

# *Developing a Heart for the Hungry*



art by Jesse Manning

## *A Hunger Emphasis Primer for Beginning Churches*

from Seeds of Hope Publishers

sponsored by the Gemmer Family Christian Foundation

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# Sacred Seasons



**Worship Tools with an Attitude...Toward Justice, Peace & Food Security for All of God's People.**

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## Statement of Purpose

Seeds of Hope, Inc., is a private, independent group of believers responding to a

# Developing a Heart for the Hungry

*A Hunger Emphasis Primer for Beginning Churches*

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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. For 23 years, the group has sought 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 hunger and poverty.

## Editorial Address

The Seeds of Hope ministry is housed by the community of faith at Seventh and James Baptist Church. The mailing address is: 602 James; Waco, TX 76706; Phone: 254/755-7745; Fax: 254/753-1909; E-mail:

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# A Word about This Packet

**S***acred Seasons* is a periodical Seeds worship resource, from which the materials in this primer are pulled. Each year, subscribers to *Sacred Seasons* receive packets for Advent and Christmastide, Lent and Eastertide, and a Hunger Emphasis resource for the fall.

Although the materials contained in this primer would be appropriate for any church, *Developing a Heart for the Hungry* is designed especially for churches that are planning their first Hunger Emphasis. We have pulled together creative and inspiring (to us) resources from about 15 years' worth of Hunger Emphasis packets, along with current information.

We hope you can use these ideas to raise awareness of issues surrounding economic justice and food security in your congregation. In producing *Sacred Seasons*, we always try to choose a variety of age groups, worship areas, events and angles, so that our churches have a potpourri of ideas from which to choose.

We also try to maintain a balance between the apostolic and the contemplative—on the one hand, the dynamic challenge to stay true to God's mandate to feed the poor and struggle for justice, and on the other hand, our own compelling need for nurture and healing while we work toward those dreams.

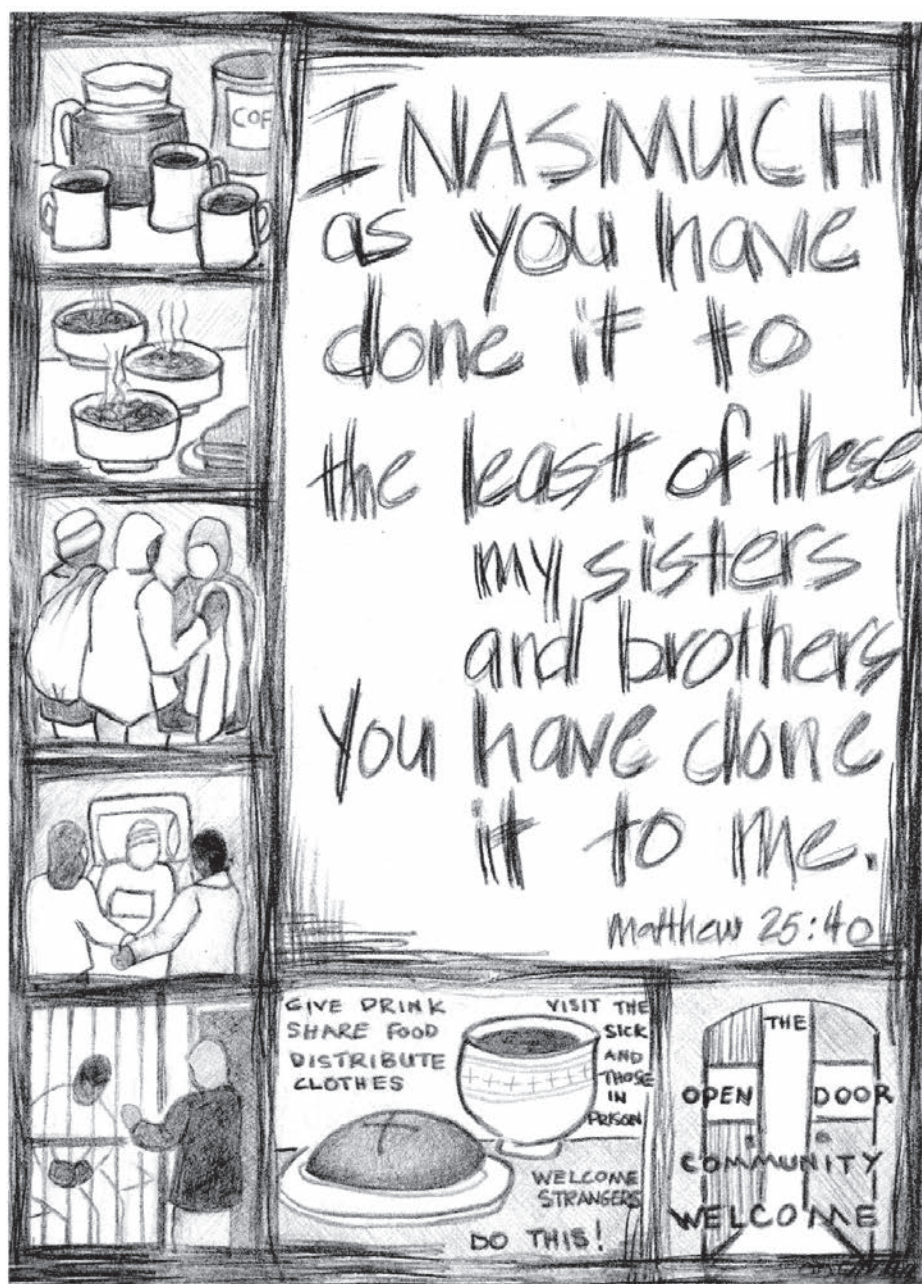
The update of the Hunger Emphasis primer was made possible by a grant from the Gemmer Family Christian Foundation. The contents are gifts of creativity for you from ministers, writers and artists who live all over the world. We hope you and your congregation will be inspired

and challenged to truly develop a "heart for the hungry."

The main body of the packet includes 32 pages, along with a 40-day Hunger Emphasis calendar and a placemat that includes a communion service.

If you find these resources helpful, you should consider subscribing to *Sacred Seasons*. The information you need is in the first column on page 2. If you have questions, please contact us at 254/755-7745 or [seedseditor1@gmail.com](mailto:seedseditor1@gmail.com).

—From the Seeds staff and Council of Stewards



art courtesy of the Open Door Community in Atlanta, GA

# 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,” “hungry,” “widow” and “orphan.”
- 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? Look at the work of local agencies. Where can your congregation’s energy best add to the work already being done? *For resources on this, go to the Food Research and Action Center site ([www.frac.org](http://www.frac.org)) or the Feeding America site ([feedingamerica.org](http://feedingamerica.org)).*
- 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 dream and 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 original concept for the list above came from comments made by Rev. Jim Lawson, a minister in Decatur, GA. Art is by Rebecca S. Ward.*



# *A Prayer for Hungry People*

by Steve Hammond

O God, we pray now for hungry people—  
not the spiritually hungry people  
not the emotionally hungry people  
not the psychologically hungry people  
(though they surely need our prayers)—  
we pray now simply for the  
hungry hungry people.

We know in the Realm that Jesus showed us  
no one goes hungry,  
no one lacks daily bread.

In Your Realm,  
those with food remember the hungry,  
those with food share their food with hungry people,  
those with food work on behalf of hungry people,  
those with food weep for hungry people,  
even if it makes them feel guilty.

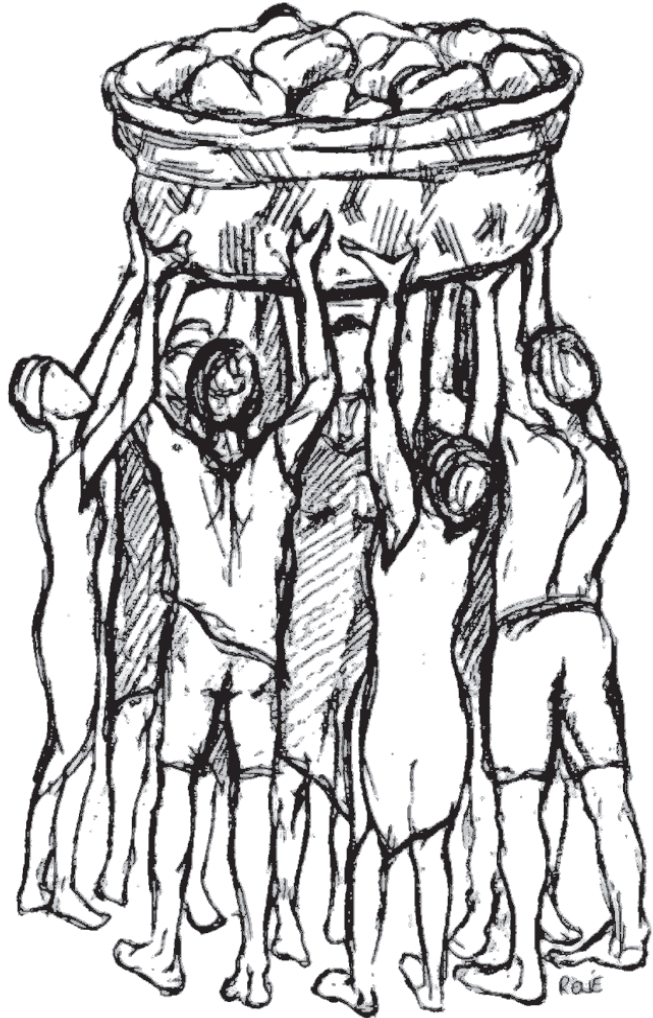
God, we are grateful you never forget  
about hungry people—  
that you long for hungry people to be fed.  
God, we are grateful you never forget  
about those who aren't hungry—  
that you long for them to share with hungry people.  
God, the hungry and unhungry stand as one  
before you;  
loved with the same love,  
both in need of you and each other.

God of Hungry People,  
so many of your people are hungry.  
Rescue your hungry children,  
fill their stomachs with food  
and their hearts with gladness,  
so that they, too, might experience the luxury  
of dealing only with  
their spiritual hunger,  
their emotional hunger,  
their psychological hunger.

Send your Spirit to the hungry people,  
and to the unhungry people,  
until all feast with Jesus in the new age.

In the name of Jesus  
and the hungry hungry  
we pray. AMEN.

—Steve Hammond has co-pastored, with his wife Mary, what is now the Peace Community Church of Oberlin, OH for more than 30 years. He directs Ohio Campus Ministries and is active with the Families Against Violence Advocacy Network.



art by René Boldt

# *God's Simple Solution*

## *A Litany about Hunger*

by David Teague & Allison Best-Teague



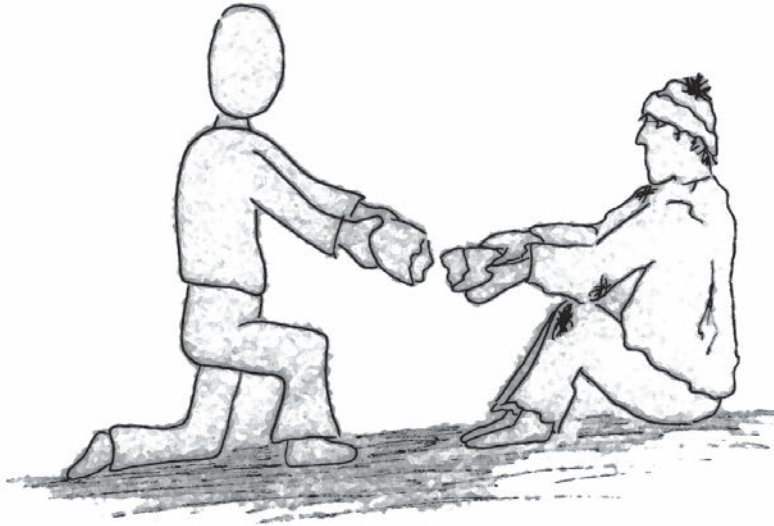
art by Peter Yuichi Clark

- ONE: Some people say the world does not produce enough food to feed everyone. Others say that we grow enough grain and vegetables to supply each man, woman, and child with 3,000 calories a day, were it not for poverty and lack of access. Who do you believe?
- MANY: As the disciples worried about how to feed the multitude, a small boy overheard them. In his hands he carried a lunch basket, containing five barley loaves and two fishes.
- ONE: Some people believe that natural disasters, wars, and other upheavals will always cut off masses of people from food and the resources to purchase and grow food, making hunger inevitable. What can anyone really do in light of such events?
- MANY: The boy went up to one of the disciples and showed them his lunch basket. The disciple took him to Jesus. Jesus took the simple meal, raised it to heaven, and broke it into pieces.
- ONE: Overpopulation is the real reason for hunger, some say. How can we hope to feed everyone if people won't stop having babies?
- MANY: Jesus asked the disciples to divide the multitude into groups of fifty and one hundred. He filled a basket for each disciple to pass among the hungry people.
- ONE: But, you say, individuals cannot affect the world hunger situation. It takes governments and the rich and powerful to bring change.
- MANY: When everyone assembled had eaten their fill, Jesus asked that the remaining food be collected so that none would go to waste. Twelve baskets of fragments were gathered.
- ALL: All over the world, millions of people suffer every day from hunger and malnutrition. Forgive us, God, when our zeal to explain the existence of hunger keeps us from seeing the truth in the simple solution you gave to us. Help us to follow a little child into the practice of sharing our abundance each moment of every day.

*—David Teague is a journalist and Allison Best-Teague is a minister. They live in Waynesville, NC.  
They have a son named David and a dog named Fig.*

# *Litany of Caring*

by Daniel G. Bagby



*art by Sharon Rollins*

ONE: We have gathered because we have learned that we are family, and that our brother's hunger and sister's shelter is our need;

MANY: Scattered and isolated, we have learned to think of ourselves as different: poor and rich, black and white, old and young, smart and simple;

ONE: But gathered as we are, we learn to celebrate our sameness: human spirits longing to belong, hungry for the bread of dignity, thirsting for the cup of opportunity, seeking the clothing of self-respect and freedom;

PEOPLE Teach us, O Giver of Life, the generosity of an open heart, a willing spirit, a dedicated mind, a helping hand;

ONE: Give us, O Teacher of Life, an ear sensitive to the cry of neglect, an eye attentive to the gesture of despair, a touch receptive to the grasp of an empty hand;

MANY: Thank you for the privilege of serving, the blessing of sharing, the joy of helping; thank you for making us capable of caring, fortunate enough to have a surplus, eager enough to want to pass it on;

ONE: Set aside our suspicions of one another, our tendency to stereotype, our willingness to use excuses as our way of hiding from responsibility and care;

MANY: Remind us that our unequal resources are an opportunity for sharing the joy of giving, helping and serving;

ONE: Call us to leave this place, aware that you make holy moments for us, when we see the face of love in others, that we touch the sacred when we do Your purpose, and that we hear the voice of hope that binds us all as one;

MANY: Cause us also to leave this place committed to the daily care and needs of one another, anxious to do good daily, eager to make giving as much a part of our daily life as You do, in whose sacred name and way we pray; Amen.

*Dan Bagby, born to missionary parents in Porto Alegre, Brazil, has been a pastor, educator and counselor. He is a retired dean and chair of the pastoral care department at a theological seminary in Richmond, Virginia.*

# Children's Sermons



## Friends Who Need Us

*based on Matthew 25:31-40*

*by John Stewart Ballenger*

**B**efore the service, engage the help of three people in the congregation. (Try to vary the gender, age and ethnicity as much as possible.) When the children's time begins, give the children a few adhesive bandages, some animal crackers, and a container of water. (Let them eat some of the animal crackers, if necessary. Then give them more.)

Tell them that you think these things might be useful before too long. Then take them for a walk around the sanctuary. Lead the children to the first person you've previously enlisted, who is sitting somewhere in the midst of the congregation.

Introduce the children to this person. You might say something like, "This is Charles. Charles, how are you today?" Charles's answer should be something like, "I'm not doing too well. I cut my finger. See?"

Then ask the group if anyone has anything that could help Charles. The children with the bandages will, hopefully, respond to their cue and give him a bandage. After he thanks them, continue your walk.

The second person should tell the children he or she is hungry, and you would prompt the children who carry the animal crackers. The third person will tell the children he or she is thirsty, and the children should give him or her water to drink.

When you have returned to the place normally reserved for children's sermons, explain that this is exactly what Jesus asked us to do—to help people like our friends in the congregation, any time we can.

—John Ballenger, formerly a drama teacher and poet, is a pastor in Baltimore, MD. He is a nationally recognized leader in the field of creative worship.

## Enough to Go Around

*by J. David Waugh*

**A**uthor's note: For this children's sermon, you will need a small bag of individually wrapped small candies, such as "Kisses" or caramels, and a number of small "banks" or receptacles for coins. You could have one of these receptacles for each child to take home, or one for each Sunday school classroom.

**T**his morning I have a treat for you. Here, I brought a bag of candy for you. (Open the bag, and offer it to the first child.)

Take as much as you want. There seems to be plenty. (Give the first child a handful, and then offer the opened bag to the next child. Usually that child will try to take as much as the first one received. Continue to offer and, if you need to, hand out the candy to the individual children in various large quantities, until there are only one or two pieces left—and several more children. You may have to facilitate this to insure that at least two or more children receive none of the offered candy.)

*(continued)*



Whoops! I must have made a mistake. I was sure that I had enough candy here for everyone to have plenty to snack on during the rest of the church service. What went wrong? *(Invariably, the children will point out that one child has a handful, and others have more than one piece while some were left out.)*

What should I do about that?" *(Provide time for the children to make suggestions.)*

I can't make the others share with you. After all, I did give it to them! They might think that it is not their fault that some of you only got a little bit and others none. Maybe the ones without should have pushed their way to the front of the line. Or perhaps if they had gotten up here with me when I first announced that it was time for the children's sermon instead of taking so much time getting here then they would not have been left out.

What if John or Louisa *(name two of the children who have the most)* think that they deserve all they have because of something that they have done? They may even think that I must like them best because they have so much. They might even think that since I didn't give much candy to some of you or any to others, then it is because I don't like some of you or that I am punishing you for something you did. Do you think that's the way I feel? *(Give them chance to respond.)*

You are right. That's not the way I feel. You know something, there is still enough candy here for everyone to have several pieces each if you would all share. Let's try that. *(Encourage the children to share. Most of the time they will work hard to make sure no one is left out and that there is a fairly even distribution. If there is any extra, ask that they give that back to you for you to give someone else later who didn't come to the front for the children's sermon.)*

Did you know that there are hundreds of thousands of persons in our world who have little or nothing to eat? Those of you who at first didn't get any candy would have been sad that you didn't get any, but you would not have gone to bed hungry today. But there are thousands of persons who will go to bed hungry.

The really sad part is that, just as there was enough candy for all of you to have some, there is enough food in the world for everyone to have what they need to live. Like with our candy, some have more than they really need, while lots and lots of people have nothing at all.

Throughout the Bible we can read about how God has asked those who love and want to honor God to do whatever they can do to help those persons who are poor, who do not have enough food, or who are helpless for other reasons. One way that our church does that is by providing bags of groceries for families in our part of the city — about 1,000 persons per month are helped this way.

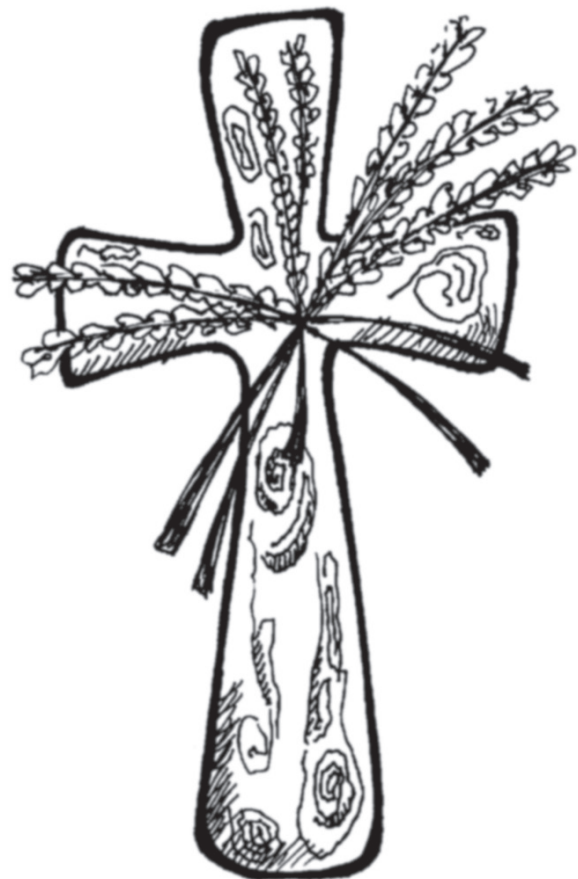
*(You will need to adapt this to your own situation.)*

We would like for you to take these banks and keep your coins in them throughout the year. We will take out the money from time to time and send it to different mission agencies to provide food for these who do not have enough to eat.

It is kind of like the way we shared our candy a moment ago. The fact that we have plenty to eat is not because we are better people than those who have little or nothing. We may have more than others for any number of reasons. However, one of the reasons may be so that we can know the joy of sharing what we have with others. Can you name some other ways that you can share food with others? *(Allow time for responses.)*

Jesus knew the joy of giving to others and taught those who wanted to be his followers to learn that joy. He said, "Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you." (Luke 6:38 NIV)

—At this writing, J. David Waugh was a pastor in the Hell's Kitchen neighborhood in Midtown Manhattan, New York City.



art by Erin Kennedy Mayer

# Hunger Activities for Youth

by Katie Cook



art by Sally Lynn Askins

## Who is My Neighbor?

*An Activity for Younger Youth*

*Luke 10:29-37*

**B**efore the session, find a large map of the world. (Make sure it is current and shows the continents in their true proportions.) Attach it to the wall of your meeting room. Also procure push pins or thumb tacks of various bright colors, colored construction paper, and scissors.

Ask the students to cut very small paper dolls out of the construction paper. Then, together with the youth, make a list of places in the world where hunger has been publicized. Ask the students, “What countries have we read about or heard about, where people are experiencing famine or chronic malnutrition?”

Ask the students to pin paper dolls onto the map in countries where they know there is hunger. In almost every case, there will be hunger in your community. If the students do not think of this, you should bring it up and pin a doll there. (You can also use double-sided tape if you don’t want to use pins.)

Then ask, “How are these people related to us?” This activity goes well with the story of the compassionate Samaritan and the lesson that these are our neighbors, whom we are instructed to love.

## Jesus in the News

*An Activity for Older and Younger Youth*

*Matthew 25:31-40*

**B**efore the session, secure a quantity of newspapers, some glue sticks, colorful markers and butcher paper or poster board. Distribute them as your students arrive. Read Matthew 25:31-40. Ask the youth to take turns reading.

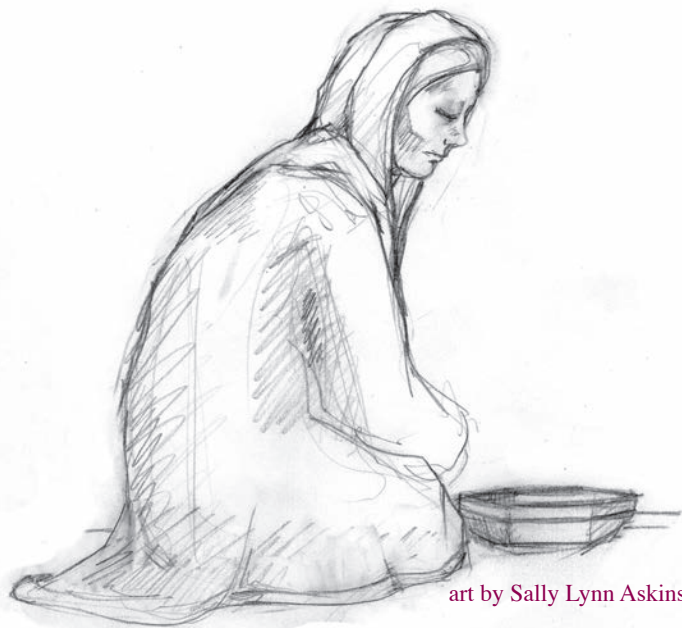
Challenge the youth to look in the newspapers for stories about people whom Jesus might have meant when he said, “If you do it for them, you have done it for me.” If they hesitate, prompt them in a subtle way. They may find stories about homeless people, elderly people, people living with HIV, people on Death Row, refugees—the possibilities are endless.

Once they begin finding appropriate stories, ask them to cut out the stories (if they are fairly short), photographs, and headlines. After they have finished, *(continued)*



art by Sally Lynn Askins





art by Sally Lynn Askins

instruct them to glue their findings on the poster board or butcher paper, making a collage.

Ask someone with good handwriting to write the following (or ask the students to cut the letters out of construction paper—encourage them to be creative) at the bottom of the collage: “Just as you did it for these, you did it for me.”

Display the collage for a while in your meeting room, as a reminder of the passage.

## Compassion Panel

An Activity for Older Youth

Matthew 25:31-40

**B**efore the session, collect objects that represent the six ministries described in Matthew 25:31-40. (For instance, you might bring a can of food or loaf of bread for “I was hungry and you fed me,” a glass or cup for “I was thirsty,” a flower for “I was sick,” and so on.) Also, find six buzzers or bells.

Divide the students into six groups. Give each group one of the objects, and tell them that they are in charge of “feeding the hungry,” “visiting the sick,” and so on, according to the object they hold. Ask the teams to sit together, with their “symbols” and a buzzer or bell in front of each team. (The area should look a little like a game show with six panels.)

Explain that you are going to tell several stories, and they are to hit their buzzers or bells as soon as they think their team’s ministry fits the need of the person in the story. (This may make the stories a little disjointed, but

it may also give them a more interesting dimension.) When the teams are ready to begin, relate this story:

*Harry is homeless. He doesn’t remember how long he’s lived on the street. He’s about 50 years old, but he looks like he is 80. He is alcoholic; he says that’s what really caused him to be where he is. He sleeps in a cardboard box on a heating grate. He sits on the sidewalk in Manhattan every day and asks for change so that he can get food—and sometimes alcohol. He smells pretty bad, and sometimes he doesn’t make much sense.*

The “feeding” team will (hopefully) hit their buzzer. The “welcoming the stranger” group and the “visiting the sick” group may also respond. Ask all of the teams to discuss the best things to do for Harry. Encourage interaction between teams. For instance, the “visiting the sick” group may say he has to have treatment for substance abuse before anyone else can help him very much. Others may disagree.

Repeat the above treatment for the following stories:

*Martha is serving time in the county jail. She has been selling crack in her neighborhood. Her two children—Teresa, age eight, and Johnny, age six—are with their grandmother. Martha hasn’t heard from the children’s father since Johnny was born. She couldn’t find a job, and she got hooked on crack the very first time she used it, when a friend gave her some. She began selling it to support her habit, and to also help her mother support the children. Now she has gone through rehabilitation. She’s clean, and she wants to go home and start over.*

*Felicia is from Honduras. She came to the United States to get away from the violence in her country, and she is here illegally. She lives in a run-down apartment house in Houston and lives in fear that the immigration authorities will find her and send her back to Honduras. She is certain that, if she goes back, she will be killed. She can’t work, because she doesn’t have a green card.*

*Jack is HIV-positive. He lives in Los Angeles, and he is too weak now to hold a job. He is afraid that he will lose his apartment, and he doesn’t have enough strength to cook.*

By this time, all teams should have had a chance to respond. Remind the students that Jesus said each of these people in the stories represents him. Ask them if thinking in this way makes them want to respond any differently. —Katie Cook is editor for Seeds of Hope Publishers. These activities are adapted from “Hunger in My World,” a unit of Sunday School lessons written for Volume 12 of the Smyth & Helwys youth curriculum series, Intersection.



# Hunger, Poverty & the Gospel: A Bible Study

by H. Joseph Haag

## The Gospels

On a memorable Sabbath just about two thousand years ago, a young man stood up in a Palestinian synagogue and read from the scroll of Isaiah. The record for this event says that, following the reading, “the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him” (Luke 4:20).

The young man, of course, was Jesus. This familiar story of Jesus at the Nazarene synagogue service is understood as Jesus’ “hometown sermon.” What is intriguing about the message is not so much that it angered the listeners, but that it involved a surprising choice of scripture:

*The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because [God] has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. [God] has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor (Luke 4:18-19).*

It is absolutely remarkable that when handed the scroll of Isaiah, Jesus chose this passage. He could have read the auspicious oracle of Isaiah 9:6, which describes the messianic king:

*For a child has been born for us, a son given to us; authority rests upon his shoulders; and he is named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.*

He could have read the opening lines of chapter 11:

*A shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots. The spirit of the Lord rests on him, the spirit of wisdom, and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord (Isaiah 11:1-2).*

He could have read from one of the servant songs in chapters 42, 49, 50, or 52-53:

*He was despised and rejected by others; a man of suffering*

*and acquainted with infirmity; and as one from whom others hid their faces he was despised, and we held him no account. Surely he has borne our infirmities and carried our diseases; yet we accounted him stricken, struck down by God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the punishment that made us whole, and by his bruises we are healed (Isaiah 53:3-5).*

Any of these passages would have been appropriate. After all, we believe that Jesus *was* the messianic child, the shoot from the stump of Jesse. He *was* the servant to be wounded for our transgressions, by whose bruises we would be healed.

He chose instead Isaiah 61:1-2 (possibly along with 58:6) and concluded his reading with the momentous judgment, “Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing” (Luke 4:21).

Over many other, apparently more promising verses from Isaiah, Jesus described, to the familiar people at the Nazarene synagogue, the Kingdom of God at work in his ministry as preaching good news to the poor, proclaiming release to the captives, and restoring sight to the blind.

We should take note of Jesus’ choice. It should shake us. *This* we should hear: Jesus thought the bringing of good news to the poor, those multitudes of desperately poor Palestinian peasants who outnumbered the Pharisees,

*(continued)*



art by Peter Yuichi Clark

Sadducees, Zealots and Essenes combined, was central to his ministry and the immediate inbreaking of God's kingdom. He thought that his embrace of the social outcasts of his day (the poor, the captives, the blind, the oppressed) was *the* messianic announcement for which, in this crucial moment, other announcements and prophecies must wait.

If the hearers of Jesus' day or any other day miss this clear choice of Jesus, they miss him altogether. As each of the Gospels makes clear, the ministry of Jesus was bound inextricably to his love for the peasant multitudes about whom Mark once remarked, "he had compassion for them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd" (Mark 6:34).

*We should take note of Jesus' choice of Isaiah 61 to read in the synagogue that day. It should shake us.*

We see and hear this particular love everywhere. Looking at Luke's account alone, we see numerous healings of the lame, the lepers, the diseased, the blind, and the demon-possessed. We hear the beatitudes, "Blessed are you who are poor...you who are hungry now...you who weep now" (6:20-21).

We see the raising of the dead boy at Nain, the only son of his widowed mother (7:11-17). In 7:20-23 (below), we read Jesus' answer to John the Baptist's question, "Are you the one who is to come, or are we to wait for another?"

*And he answered them, "Go and tell John what you have seen and heard: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, the poor have good news preached to them."*

As we move on in Luke's Gospel, we see Jesus multiplying bread loaves and fish among a crowd of hungry listeners (9:10-17). We hear the parable of the Samaritan who had compassion (10:29-37) and the parable of the spurned host who invites "the poor and maimed and blind and lame" to his banquet (14:15-24). We hear Jesus' advice to the Pharisee who had invited him to table:

*He said to the man who had invited him, "When you give a dinner or banquet, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your kinsmen or rich neighbors, lest they also invite you in return, and you be repaid. But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind, and*

*you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you. You will be repaid at the resurrection of the just (Luke 14:12-14).*

Closely related to this special compassion of Jesus are his numerous warnings concerning the use of wealth. Looking again at Luke, we see in 16:10-31 a succession of these warnings. First, there is a series of teachings about stewardship which ends with the well-known injunction, "No slave can serve two masters; for a slave will either hate the one and love the other, or be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth" (16:13).

The verses that follow give a revealing commentary about the Pharisees:

*The Pharisees, who were lovers of money, heard all this, and they ridiculed him. So he said to them, "You are those who justify yourselves in the sight of others; but God knows your hearts; for what is prized by human beings is an abomination in the sight of God" (Luke 16:14-15).*

Following, in verses 19-21, is the compelling account of the rich man and Lazarus. While the story is richly textured and can stand alone, it seems for Luke to illustrate the preceding verses. It is difficult to escape the conclusion that the rich man's demise in Hades is directly related to his former life of luxury in full view of Lazarus' languishing at his gate.

*When the rich man begs for mercy, he hears this telling refusal: But Abraham said, "Child, remember that during your lifetime you received your good things, and Lazarus in like manner evil things; but now he is comforted here, and you are in agony" (Luke 16:25).*

This connection between Kingdom life and the stewardship of wealth is carried further in the story of Zacchaeus (19:1-10). Luke's famous account concludes with the moving statements from Zacchaeus in which he vows to restore fourfold what he had taken illegally and to give half of his wealth to the poor.

A number of other passages could be cited, which together with those already mentioned, clearly establishes two points: First, Jesus' proclamation of the Kingdom and his understanding of messiahship were closely bound to his love for the peasant multitudes who thronged to hear his words of power, forgiveness, and healing. Second, Jesus held up stewardship of wealth toward the poor as an important mark of discipleship.

Jesus' parable of the last judgment in Matthew 25 nails both points: "And the king will answer them, 'Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me'" (Matthew 25:40).

## *The Hebrew Scriptures*

Jesus' convictions about the poor are vitally connected to Israel's past. In the closing scene of the story of the rich man and Lazarus mentioned above, the rich man pleads for permission to warn his five brothers of coming judgment.

In the story Abraham replies, "...If they do not listen to Moses and the prophets, neither will they be convinced even if someone rises from the dead" (Luke 16:31).

Jesus knew well that the Law and the Prophets were brimming with expressions of God's concern for the poor.

*Many other passages could be quoted, but the point has been made that the Law which was so central to Hebrew faith—the faith that Jesus inherited—understands God to have special concern for the poor.*

The Law (Torah), for example, details regulations of the sabbatical (or seventh) year in which the land was to lie fallow, in part at least, "so that the poor of your people may eat: (Exodus 23:20-22; cf. Leviticus 25:2-7), presumably, the unharvested and voluntary crops.

The Jubilee year (every fiftieth year) provided also that slaves be set free and debts be forgiven. This provision granted a new start to Hebrews who had sold themselves into slavery or fallen into debt (Leviticus 25:8-17). During this year all land would return to its original owners without compensation.

It apparently was understood that God wanted the original, and basically equal, distribution of land in Israel to continue. In an agrarian society, land was capital; and with capital returned, the poor could again earn their way.

Mention also should be made of the Torah's special regulation of harvests, usually referred to as the gleaning law. Leviticus 19:9-10 says that fields and vineyards must be harvested so that generous gleanings are left for the poor to pick up and consume. The story of Ruth vividly illustrates the gleaning law at work.

Many other passages could be quoted, but the point has been made that the Law, which was so central to Hebrew faith—the faith that Jesus inherited, understands God to have special concern for the poor. The Law argues, in

fact, that this special concern lies at the heart of divine justice:

*For the Lord your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who is not partial and takes no bribe, who executes justice for the orphan and the widow, and who loves the strangers, providing them food and clothing. You shall also love the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt (Deuteronomy 10:17-19).*

It is not surprising that the prophets demanded that this particular justice of God be done in society. Indeed, one of their common complaints against both Israel and Judah was that the people had neglected and oppressed the poor in their midst (Isaiah 5:8; Amos 8:4; Micah 2:2). This complaint rivals religious apostasy in terms of frequency of mention. Amos thundered that the Israelites "trample the head of the poor into the dust of the earth" (2:7), and Isaiah commended justice toward the poor over empty ritual.

*Your new moons and your appointed festivals  
my soul hates;  
they have become a burden to me,  
I am weary of bearing them.*

...

*Wash yourselves; make yourselves clean;  
remove the evil of your doings from before  
my eyes;  
cease to do evil,  
learn to do good;  
seek justice;  
rescue the oppressed,  
defend the orphan,  
plead for the widow (Isaiah 1:14, 16, 17).*

The same theme appears repeatedly in the Psalter:

*God has taken [God's] place in the divine  
council;  
in the midst of the gods, [God] holds  
judgment:*

*How long will you judge unjustly  
and show partiality to the wicked?  
Give justice to the weak and the orphan;  
maintain the right of the lowly and the  
destitute.*

*Rescue the weak and the needy;  
deliver them from the hand of the wicked.  
(Psalm 82:1-4; cf. Psalm 94)*

## *The Early Church*

Just as Jesus embodied this powerful Old Testament tradition in his own life and ministry, the early church followed Jesus. The Book of Acts records the practice of the Jerusalem community:



*There was not a needy person among them, for as many as owned lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold. They laid it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need. (Acts 4:34-35)*

Because many in the church were poor, those who had material means liquidated their assets to provide for members of the fellowship in need. The book of Acts says that by this practice the early church bore powerful witness for Christ in the world.

When the Jerusalem church was struck by famine in the middle of the first century, the apostle Paul undertook the work of collecting an offering on their behalf from the churches in Asia and Macedonia. To the Corinthians he wrote:

*I do not mean that there should be relief for others and pressure on you, but it is a question of a fair balance between your present abundance and their need, so that their abundance may be for your need, in order that there may be a fair balance. As it is written, "The one who had much did not have too much, and the one who had little did not have too little" (2 Corinthians 8:13-15).*

James makes ministry to the poor central to his well-known argument about the inseparability of faith and works:

*What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if you say you have faith but do not have works? Can faith save you? If a brother or sister is naked and lacks daily food, and one of you says to them, "Go in peace; keep warm and eat your fill," and yet you do not supply their bodily needs, what is the good of that? So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead (James 2:13-17).*

John makes the claim that sharing with those in need is the sign of real love:

*We know love by this, that he laid down his life for us—and we ought to lay down our lives for one another. How does God's love abide in anyone who*

*has the world's goods and sees a brother or sister in need and yet refuses to help? Little children, let us love, not in word or speech, but in truth and action (1 John 3:16-18).*

From one perspective, then, Jesus' choice of a text for his synagogue sermon at Nazareth is not surprising at all. He rightly understood the true heart and soul of Israel's covenant with God, and he incarnated that faith in his own self-understanding and ministry. He recognized that real faith is accurately reflected in believers' attitudes and actions toward the poor. By so believing and living, we in turn reflect the character of Jesus:

*For you know the generous act of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that by his poverty you might become rich (2 Corinthians 8:9).*

—At this writing, Joe Haag was associate director of the Christian Life Commission (CLC) of the Baptist General Convention of Texas, headquartered in Dallas. He was also a member of the Seeds Council of Stewards for a number of years. A version of this Bible study was originally printed in *Therefore...*, a periodical publication of the CLC.

*Trouble and weeping and fear and ruin come  
when people forget the promises of God  
that bind us to each other—the hungry to  
the overfed, the innocent to the cynical, the  
triumphant to the brokenhearted.  
All over God's round earth, trouble comes  
when the people forget the promise.  
And God is far away.*

*So we try to help each other remember the  
promises which are our way and our truth  
and our life. We try to help each other stop  
expecting faith to be soothing. We stop trying  
to mostly entertain each other in church and  
instead help each other find faith that will  
deepen into sacrificial love.*

*—Martha Sterne*

# Preaching about Hunger:

## *Good News for the Hungry & the Full*

by Raymond Bailey

Text: Luke 4:16-21

**J**esus' first sermon set the tone for his entire ministry. His choice of text indicated something about his own sense of mission and about the continuity between the old and new covenants.

Luke records Jesus' return from the desert and a personal experience of hunger as a prelude to the sermon at Nazareth. The physician tells us that Jesus, having faced the illusions of Satan about power in the world, returned

experienced loneliness, hunger and spiritual temptation—all common to the lot of the poor.

The sermon in the synagogue at Nazareth was good news for the poor (*Lk. 4:18*). What was it in the sermon that so incensed his neighbors? Jesus applied this text of grace to those outside Israel. His illustrations included examples in Sidon and Syria, countries and peoples despised by Israelites.

How like our own day this is! There are growing numbers of United States citizens, most of whom claim to be followers of Jesus, who want to deny the most basic benefits tainted as "welfare" to those born in other nations whom they view, as the Jews did Gentiles, as intruders. The anti-immigrant movement in the US manifests the spirit of those who drove Jesus from his home "church" and his hometown.

Study after study demonstrates a willingness of people to help those who are most like them. The US Congress, with overwhelming public approval, moves rapidly to help middle and upper-class victims of floods, tornadoes and other disasters. Support comes from those most critical of helping the victims of economic and social cycles. Jesus proclaimed good news to the poor and release of the captives. Too many today want to just help "our own kind."

The call to feed the hungry is also good news to the rich. Jesus often warned of the curse of greed and wealth. The rich man and Lazarus, the postscript to the account of the rich young ruler, the judgment scene in Matthew 25, and the parable of the farmer who wasted his life building new barns are just a few of Jesus' warnings.

Gordon Cosby, the late pastor of the Church of the Saviour in Washington, DC, often said that God had called him to relieve the wealthy of the burden of their money. Such ideas are not original with contemporary reformers. Selfishness and indifference to the poor were popular themes in the writings of the early leaders of the church. St. Basil wrote:

Aren't you a miser, a plunderer, when you use for your own benefit something which has been given to you to be administered?...The bread which you keep for yourself although you do not need it belongs to the hungry.... You commit as many injustices as there are people with whom you avoid sharing what you have.<sup>2</sup>

*(continued)*

art by Peter Yuichi Clark



*Subjects like hunger, violence, war and peace are too often reserved for special occasions.*

"in the power of the Spirit." His example instructs us about preparing to preach in our own Nazareth.

We make much of the poverty of Jesus (that he was born in a stable, and so on) but his was most likely a middle-class family. They owned an animal, Joseph was a craftsman, they took Jesus to Jerusalem and the temple for the rite of passage to adulthood. More telling than his personal poverty is his willingness to identify with the poor.<sup>1</sup> Jesus did not shy away from lepers, outcasts, the sick or the hungry.

He did not just look on their suffering; he had "compassion." He suffered with them. It is worth noting that he went immediately from the baptism of John (Jesus' identification with sinners) into the wilderness where he

John Calvin was not restrained in his attack on the grain merchants of his day; he called them “murderers, savage beasts, biting and eating the poor, sucking in their blood.” He warned those in his congregation that “those who have riches, whether inherited or won by their own industry and labour, are to remember that what is left over is not meant for intemperance or luxury, but for relieving the needs of the brethren.”<sup>3</sup>

Money that is given to feed hungry people is a twofold blessing, for giver and receiver are equally blessed. The conscientious pastor will address the needs of folks to give as much or more than the physical needs of the impoverished.

The original offerings in the church were to feed the hungry. This was an extension of the best of Jewish heritage with its emphasis on forgiveness of debts, land redistribution and grain left in the fields for the poor. Providing for those in need was a jubilee experience.

The offerings received in early Christian worship were to care for the poor. Paul’s fund drives for impoverished Christians are well documented in the correspondence to the Corinthians. Christian tradition provides ample evidence of philanthropy in the mission of God’s people.

I alluded above to the popular attitude, “Let’s take care of our own” or “Charity begins at home.” Most of our giving is more ego-centered than that. The great majority of religious giving in this country is for the purpose of sustaining institutions. We, like the man Jesus told about in Luke 12, tear down our spiritual barns and build bigger ones. The support of staffs who serve us and programs that serve us is the primary purpose of revenue growth in US Christian churches. Musical instruments are purchased sometimes for use once a year or less.

When preaching sacrifice on behalf of the hungry, be prepared to experience the rejection Jesus experienced when one went away because he had great riches (*Mk. 10:17-31; Matt. 19:16-20:16; Lk. 18:18-30*). Before preaching on social issues, the preacher should examine her role in creating or encouraging such attitudes.

The painful question is how many sermons on social themes are diluted by personal and institutional lifestyles. Hosea noted that social conditions often reflect a situation where it is “like people, like priest” (*Hosea 4:9*). Grand words about the obligation of Christians to feed the hungry will be meaningless unless supported by a lifestyle of respect and concern for those in need.

Preaching on particular issues or for special occasions should reflect something of a systematic personal theology. The interpretation of isolated texts should be informed by one’s understanding of God and the overall biblical message. I would suggest three aspects of theology particularly relevant to the subject of hunger

and Christian responsibility: stewardship, anthropology, justice/righteousness.

We sing “this is my father’s (mother’s) world.” Do we believe this is God’s world? If we do believe it, what difference does it make in our decisions about the use of natural and human resources? A stated religious proposition that is not a guiding principle for living is blasphemy. God created the world and gave humanity the privilege and responsibility for it. The world has been entrusted to us and we are accountable for it.

*Congregations should not be allowed to drop a few extra bucks in the plate on a special Sunday or suffer a meal of rice and beans and then think, “Well, that’s over for another year.”*

The term “steward” is found in only two places in the gospels (*Lk. 12:41-48 and Lk. 16:1-13*). In both instances it is a part of a story of unfaithfulness and judgment. As private managers and public magistrates, stewards were persons charged with the control of property and the care of persons. Stewards were not just to observe passively their domains; they were to develop them. The fact is that God gave to humankind “dominion” (*Gen. 1:26*). The environment is to be managed in such a way as to serve God’s purpose in creation.

The problem of hunger is one of political and economic circumstance—circumstances over which humans exercise control. Natural resources are not just for our comfort and enjoyment but for our development. Never has a famine covered the whole earth. The problem is one of distribution. These are theological as well as social realities, to which there is usually great resistance. The experts tell us that 50 percent of the world’s wealth is controlled by six percent of the world’s population—with those dwelling in the United States.

Begin with the Bible and God’s mandate of stewardship and then use demographic data available from organizations such as Seeds of Hope and Bread for the World to give evidence of our sins of commission and omission.

Nelson Mandela observed that “our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure.” It may not be what we do with our weakness but what we failed to do with



our power that embarrasses us the most when we stand before God. Luke said that Jesus came in the power of the Spirit. Christian theology acknowledges that God has given us responsibility for God's world and the power to do the job.

Human beings are a part of God's creation. Certainly we should care for the environment, but only women and men are said to be created in God's own image. (*Gen. 1:27*). The scriptures teach that all people share a common divine heritage. The value of human life is the

*The great frustration that many feel listening to sermons on social problems is the absence of hope or a plan of action for resolution. People may leave a hunger emphasis service feeling guilty, sad and hopeless, thinking "so what?"*

highest value in God's economy. The psalmist depicts the grandeur of God climaxed in the creature made "a little less than God...with glory and honor...with dominion over the works of thy hands" (*Ps. 8:5-6*).

The care of persons is the primary task of the church. Time and again the Bible makes it clear that such care includes bodily needs (*see Isaiah 58:6-12; Amos 4:1, 5:11-12; Matt. 25:31-46; James 1:27, 2:15-16*). "Who is my neighbor?" was a favorite question of the rich and middle-class of Jesus' day and is repeated in many forms today by the same classes, perhaps for the same reasons.

Theology is about the existence, meaning and presence of God. As Jon Sobrino says,

Theology becomes responsible in that it responds to the real world. Theology becomes practical because its motivating concern is not pure thought nor even pure truth but rather the building of the Kingdom of God and of a church that will be at the service of this kingdom.<sup>4</sup>

Justice is the end of God's presence in the world. Jesus as God among us called for social transformation of the most radical kind. The course of history was retargeted according to the original purpose of God in creation. Sobrino contends that justice is a form of love and as such is essential to the gospel message. "Justice takes seriously the primordial fact of the *created world* in its given form...."<sup>5</sup>

The interruption and distortion of creation produced injustice. Injustice is the result of sin, of a world and time out of joint. Justice in simplest terms is right relationship; all things and persons in right relationship to God. Paul's natural theology in Romans most clearly states the situation. Chapters one and two reflect on how the world became a realm of injustice.

The whole system is being reordered. "For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God; for the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will but by the will of him who subjected it in hope; because the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and obtain the glorious liberty of the children of God" (*Romans 8:19-21*). The world remains out of joint until all of God's children are filled with the bounty of God's world.

Let us now turn to some practical suggestions for preaching about hunger. Subjects like hunger, violence, war and peace are too often reserved for special occasions. Certainly it is good to have special emphasis Sundays in which appeals for food, money or political action can be the singular focus. This is not enough, however, for a problem of such magnitude. The need and the opportunity for ministry should be kept before the church.

I would like to propose a philosophy of campaign preaching. Do not try to do it all in one sermon. Plan a series that will lay a foundation and build upon it. False notions have to be challenged, problems exposed, solutions offered and tested, and hopefully consensus for action established.

A pastor might begin with a sermon on creation, follow with one on the uniqueness of humanity, deal with the fall, then Cain and Abel and separation, etc., and end up with the responsibilities we have to one another as a part of a single global family.

Sermons on different topics may offer opportunity for subpoints on injustice, poverty or hunger, or illustrations that raise consciousness of human suffering. An evangelical sermon might well note that God is interested in the redemption and healing of the whole person.

Congregations should not be allowed to drop a few extra bucks in the plate on a special Sunday or suffer a meal of rice and beans and then think, "Well, that's over for another year." Critical topics should be kept before them. Follow the biblical model and note the frequency with which obligation to the poor recurs.

Sermons should have particular behavior goals. The preacher should ask, "What is it that I want to happen as a result of this sermon?" It is easier to describe problems than it is to prescribe solutions. Too many sermons spend 95 percent of the time picturing the problem and then conclude with a weak appeal for concern and prayer.

The great frustration that many feel listening to sermons on social problems is the absence of hope or a plan of action for resolution. People may leave a hunger emphasis service feeling guilty, sad and hopeless, thinking “so what?” An effective sermon on hunger will offer concrete suggestions for action. The people want to hear how they can make a difference.

A proven technique for organizing persuasive sermons is that called the Monroe Motivated Sequence. Monroe offered a five-step formula: (1) the Attention Step, (2) the Need Step, (3) the Satisfaction Step, (4) the Visualization Step, and (5) the Action Step.<sup>6</sup>

This formula is audience-centered. The audience must be made aware of the problem and how it affects them. They then must be told how they can do something about it and helped to visualize how they can actually be a part of the solution.

Illustrations are the key to effective preaching on any subject. They help to link the familiar with the unfamiliar, to grasp the concrete and to identify with actors in a particular scene of the human drama. Illustrations should be believable, have an air of the familiar and reflect the life experience and values of the listeners.

Good illustrations have strong sensory appeal. Let the congregation see, hear, taste and touch what the hungry person experiences. The greatest impact of an illustration is most likely in proportion to the ability of the audience to identify. Empathy is a stronger appeal than sympathy. Reduce cosmic evil to everyday life experience. Take the staggering statistics of the effects of starvation and compare it to the headlines of today’s newscast.

People are appropriately shocked, outraged and filled with sorrow at deaths in mass shootings, airline crashes and natural disasters. Compare those to the fact that some 24,000 people die every day from hunger-related causes. And that number can be changed.

Frederick Buechner recently addressed the challenge we face:

Hunger in the literal sense is unknown to you and me. In a world where thousands starve to death every day, we live surrounded by plenty. We watch with full bellies the TV footage of [developing world] children with their bellies swollen, their

legs and arms like sticks, the eyes vacant in their ancient faces, and may God have mercy on us as a nation, as a civilization, as whatever it means to call us Christendom, if we do not find some way to wipe their hunger from the face of the earth.<sup>7</sup>

Let us join our voices with the prophets and Jesus in crying out against injustice and for the care of persons.

—Raymond Bailey taught homiletics in Louisville, KY, for 16 years, and pastored in Waco, TX, for 16 years. He is now retired in Frankfort, KY. He also taught homiletics while pastoring in Waco. He says he would sometimes show the last five minutes of the movie *Romero* to his preaching students and tell them, “This is what happens when you preach the gospel.”

## Endnotes

1. See Matthew L. Lamb, *Solidarity with Victims*; New York: Crossroad, 1982.
2. Quoted in Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Until Justice and Peace Embrace*; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983, p. 79.
3. Ibid.
4. Jon Sobrino, *The True Church and the Poor*; Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1984, p. 4.
5. Ibid, p. 50.
6. Alan H. Monroe and Douglas Ehniger, *Principles and Types of Speech*, 6th edition; Glenview, Ill.: Scott, Foreman and Company, 1967, pp. 264-289.
7. Frederick Buechner, “The News of the Day,” *The Christian Century*, July 17-24, Vol. 113, No. 22, p. 721.

*When someone steals a man's clothes we call him a thief. Should we not give the same name to one who could clothe the naked and does not? The bread in your cupboard belongs to the hungry man; the coat hanging unused in your closet belongs to the man who needs it; the shoes rotting in your closet belong to the man who has no shoes; the money which you hoard up belongs to the poor.*

*--Basil the Great,  
Bishop of Caesarea (ca 365 CE)*

# *Facts about Hunger & Poverty Around the World*

compiled by Kristin Waites

**T**he vast majority of hungry people (98 percent) live in developing countries, where almost 15 percent of the population is undernourished. Around three-quarters of these undernourished people live in low-income rural areas, principally in higher-risk farming areas. — World Food Programme (WFP)

Approximately 805 million people in the world do not eat enough to be healthy. That means that one in every 10 people on Earth goes to bed hungry each night. However, there is hopeful news: the number of people living with chronic hunger has declined by 200 million people over the past 20 years. — United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO)

Hunger is number one on the list of the world's top 10 health risks. It kills more people every year than AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis combined. — Joint UN Program on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS)

Nearly half of all deaths in children under the age of 5 are linked to poor nutrition. Some studies estimate this to include 3.1 million children. — WFP, UN Inter-Agency Group for Child Mortality Estimation (IGME)

The first thousand days of a child's life, from pregnancy through age 2, are the critical window in which to tackle under-nutrition. A proper diet in this period can protect children from the mental and physical stunting that can result from malnutrition. — IGME

It costs just US\$0.25 per day to provide a child with all of the vitamins and nutrients he or she needs to grow up healthy. — WFP

If women in rural areas had the same access to land, technology, financial services, education and markets as men, the number of hungry people could be reduced by 100 to 150 million. — FAO

Countries in the Asia-Pacific region (the part of the world in or near the Western Pacific Ocean) have some 563 million food-insecure people, which equals about two thirds of the total number. — WFP

One out of six children in developing countries is underweight. — WFP

About 180 million children under the age of 5 suffer from stunting and are not reaching their potential. About 80 percent of these children live in just 20 countries. — WFP, UNICEF

Across the developing world, 66 million primary school-age children are hungry when they attend classes, with 23 million in Africa alone. US\$3.2 billion would feed all of the hungry school-age children in the world for one year. — WFP

*continued on page 21*



art by Robert Darden



# Hunger & Poverty in the US

compiled by Kristin Waites

Nearly 49 million people in the United States live in food-insecure households or a household where the members are unable to consistently access the adequate amount of nutritious food necessary for a healthy life. — United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)

A key cause of food insecurity in the United States is the lack of sufficient resources to cover the cost of food in addition to meeting other basic needs. — Feeding America

Ninety percent of all counties in the US have a majority of food-insecure children living in households with incomes at or below the federal poverty line. — Feeding America

One in six people in America faces hunger. — Do Something (*An organization for youth volunteering opportunities*)

Households with children reported a significantly higher food-insecurity rate than households without children. — Do Something

Food insecurity exists in every county in America. — Do Something

In the US, hunger isn't caused by a lack of food, but rather the continued prevalence of poverty. — Do Something

One in seven people is enrolled in Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). Nearly half of them are children. — Do Something

Forty percent of food is thrown out in the US every year, or about \$165 billion worth. All of this uneaten food could feed 25 million Americans. — Do Something

More than one in five children are at risk of hunger. Among African-Americans and Latinos, nearly

one in three children is at risk of hunger. — USDA

Of the more than 20 million children who receive free or reduced-price lunch each school day, less than half receive breakfast and only 10 percent go to summer feeding sites. — USDA

About half of all American children will receive SNAP benefits at some point before age 20. — Bureau of Labor Statistics

Low-income households spend a greater share of their income on food. Food accounts for 16.4 percent of spending for households making less than \$10,000 per year, compared to the US average of 12.7 percent. — Bureau of Labor Statistics ■

## Hunger & Poverty Around the World,

*continued from page 20*

There is enough food to provide everyone in the world with at least 2,720 kilocalories (kcal) per person, per day. The principal problem is that many people in the world do not have sufficient land to grow, or income to purchase, enough food. — FAO

As of 2008, the World Bank has estimated that there were an estimated 1,345 million poor people in developing countries who live on \$1.25 a day or less. — WHES

Under-nutrition among pregnant women in developing countries leads to one out of six infants being born with low birth weight. This is not only a risk factor for neonatal deaths, but can also cause learning disabilities, mental retardation, poor health, blindness and premature death. — World Hunger Education Service (WHES)

By causing poor health, low levels of energy, and even mental impairment, hunger can lead to even greater poverty by reducing people's ability to work and learn, thus leading to even greater hunger. — WHES

One out of three people in developing countries is affected by vitamin and mineral deficiencies. — World Health Organization (WHO)

A child dies from hunger-related causes every 13 seconds. That's as many as 7,000 children younger than 5 killed every day. — 30 Hour Famine ■

# Test Your Hunger IQ

by Kristin Waites

*Think you know about hunger issues? Take this quiz to test your knowledge!*

*Once you have answered all of the questions, unscramble the letters of the correct answers to discover the secret phrase! (Check your answers below or on the hunger statistics page if you aren't sure.) Once you've discovered the word, do some research to see why it's important in ending hunger and what you can do to help. (Hint: the secret word is also one of the terms in the word search!)*

1. One in \_\_\_\_ Americans does not have enough food.  
D. five E. two F. six G. eight
2. True or False: The lack of adequate nutrition during early childhood can affect cognitive, physical and behavioral development.  
S. True T. False
3. Approximately how much of the population in developing countries is undernourished?  
O. 15 percent P. 20 percent Q. 10 percent R. 5 percent
4. How many US dollars does it cost per day to provide a child with all of the vitamins and nutrients he or she needs to grow up healthy?  
A. \$1.30 B. \$5.75 C. \$0.25 D. \$7.50
5. How many people in the world do not have enough to eat?  
A. 50 million B. 100 million C. 500 million D. 805 million
6. 1.345 billion people in developing countries live on \_\_\_\_ per day or less.  
N. \$0.40 O. \$1.25 P. \$1.00 Q. \$0.75
7. 80 percent of the stunted children in the world live in just \_\_\_\_ countries.  
S. 47 T. 8 U. 20 V. 14
8. One in \_\_\_\_ people will go to bed hungry tonight.  
C. eight D. six E. ten F. five
9. True or False: There is enough food in the world to provide everyone with enough nourishment.  
E. True F. False
10. How many people live in food-insecure households in the United States?  
Q. 30 million R. 49 million S. 12 million T. 73 million

Correct answers: 1-F, 2-S, 3-O, 4-C, 5-D, 6-O, 7-U, 8-E, 9-E, 10-R  
Secret Phrase: Food rescue



# How to Make a Hunger Emphasis Banner

by Kathy Manis Findley

## *The Thematic Images*

This banner design allows worship to focus on any number of themes. The single word, HOPE, is designed to move the worshipper to a hope-filled response to hunger and poverty. The style of the letters and the flowing leaves are designed to symbolize the gentle flow of compassion and help for those who suffer.

The stalks, which bleed off the right side of the banner, are subtle reminders that there is more than what we can see both in the tragedy of hunger and in our responses to that tragedy. The three heads of wheat could allude to the grace of the Creator God who has provided abundance, to the compassion of Jesus Christ who gave food to the multitudes, and to the Holy Spirit who dwells in us and is the source of our caring.

It strikes me that, just as Jesus took the food that was available and made it become more than enough for all, we also have the power to make what our earth produces enough for all the world's people. To provide for those who hunger, we must embody the creative spirit of the God who created us, the compassionate spirit of Christ who fed those who hungered and the spirit of the Comforter as we comfort those who mourn their impoverished existence.

## *The Banner Design*

The banner is relatively simple to construct. The banner itself is made of a natural-colored burlap with the bottom edge fringed. The design is monochromatic, in that each element of the design is constructed out of varying shades of natural, golden tan, golden brown, brown and brighter gold colors. The letters for "HOPE" should be the brightest gold of the monochromatic colors.

Make sure there is plenty of contrast between the natural-colored burlap of the banner and the color used for the letters. Also, the fabric texture should contrast. You could achieve this by using felt. Another option is to use a bridal satin for a very rich contrast. This fabric must be backed with the iron-on "Wonder Under" before cutting out the letters.

You could also use a contrasting color for the "HOPE" letters, such as deep burgundy or hunter green. Everything on the design would then be shades of tan/golden brown/brown, but the letters will be a deep contrasting color.

Step back several feet from the banner before you

make a final decision about the colors. Pin on a few of the elements to see all the colors together and to see where your eye is drawn. A vibrant golden color should draw your eye to the stalks of wheat and the word "HOPE" at the same time.

## *Constructing the Banner*

If you are unable, as I am, to enlarge the design without the aid of a "newfangled" machine that projects enlargements, here is what you can do. Decide on the size of the banner and cut a piece of butcher paper to that size. To enlarge the design, tape the paper to a wall, and use an overhead projector to size the image onto the banner. Trace the design on to the paper. This will be your pattern for cutting the design elements.

I suggest lining the banner. This will make it hang better and look finished. Simply choose a fabric of matching or contrasting color. Almost any fabric will do for this, except a very lightweight fabric. Many cloth stores have remnant drapery fabrics that have just enough body to make a good lining. Place the burlap and your lining fabric right sides together and machine stitch around three edges, as if you were making a pillow case.

Leave the bottom edge of the banner unstitched. Also cut the lining fabric about 5-6 inches shorter than the burlap. By putting the short side at the bottom, you will be able to leave 5-6 inches of burlap at the bottom for fringing. When you have turned the banner, pull out the corners carefully with a straight pin and press with an iron. At the bottom turn the lining under about one-half inch and blind-stitch or machine-stitch on the front side of the banner. Then unravel the bottom of the burlap to make the fringe.

## *Hanging Tabs*

The tabs are made by taking strips of burlap 6 inches by 10 inches and sewing them lengthwise, right sides together. Stitch the tab a second time, close to the first stitching line to ensure the tab seam will not unravel. You may also use a thin stream of glue down the length of the seam after trimming.

After turning, you will have a two-and-a-half-inch wide tab. Press the tab with the seam on the center back. You may leave both top and bottom seams unstitched. The 10-inch length tab will give you flexibility on the size of

*continued*



pole (dowel) you use to hang the banner. Pin the tabs in place and machine stitch on the front side of the banner.

### *Banner Pole & Hanging Braid...*

**Y**ou may use a wooden curtain rod with wooden finials. Rods that are approximately two inches in diameter look very nice. Some are ridged. They are available unstained or stained. Choose a wood stain that blends with the banner colors. You may also purchase a wooden dowel from a building supply store and stain it yourself.

Hang the banner with a drapery cord the length of the pole, plus about 24 inches. This will allow you to knot the braid at each end of the pole, and have several inches of cording dropping on either side of the banner. Glue the ends of the braided cording to prevent un-braiding, which will happen instantly. Finish ends by gluing on a matching drapery tassel.

The wheat plant turns golden-brown when ripe. The head of the plant holds 30-50 kernels of grain. (Fortunately, we do not have to cut 30-50 kernels of grain for our banner design.)

The leaves and stems may be cut from felt fabric and glued on the burlap. One color should be used for both. Another shade may be used for the wheat heads. The irregular shaped kernels may be cut from felt. Cut each kernel separately. Fold the felt several times to cut multiples. Don't be particular about the shapes. You will glue<sup>1</sup> these on the burlap, placing them as the pattern indicates.

The beards or awns of the wheat head look like bristly hairs. You may cut these from the same felt, or use a cording<sup>2</sup> of the same color or another shade of the same color. The cording will also be glued in place.

—At this writing, Kathy Findley was a pastor in Little Rock, AK. She has designed banners for all kinds of events, including national meetings.

### *Endnotes*

1. Use a flexible fabric glue or something like Aileen's Tacky Glue. It will dry clear, so you need not despair when the glue gets all over your banner. A tacky glue works best because it gets a bit tacky and allows you to place the design elements without having to hold them for 10 minutes. This

is especially important when gluing cording. You can press the banners when using this glue.

2. If you use satin cording, also use a braided satin drapery cording to hang the banner. These are available in some places with a wire inserted in the braid. If you use regular drapery braid, insert a flexible wire through the braid to prevent the cord from stretching. Use an ornamental satin tassel at the both ends of the hanging cord. You must glue the ends of the braid to keep them from unraveling. The tassels will cover the glued ends to give a finished look. If you use satin cordings, the letters "HOPE" will also be nice in a satin fabric. ■



banner art by Kathy Manis Findley

# What's For Dinner?

## How to Conduct a Hunger Meal

by J. Kelly Owen

**H**unger meals are popular and effective ways of accomplishing two hunger-related goals: the need to raise money and the need to raise awareness. Which is your primary goal will determine a great deal about the kind of hunger meal you will have. If you are primarily interested in raising money, you are going to want an attractive, though not necessarily large, meal and perhaps a well known speaker or other entertainment.

There are people in almost every community who have lots of experience with this kind of meal, and who would be willing to give you some pointers on what works in your community. My experience is primarily with meals as educational events, so I'll be sharing with you some ideas from that perspective.

The reason that hunger meals are such a popular way to teach about hunger is that they provide the opportunity to experience hunger and food issues directly, and from different perspectives. We can experience, at least briefly, the feeling of being hungry, the problems of inequitable distribution of resources or the difficulty of feeding a family on food stamps.

We can also use the meal as an opportunity to practice using our roles in society to improve conditions for others—roles like steward, teacher, consumer, servant and leader.

Below are some new ideas and some old ideas with a few new twists. Get your planning group together and pick and choose from these ideas and others you have; use them, abuse them and plan a great hunger meal!

How about a SNAP meal? SNAP stands for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. It was formerly known as the Food Stamp program. The national average for recipients is \$195 a month for a one-person household. That's \$6.50 per day, or about \$2.17 per meal.

What kind of meal can you serve for \$2.17 a person? Using your best shopping skills and careful planning, you can probably do fairly

well, once. Doing it repeatedly would become quite a challenge.<sup>1</sup>

Give people a cost breakdown of the meal and talk about the problems you had to deal with. Talk about how careful shopping on the part of the more affluent could free up resources that could then be used for ministering to others.

For a different SNAP-type meal, give everyone at the meal a set of food coupons and a price list for each item available at the serving table. Ask them to decide what they will and will not “buy” with their coupons.

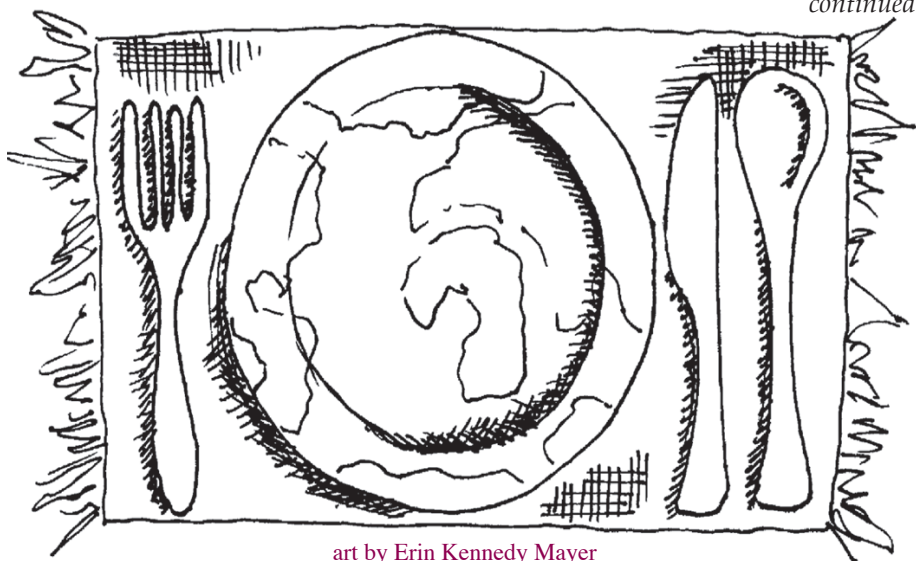
Then talk with them about what kinds of decision they had to make. Note: In order to simplify your planning, you may want to serve everyone the same thing after the “buying” decisions are made.

One popular hunger meal is used to demonstrate the inequitable distribution of food resources around the world. One table is designated as “The West” (the US, Canada, and Western Europe) where everyone has more food than they need or can eat.

Other tables are “The East” where meager but sustaining food is available. Another group of tables are the “Developing World” where food is in short supply and of low quality. You might even add a famine table where there is no food at all.<sup>2</sup>

Sometimes people add to the disparity of experience by providing waiters, fancy tablecloths and dishes, and

*continued*



art by Erin Kennedy Mayer

centerpieces with candles for the wealthy “nations.” Other “nations” must use simple dishes and utensils with no table decorations, and they must serve themselves. (Some hunger-meal organizers get people to dress like beggars and haunt the wealthy tables. They also instruct the waiters to run them off angrily.)

If you have a lot of nerve, you might instruct someone from poorer “nations” to serve the wealthy “nations” and then go to their tables to eat.

For a different twist, designate people at each table as being from different areas. (This could be done by taping cards of different colors to the backs or bottoms of all the chairs. That way you could control how many “nations” are represented at each table.)

Different members of one family could end up assigned to different parts of the world. One person could be served a feast while her friend (sitting beside her) receives nothing. Then you would talk about the feelings, actions and reactions of the people at each table. Note: It is common to go ahead and serve everybody after the initial activity. But that’s up to you.

A simple exercise in service is to have each person at the meal serve the meal to someone else. Of course, that means that not only will everyone be a server but they will also be served.

After the meal, talk about how it feels to serve and be served. Can any of these things be applied to serving and being served by people who face hunger? (For instance, many people with inadequate or barely adequate food supplies work for companies who import goods to the West. Just a thought.)

One final thought. Motives count. Concern for the hungry is good. Making other people aware of hunger issues is good. Encouraging people to try to make a positive impact on hunger is good. But, as Christians and as the Church, we are called to do everything to the glory of God. If you leave God out of your plans, you’ve got a much bigger problem than what to serve for dinner.

—Kelly Owen, at this writing, was serving as a pastor in Warsaw and Paris, MO.

## Endotes

1. You may have heard of celebrities taking the “SNAP Challenge” and trying to live on a SNAP budget for a week or a month. But people don’t usually factor in the fact that they probably already have food in their pantry and the fact that they know it is only for a limited time.
2. See “Hunger in God’s World,” a hunger workshop created by Seeds of Hope, for more ideas about how to divide your “nations.”

# Poems, Quotes & Pithy Sayings

O God of abundance, you feed us every day. Rise in us now, make us into your bread, that we may share your gifts with a hungry world, and join in love with all people, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

—from the morning prayer at the St. Gregory’s food pantry in San Francisco, printed in *Take This Bread* by Sara Miles.

To leave the world a bit better, whether by a healthier child, a vegetable garden, or an improved social condition; to know that even one life has breathed easier because you have lived. This is to have succeeded.

—Ralph Waldo Emerson

It is important for people to realize that we can make progress against world hunger, that world hunger is not hopeless. The worst enemy is apathy.

—David Beckmann, president of Bread for the World

When people were hungry, Jesus didn’t say, “Now is that political, or social?” He said, “I feed you.” Because the good news to a hungry person is bread.

—Archbishop Desmond Tutu

art by Sharon R. Rollins



# The ABCs of Responding to Hunger

The many biblical mandates to care for poor and helpless people do not seem to be optional, but what can the average Christian do in the face of such overwhelming need?

**A** Anchor yourself in prayer. After you have become aware of hunger issues and the biblical call to respond to them, the first thing you should do is pray and/or meditate. Pray for hungry people and for those who labor to help them. Spend time in silence to center yourself and allow God to lead. Make sure that your personal and corporate worship times always include a remembrance of poor and hungry people. People who do not balance their ministry activities with contemplation are destined to “become weary in well doing.” (See “C” for resources that will enhance this kind of worship.)

**B** Be knowledgeable about hunger issues. Stay informed about where hunger and poverty exist and what people are doing to heal them. Find sources who can help you stay on top of hunger realities around the world. Read the newspaper; watch television news. Find a periodical that deals with hunger and justice issues. *Hunger News & Hope* (a Seeds of Hope quarterly publication) covers these issues. (Sign up for free electronic copies; email [seedseditor1@gmail.com](mailto:seedseditor1@gmail.com) and say you’d like to be on the list.) You can also find a wealth of information on the Internet. The Food Research and Action Center ([www.frac.org](http://www.frac.org)) is a good source of information about hunger in the United States.

**C** Challenge the people around you. Keep those around you—particularly your faith community—informed. Share the

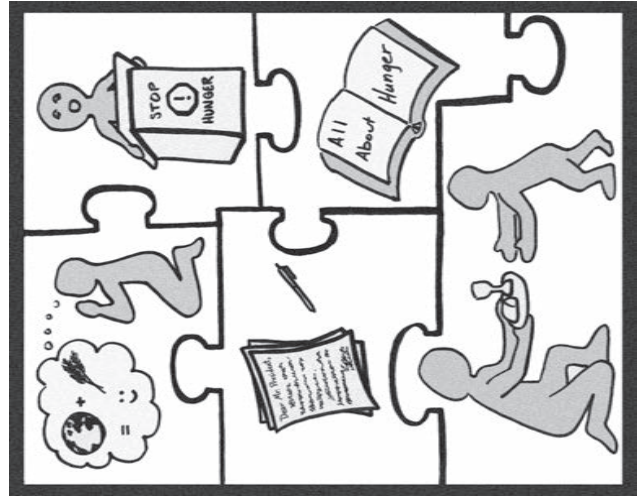
resources you found under “B” with your congregation. Get your church to subscribe to *Sacred Seasons*, the Seeds of Hope worship resource periodical—and make sure the various materials get to the persons who could use them most. Arrange for a group tour of your local shelter or soup kitchen. Invite guests to speak to your church about hunger issues.

**D** Develop an understanding of advocacy. Even though many of us abhor the idea, we must all at least be aware of public policy. Systemic injustice and destructive policies can undo in one moment all of the good work that thousands of people at soup kitchens and feeding programs have done every day for years. Christian lobby groups like Bread for the World can help you understand the political ramifications of hunger issues—in light of biblical teachings. They can also teach you to communicate effectively with your elected representatives. Go to [www.bread.org](http://www.bread.org) for more information. Ask about their Covenant Churches program and the annual Offering of Letters campaign.

**E** Explore individual service opportunities. This is absolutely crucial. We must each get involved on a personal, individual level. Check out

your local feeding programs, shelters, soup kitchens and similar organizations for the place that fits your talents and interests. Establishing and maintaining actual, personal contact with poor people is vital to our spiritual health.

Once you’ve done these five things, you’ve made a significant beginning toward a meaningful response to the presence of hunger in your world.



art by Sharon R. Rollins

**N**ote: This is a monologue, for which I suggest a voiceover. One or two mimes may be used. The woman who represents the speaker is a down-trodden, weary, cynical woman who has habitually received hard knocks from life. She represents all races of women who live their lives trapped somewhere, never leaving the place where they were born. She could be an Appalachian woman, who has had to claw a living from the land, and who is extremely independent and mistrustful of outsiders. She could be an inner city woman, living under a siege of urban terror. She is all women who have seen so much greed, indifference, and violence that they no longer believe that anyone really cares about anyone. She is wary of all strangers, and even of some people whom she knows. She especially mistrusts someone from a more affluent background.

The second mime (if you choose to use one) is this stranger from the suburbs. She has come, presumably, to minister to the cynical woman. She must find a way to penetrate the thick walls with which the latter has been encrusted. Eventually she does this by washing the feet of the astonished woman.

I would suggest that there be few props—perhaps only a bowl and towel.

# Stained Glass

## A Monologue for Mimes

by Katie Cook

**T**he Voice, caustic and jaded, begins:

And just who do you think you are? A fine lady, yes, indeed; you come here in those fine clothes and come swooshin' up in that shiny sports car—and you have the nerve to say you want to help me? Help me? You don't care about me. You want me to believe that you care what happens to me. Oh, yes, I've heard that one before. You're after my money—which I ain't got none—or you just want to put me on your list of Good Deeds. Another star for your crown.

Look at you. You don't even want to stand too close to me; you might get dirty. Yeah. A little social dirt. Well, let me tell you something, Mrs. Holier-Than-Thou, I don't want to be one of your good deeds. Do ya hear? I don't want your help. I can get by. I always have.

Go on, take one of your la-di-da ski trips. Yeah, go to that Neiman-Marcus place and buy yourself something pretty. You

look like you got the money. Do I need your money? No, nor I don't want it neither.

(louder, as second woman does not go away):

Lady, don't come botherin' me. I don't want anything you got. No, I don't want your handouts, and I don't want your God, neither. Where was God when my little Martha died? Huh? Where was God? Where was your God when my man lost his job and couldn't find no other'n? Where was God when I was scrubbin' floors to keep my children in clothes? No, and I don't want your pity worst of all!

(there is a long silence. The second woman begins preparing a bowl and towel for the washing of feet. The first woman stares.) What are you doing? What's that towel and bowl for? You wanna do what? Wash my feet? Huh? My feet? Why? But—what? Okay, I'm sittin'.

Am I gonna have to pay for this, because I ain't got no mon—I'm sittin', I'm sittin'.

(another silence. Second woman washes the feet of the first. Eventually the voice resumes in a softer tone:)

Why did you do that? You got your dress all dirty and everything. A servant? Huh? You, a servant? Did Jesus really say that? Wow.

(first woman suddenly becomes rather shy)

Hey, uh...would you like—uh, maybe a cup of coffee? I could make one in a jiffy. No, I want to. Hey, did you see this new picture of my boy? He's in the service. Yeah. Oh, no; that's my other boy. Yeah.

(pause)

Uh, huh...That's—Martha. Huh? Oh, leukemia. Yeah...Well, here's that coffee. Hope you like it strong. Oh, that's how my mama made it. I forget what you call it—dripolator, I think. It's the same one she used when I was a kid. No, sit over there; this here chair's broke.

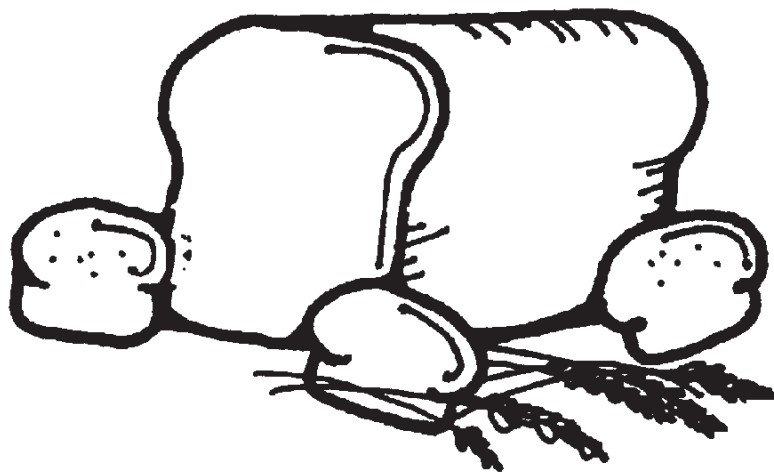
(the scene fades)

— "Stained Glass" was originally written for *The Storytellers*, a student drama group under the direction of Rev. Fern Gregory in Kansas City, Missouri.



art by Erin Kennedy Mayer

# The Bread of Life



## ...A Drama about Hunger

by John Stewart Ballenger

*Note: This play was originally presented by students at Baylor University at a hunger banquet with the audience seated at tables. Voices must follow each other smoothly—flowing—with the actors adding as much animation as possible. The feel should be reminiscent of Godspell. There are no character designations in order to accommodate however many actors are available. Lines can be combined where deemed appropriate.*

### scene i

*(Three people take their places on raised stage-freeze in a tableau: one leaning against the back wall, back to audience—head in hands—forearms against the wall, one going Down Stage Right, and one Up Stage Left. Four people are at one table next to each other, male and female in the middle. The two on the outside lean in over and on the middle two for these lines:)*

I'm starving!

when are we gonna eat?

when are we gonna get there?

there's a McDonald's, dear

over 75 billion served

served...served?

the greatest among you must become like the young, and the leader like one who serves...serves.

*(With the next lines, actors begin moving from the back of the room up towards the stage)*

a banquet was prepared

right off of the interstate

a fast food buffet

catering to every taste

with garish lights and numerous billboards

inviting all *(pause)* with money who have no excuse

McDonald's took in \$28 billion in 2013

*(one of the "children" from the table gets up to join the movement forward)*

over 100 billion served

you cannot serve God and wealth we judge this truth to be self evident the pursuit of happiness is limited to those who can afford it

*(crescendo and allegro over the next four lines)*

afford transportation

afford medical care

afford to go to college

afford their next meal

*(quietly)* have it your way—every day if you can afford it

*(the "mother" from the table gets up to join the movement forward)*

eyes bigger than your tummy?

bank account bigger than your heart?

and soul?

*(crescendo and allegro over the next four lines)*

no dessert if you don't clean your plate

no money if you

don't have a job

no banquet if you

don't have money

no food—

*(other "child" from the table gets up to join the movement forward)*

look at all that food

you wasted

look at all you

wasted

*(the "dad" from the table gets up to join the movement forward)*

think of all the

starving children

in Africa

*(all have gathered at the front, next four lines said in chorus by all with the outside people of the cluster kneeling)*

God is great

God is good

let us thank God

for our food

*(one voice, loud and clear)* my food

*(from within the cluster of folks at the front, a hidden speaker)*

woe to you who are complacent in

Zion and to you who feel secure on

Mount Samaria; remember that in your

lifetime you received your good things,

while others received bad things, but

now they are comfortable and you are

in agony!

### interlude

*(the Upper Stage left figure)* Go out quickly into the streets and alleys of the town and bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame.

Go out to the roads and country lanes and make them come in, so that my house will be full.

*(the figure leaning against the wall says:)* 87...93...98, 99, 100! coming! ready or not! I'm gonna find you! *(while the figure Down Stage Right goes down to hide behind the piano)*

*(USL figure)* Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Do you not leave the ninety-nine in

*continued*



the open country and go after the lost sheep until it is found?  
(figure) well, do you? do you really?

## scene ii

(actor who pushes way out of the pack to expound)

I quote Jane Wagner: "...what drove me crazy was my last creative consultant job with the Ritz Cracker mogul, Mr. Nabisco. It was my job to come up with snack inspirations to increase sales. I got this idea to give Cracker Consciousness to the entire planet. I said, Mr. Nabisco, sir! You could be the first to sell the concept of munching to the third world. We got an untapped market here! These countries got millions and millions of people who don't even know where their next meal is coming from. So the idea of eating between meals is something that just never occurred to 'em!"

(rest of the group mimics a drum cymbal punch line) badam ch.

(several actors disperse into the aisles in the manner of vendors hawking their wares)

popcorn!  
peanuts!

Snickers satisfy!  
get your hot dogs!  
Sun Chips—the healthy snack!  
Pizza—delivered fresh in 30 minutes or less—guaranteed  
even to turtle creatures living in the sewers  
sometimes you feel like a nut,  
sometimes you don't  
rrrruffles have rrrridges for rrrrich folks not wrrrrretches  
for those who can afford it  
the richest one billion people in the world have incomes at least 150 times greater than the poorest one billion

(from the front while someone mimes the story)

Old Mother Hubbard  
went to the cupboard  
to get her poor child a crumb  
but when she got there

(echo gets softer and softer) the cupboard was bare, the cupboard was bare, the cupboard was bare

(one of the "vendors" reaches the back and booms) son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel, prophesy and say to them, this is what the Sovereign Lord says: woe to the shepherds of Israel who only take care of themselves. Should not shepherds take care of the flock?

## interlude

(USL figure) Show us your unfailing love, O Lord, and grant us your salvation.

(the one who is "it") I see you! I see you!

(USL figure) while you are still far off, the father sees you and is filled with compassion and runs

(the figure in hiding) Yeah, but now you gotta catch me!

(USL figure) I do not understand my own actions, for I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate.

## scene iii

(children's sermon set-up, one person telling, all the others seated around facing in. all the vendors who went to the back now come to the front as children)

once upon a time, in the not so far off land of Acirema, a plague devastated the population. It swept through the mountains and valleys—over the amber plains—through the cities, from sea to shining sea. And God was most displeased. You see, this was not a mysterious plague of unknown origin; this was not a plague that could not be treated—for which there was no medicine which would lead to inevitable death. Quite to the contrary, a common well-known, easily treated problem with medicinal supplies aplenty. The city of Yenom, as a matter of fact, had enough medicine and vaccine to eradicate the disease—not only in Acirema—but wherever it cropped up. This medicine, however, was not one of those foul tasting mediciny medicines. It tasted—wonderful! like each person's favorite treat—chocolate to some, fresh fruit to others, seafood, Chinese, Italian ... Turkish Delight. And the people of

Yenom clung to what they perceived to be theirs, living their lives in abundance while all around people died.

(one of the "children" stands up facing out to the left) a person who has too little suffers

(one of the "children" stands up facing out to the right) a person who has too much causes others to suffer

(one of the "children" stands up facing straight out) when a person has the right amount, the creation is in order

(from one of the seated children, snidely) aww—let 'em eat cake

("children" pair up and play:) patty cake, patty cake  
baker's man  
bake me a cake  
as fast as you can  
roll it, pat it, mark it with a "B"  
and put it in the oven  
for baby and me

(storyteller) every fifth child in Acirema, excuse me, America, faces hunger

(chorus everyone facing out) EVERY FIFTH CHILD IN AMERICA faces hunger

(everyone joins hands and dances around) ring around the rosie  
pocket full of posy  
(they all fall down) ashes ashes, we all fall down  
ashes to ashes  
they all fall down...they all fall down  
mark them with a "B"  
everyone to whom much is given, of them much will be required

## interlude

(USL figure) since God loved us so much, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God lives in us, and God's love is made perfect in us.

(the one who's "it") gotcha! you're with me now—on my side—doing what I do—you're like me now

(USL figure) let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus

## scene iv

*(everyone has sat up)* you are all part of one body

*(one is told to lie down)* when one part starves—you all starve

One part? Every three days, hunger claims as many lives as the first atomic bomb detonated over Hiroshima

*(some more lie down)*

if the world's hungry were to line up, single file, in front of your door, the line would continue out of sight, over continent and ocean, around the globe, circling the globe twenty-five times

*(some more lie down)*

in the past five years, more people have died of hunger than were killed in all the wars, revolutions and murders of the last century. *(some more lie down)*

*(looking at those lying down)* many parts starve because they're not being fed

every sixty seconds twenty-one children and seven adults die of hunger other parts starve because they're not feeding...we're not feeding

*(those still sitting up look at each other puzzled)*

worldwide we produce enough grain for every man woman and child to have 3000 calories a day

would you like your certificate of citizenship in Yenom?

*(imperative)* ashes ashes *we all fall down* *(everyone falls down)*

living abundantly, we lose the abundant life

you must decide—some people should not be saying, give us this day our daily bread, they should be hearing, give us this day our daily bread, should be responding to, give us this day our daily bread

*(one actor begins to whistle “Have Thine Own Way Lord”)* you are all part of one body, Christ's body to be sacrificed for if we claim to be as Christ... Christian and refuse to be sacrificed we make a mockery of: nevertheless thy will be done. Can you drink of this cup?

*(actors move into the aisles for the following questions)*

give up a trip to the mall?

buy Levis instead of Guess and donate the difference?

give up a meal a week and donate what it would cost?

can you let go of some of your resources?

alter your lifestyle?

can you? can you? can you? can you? can you?

*(the actor whistling stops. pause)* will you?

*(with conviction)* you must

*(for the rest of the lines of this section the actors should all be scattered through the entire audience except those in the interlude)*

this is the body of Christ—broken are you a part of it—broken? sacrificed to the uttermost ends of the earth

take and eat

be filled by this sacrifice

be saved

that the body of Christ might be healthy to the outermost parts

## interlude

*(USL figure)* restore us, O God; let your face shine, that we may be saved *(“it”)* olly olly all come free

*(USL figure)* this is right and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour who desires everyone to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth

## scene v

Jesus loves me this I know

Jesus loves the little children

all the children of the world

red and yellow, black and white,

all are precious in God's sight

Jesus loves the little children of the world

all are precious

suffer the children to come to me

suffer the children

the children suffer

no! that's not how it's supposed to be it's how it is, though

the children suffer

15,000 die each day *(begins to mime fiddling with a calculator)*

ashes to ashes

little ones to him belong

105,000 a week

they all fall down

we all fall down

and Jesus weeps

they are weak, but he is strong

450,000 a month

God tears

they all fall down

what you do not do to the least of these you do not

you do not

5,400,000 a year

DO NOT

do to me

## interlude

*(“it”)* where are the others? where are the rest of my children?

## scene vi

*(set-up should be reminiscent of a Christmas pageant—woman kneeling, man standing next to her with his hand on her shoulder)*

for unto us a child was born

it died of malnutrition

starved to death

our future

will not be the same

*(the “angel” stands behind “Mary and Joseph” with outstretched arms)* and there was with this child a multitude of heavenly host, crying

God tears

look to the falling star

*(three people enter, single file making their way to the manger)*

we must gather our scraps of wisdom and make the most important wish we can

a wish we actively work to bring about children, you show love for others by truly helping them, and not merely by talking about it

God's wish

peace to all on earth tonight

peace not to worry about whether or

not there will be food tomorrow

let us bring our gifts to the stable—to the very least of these

## interlude

*(“it”)* what do you invest in that's more important to me than the life of one child?

## scene vii

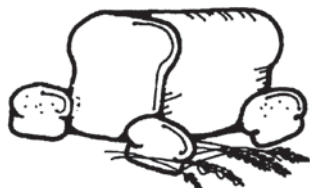
now I lay me down to sleep  
the Lord I pray my soul to keep  
and should I die before I wake...  
should I die...  
should I die?

*("it" comes down from the tableau.  
all others take their places like a Last  
Supper painting)*

I am the bread of life.  
that's Jesus Christ  
this is my body which is for you  
which is broken for you  
do this in remembrance of me.  
do what in remembrance?  
now you are the body of Christ.  
that means me.  
if one part suffers  
all parts suffer with it  
be imitators of God  
if we have died with Christ—  
died?  
if we have *died* with Christ—  
this is my body broken for you  
do *that* in remembrance? *broken* in  
remembrance?

we shall also live with him  
that means I am the bread of life  
I bring you great news of a great joy  
that shall be for all people.  
to you is born this day...a savior  
a word made flesh  
the body of Christ  
that's me—that's us  
broken  
for you  
for all  
for we so love the world that we give  
of ourselves that all might have life.  
When all had had enough to eat he said  
to his disciples, gather the pieces that  
are left over.  
let nothing be wasted.  
I tell you the truth—anyone who has  
faith in me will do what I have been  
doing. They will do even greater things  
than these—because I am going to  
God.

—John Ballenger is a pastor in  
Baltimore, MD.



# Benediction

by Katie Cook



## Go now from this place,

remembering that the God who calls us to mission  
is able to do more than we can ask or imagine.

## Go now from this place,

And may our hearts burn with love  
For hungry people around the world  
and across our cities.

As we go, may we be borne up by the joy of sharing  
and not laden with the paralysis of guilt.

As we go, let us not be daunted  
by the enormity of our task.

May the God of miracles multiply our loaves and fishes  
so that all of God's children will eat and be filled.

## Go now from this place,

And may impossible, wonderful things come to pass.

## Go now from this place,

and may God grant us the strength, wisdom and grace  
that we will need for this journey. Amen.

—Katie Cook is the editor for *Seeds of Hope*. The art on this page was  
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