third Straight Year

800,000 More Children Under Poverty Level

WASHINGTON, DC—The US Census Bureau reported in August that the number of Americans living in poverty increased last year for the third straight year. Those living in poverty increased by 1.3 million, while the ranks of the uninsured swelled by 1.4 million.

Approximately 35.8 million people lived below the poverty line in 2003, or about 12.5 percent of the population, according to the bureau. That was up from 34.5 million, or 12.1 percent in 2002.

The rise was more dramatic for children. There were 12.9 million living in poverty last year, or 17.6 percent of the under-18 population. That was an increase of about 800,000 since 2002, when 16.7 percent of all children were in poverty.

The Bureau's definition of poverty varies by the size of the household. The threshold for a family of four was \$18,810, while for two people it was \$12,015.

Nearly 45 million people lacked health insurance, (or 15.6 percent of the population.) That was up from 43.5 million in 2002, or 15.2 percent, but was a smaller increase than in the two previous years.

Uninsured rates for children, though, were relatively stable at 11.4 percent, likely the result of recent expansions of coverage in government programs covering the poor and children, such as the state Children's Health Insurance Program, analysts said.

Meanwhile, the median household income, when adjusted for inflation, remained basically flat last year at \$43,318. Whites, blacks and Asians saw no noticeable change, but income fell 2.6 percent for Hispanics to nearly \$33,000. Asians had the highest income at over \$55,000, while whites made \$47,800 and blacks nearly \$30,000.

Census Bureau analyst Dan Weinberg said the results were typical of a post-recession period. He said the increase in people without insurance was due to the uncertain job picture. "Certainly the long-term trend is firms offering less generous

(benefit) plans, and as people lose jobs they tend to lose health insurance coverage," he said.

During the last three years, 5.2 million people have lost health insurance and 4.3 million have fallen into poverty.

Official national poverty estimates, as well as most government data on income and health insurance, come from the

bureau's Current Population Survey. This year the bureau is simultaneously releasing data from the broader American Community Survey, which also includes income and poverty numbers but cannot be statistically compared with the other survey.

—from the US Census Bureau (www.census.gov)

Hurricanes Bring More Flooding to Haiti and Dominican Republic

HAITI AND DOMINICAN REPUBLIC—In the summer issue of *Hunger News & Hope*, [See "Deadly Floods Strike Haiti and the Dominican Republic," Vol. 6 No. 3, p. 7] we reported that several thousands of people had been killed on the Caribbean island of Hispaniola by floods that resulted from heavy May rains.

At press time, Haiti and the Dominican Republic continue to struggle more than ever as a result of Tropical Storm Jeanne, which hit the area on September 18.

The storm was the fourth disaster to strike the Caribbean within a month, following Hurricanes Charley, Frances, and Ivan. Jeanne struck both countries with full force, causing significant flooding and sending residents scrambling for shelter. Over 1,000 people have been killed and 1,200 are still missing. An estimated 160,000 are homeless.

In Haiti's northern coastal city of Gonaïves, 1,031 people have lost their lives, 1,200 are missing, and several thousand have been displaced from their homes. Fifty percent of the city of 100,000 is still covered by water and mud, including most of the agricultural land. Officials estimate that eighty percent of Gonaïves's population has been affected by the flood.

Relief organizations such as the World Food Programme (WFP) and Médecins Sans Frontières/Doctors Without Borders (MSF) have limited access to the area due to debris and high water blocking many roads. Thus, the distribution of clean water and medical supplies is slow. With a flooded hospital and muddy drinking water, both are vitally important to the residents.

Water still covers at least thirty percent of Port-de-Paix, especially along the coast. The river remains very high and agricultural land is completely saturated with some low-lying land still underwater.

In the Dominican Republic, the situation is marginally better. Many rivers overflowed, creating widespread flooding. On September 18, the Yuna River overflowed, isolating several cities and forcing 37,000 people to abandon their homes. Eleven have been killed, 261 injured, and 6 are missing.

The UN has dispatched several agencies, which will distribute food and medical supplies as well as clean water. In addition, the US Embassy has promised to give \$60,000 to aid in recovery operations, and the European Union has pledged \$1.8 million.

—compiled by Stephanie Tinker. Source: United Nations (www.un.org/news)

Latest Issue of *Christian Reflection* Focuses on Hunger

Food and Hunger, the next issue of *Christian Reflection* from the Center for Christian Ethics at Baylor University, explores the centrality of food in the life of God's people.

In the first garden and from the gift of manna we discern God's providential care. The Old Testament gleaning laws and Paul's teaching on the love feast point us toward the sustenance of all people. Jesus' first miracle at Cana, turning water into fine wine, and his vision of the eschatological banquet remind us that food is to be enjoyed without guilt for pleasure. Life with and before God is embodied, food-concerned living.

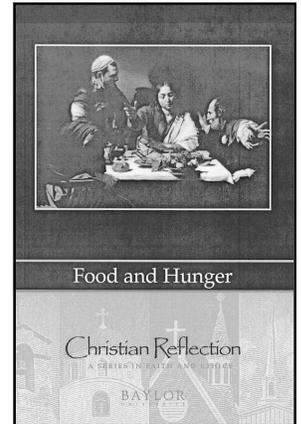
Todd Still traces how meals and memory are linked throughout Scripture, and Thomas Hibbs discovers how table fellowship nourishes our souls as it satisfies our physical appetites.

"Who are the hungry in the United States and the world today, and who cares?" asks demographer Jack Marcum in his review of Christian attitudes toward hunger. Articles by David Beckmann and Sister Alice Marie Quinn, DC speak a word of judgment about our misappropriation of food and invite us to

practical ways for sharing with "the alien, the orphan, and the widow" today. Marie Griffith examines the Christian fitness industry: Are its diets a rejection of gluttony and excess, or a pursuit of prestige and appearance?

The haunting photography of lay Franciscan Gerard Thomas Straub, Caravaggio's amazing *The Supper at Emmaus*, Carolyn Winfrey Gillette's hymn "Where is Bread?" and a new worship service by Katie Cook help us to re-integrate Christian ethical reflection with worship and art.

For a free suscription, call toll-free 866-298-2325, or visit www.ChristianEthics.ws to download the contents and study guides in PDF format or to order multiple copies.



Are You Looking for Hands-On Training in Sustainable Agriculture? Are You Thinking of Working in a Developing Country?

World Hunger Relief, Inc trains individuals who feel called to service in developing countries and wish to acquire skills in sustainable farming, community development and Christian missions. Interns work and study for one year on our 40-acre farm in central Texas, followed by an optional three-month experience in a developing country.

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5. Become familiar with food technology, nutrition and health issues

WHRI accepts two interns every four months in January, May, and September.

For information about housing, daily schedule, curriculum, and intern assistantships see www.worldhungerrelief.org. Please send inquiries to P.O. Box 639, Elm Mott, TX 76704 or WHRIEducation@hotmail.com.

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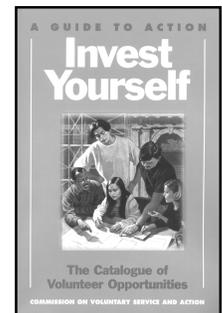
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ISBN: 0-9629322-8-0

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To order, call CVSA at 646-486-2446 or write to them at 1 Union Square West, Suite 902; New York, NY 10003. Cost is \$10 plus \$2 postage. Bulk prices are available.



Hunger for the Word:

Lectionary Reflections on Food and Justice

H*unger for the Word*, edited by Larry Hollar, is a compilation of weekly meditations compiled by a diverse group of writers concerned with hunger and justice issues.

The 46 writers who contributed devotionals come from various spiritual perspectives and creative backgrounds. The list is comprised of pastors, scholars, theologians, professors, and lay members from 18 faith traditions. Each writer is active in the anti-hunger advocacy movement.

When approached to compile a week-by-week interpretation on the lectionary passages, each contributor was asked to offer three parts for each weekly presentation: 1) reflection on the lectionary passage, 2) a children's sermon concept, and 3) musical suggestions. The diverse range of age, passion, and experience of

these contributors gives the reader a colorful array of perspective and approach during their journey through this book.

The devotionals focus on the struggle for fairness, justice, and love in the world. The writers do a wonderful job of fusing passion for the cause with attainable goals for the reader.

This book is an invitation into a new mindfulness of world hunger and also a guide into how God's word can nurture our pursuit to feed the hungry.

The opening line of the introduction states, "This book and the two other volumes that are a part of the *Hunger for the Word* series are for people who love to explore and tussle with the Bible, regularly and respectfully." This proclamation—or warning, perhaps—is an accurate summation of what the reader will encounter within this 215 page volume.

Hunger for the Word

Lectionary Reflections on
Food and Justice Year A



Larry Hollar, Editor

Hunger for the Word is an excellent resource for teaching, but is also a beneficial experience for the layperson seeking creative and mindful reflections on hunger and justice issues.

This volume, written for Lectionary Year A, is the first of a three-part series, based on both the Revised Common and Roman Catholic Lectionaries. For more information, go to www.bread.org.

—reviewed by Jonathan Hal Reynolds

New Note Cards from Church World Service

Images of Hope note cards, new from Church World Service (CWS), employ designs arising from an international AIDS poster competition cosponsored by CWS with the Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance. Entrants from 32 nations were asked to employ their artistic gifts in the struggle against the stigma associated with HIV/AIDS.

The set of 12 five-inch by seven-inch blank cards features four of the winning entries in color. Proceeds from sales of these cards support CWS's

AIDS-related programs around the world. The set of 12 cards with envelopes (3 of each design) is \$5.00 plus \$3.00 shipping and handling.

To order, call 1-800-297-1516, Ext.222 or send a check made out to Church World Service, PO Box 968, Elkhart, IN 46515.

Left: one of four designs, this one by Nubarian David of Armenia. Note: The designs on the cards are in color.



Raise Hunger Awareness through Worship.

Subscribe to Sacred Seasons, a worship resource from Seeds of Hope.



Sacred Seasons is a quarterly series of creative worship tools to help raise awareness of hunger and justice issues. A year's subscription includes Advent, Lent, Ordinary Time, and a fall hunger emphasis resource. To order, call 254/755-7745; fax 254/753-1909; write to Seeds Publishers at 602 James, Waco, TX 76706; or email seedshope@aol.com. Single packets are US\$50. (Non-US subscriptions are \$135; individual packets are \$60.) For more information, see www.seedspublishers.org.



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Statement of Purpose

Seeds of Hope is a private, independent group of believers responding to a common burden for the poor and hungry of God's world, and acting on the strong belief that biblical mandates to feed the poor were not intended to be optional. The group intends to seek out people of faith who feel called to care for the poor; and to affirm, enable, and empower a variety of responses to the problems of poverty.

Editorial Address

Seeds of Hope Publishers are housed by the community of faith at Seventh and James Baptist Church. The mailing address is 602 James, Waco, Texas 76706; Phone: 254/755-7745; Fax:

quotes, poems, & pithy sayings

The greatest challenge of the day is: how to bring about a revolution of the heart, a revolution which has to start with each one of us.

—Dorothy Day

We need, in every community, a group of angelic troublemakers.

—Bayard Rustin

The world is hungry. People are starving in the global Wal-Mart. Others are choking on obesity of body, soul, and mind. There are countless “dead men walking.” Weak and powerful alike, they feed their addictions and take what they can. But among them walk a people who keep an alternative vision alive in their hearts.

—Harold Button

Beyond any possible doubt, the life of the poor is one of hunger and exploitation, inadequate health care and lack of suitable housing, difficulty in obtaining an education, inadequate wages and unemployment, struggles for their rights, and repression. But that is not all. Being poor is also a way of feeling, knowing, reasoning, making friends, loving, believing in, suffering, celebrating, and praying. The poor constitute a world of their own.

Commitment to the poor means entering, and in some cases remaining in, that universe with a much clearer awareness; it means being one of its inhabitants, looking upon it as a place of residence and not simply of work. It does not mean going into that world by the hour to bear witness to the gospel, but rather emerging from it each morning in order to proclaim the good news to every human being...

—Gustavo Gutierrez

If you are neutral in situations of injustice, you have chosen the side of the oppressor. If an elephant has his foot on the tail of a mouse and you say that you are neutral, the mouse will not appreciate your neutrality.

—Archbishop Desmond Tutu



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 Web: www.seedspublishers.org. Copyright © 2004; ISSN 0194-4495. Seeds of Hope, Inc., holds the 501(c)3 nonprofit tax status.

Seeds of Hope Publishers also produce quarterly packets of worship materials for the liturgical year—with an economic justice attitude.

These include litanies, sermons, children's and youth activities, bulletin art, and drama.

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