

Hunger News & Hope

...a Seeds of Hope publication

The 110th Congress and the Poor

compiled by Bessie Hilliard, Katherine Ramirez, and Emily Benton

Farm Bill Passes House, Senate Still to Consider

WASHINGTON, DC—On July 27, the US House of Representatives passed, with a vote of 231-191, a \$284 billion farm bill (the Farm, Nutrition and Bioenergy Act, or HR 2419). The bill allocates more funds for conservation, food-nutrition programs, and producers of crops such as wheat, corn, and soybeans.

The bill was greeted with controversy—including a veto threat from President Bush. Detractors say the bill will be too costly. About 12 percent of the funds, or \$35 billion, is set aside for farm subsidies over the next five years—part of \$42 billion that has been allocated for potential farm assistance.

Under the new bill, recipients of farm subsidies would have a \$1 million income limit—much lower than the \$2.5 million limit established in the last US Farm bill. Farmers hoping to rely on these funds are naturally unhappy with the new amount.

The House bill includes new requirements to ensure meat, fruit, and vegetable products are labeled properly with their country of origin—as well as making sure that US-based foreign corporations are paying taxes, despite international treaties. Opponents insist that this will negatively impact world trade.

Other new additions to the bill include \$840 million for an international food aid program and \$100 million to settle claims of racial discrimination. In general, the annual increase from \$49.5 to \$56.8 billion reflects a greater focus on nutrition and conservation. The bill also provides \$4 billion over five years to improve Food Stamp Program benefits and access, and to raise funding for The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP).

At press time, the Senate Finance Committee and Senate Agriculture Committee were working on their own Farm Bill. The Finance Committee has proposed the appropriation of \$10 billion in new funding for a disaster trust fund and tax credits for preservation work. Agriculture Committee Chair Tom Harkin (D-Iowa) contends, however, this work would cost twice that much.

Analysts say the Senate bill needs to further strengthen Food Stamp benefit increases, raise Food Stamp resource limits, and restore Food Stamp eligibility to more vulnerable groups currently left out. The Food Research and Action

Center (FRAC) says Congress must pass a Farm Bill this year to ensure Food Stamp and nutrition program improvements are enacted.

Congress Rejects Immigration Bill

On June 28, Congress squelched the immigration reform bill that was before

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What One Church Can Do:

Texas Church Takes on Water Project for Uganda

by Becky King

Water...we bathe in it; we wash our cars with it; we water our yards with it; we swim in it; we cook with it; and, of course, we drink it. And, naturally, we can safely assume it is clean water we are using in each of those cases.

But what if it wasn't?

What if the only water available, and in small amounts to boot, was dirty and germ-infested? That's the situation in which many people in our global community find themselves. It's life-threatening, and it's something that members within one Waco, Texas, church had laid on their hearts to tackle as a special mission.

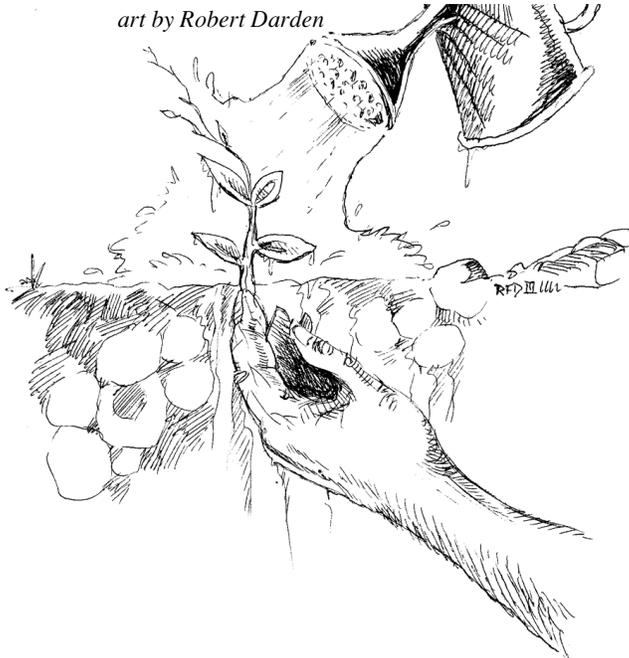
Columbus Avenue Baptist Church in Waco (CABC) has been raising many thousands of dollars over the last couple of years, to be used to drill water wells in Uganda. Clean water is not only a health problem, but also an economic and educational problem. Water-related sicknesses cause people to miss work and school.

Wells, like those to be drilled from CABC funding, will provide fresh, clean water in communities where it is desperately needed. They will be drilled on church properties within Ugandan communities and will help meet a critical physical need so that spiritual needs can also be addressed.

How did Columbus Avenue get involved in this particular mission? During a church mission trip to Uganda a couple of years ago, members were devastated by the dire need for clean water there—and by the awful results of that need. People were dying from the lack of decent drinking water.

After a report to the church member-

art by Robert Darden



ship upon their return, the congregation raised funds to drill a single well working in partnership with Hope Focus Ministries, an organization working in Uganda. That well is now serving five villages.

It is also significant to CABC members that this was a demonstration of Christian love to many hundreds of Ugandans. The folks from Waco found that, when they met with their needy brothers and sisters and listened to them and worked to meet a real need, it made a difference. It was the gospel of credibility and action. The love of Christ was visible in their deeds.

After the drilling of that first well, a committed group of CABC members felt led to continue the ministry. They began

a campaign within the church to raise \$50,000 with the hope that as many as 10 wells could be dug to help thousands more Ugandans.

Hope Focus Ministries staff helped identify where wells were critically needed. A faith-based partner was selected to do the actual drilling—Living Water International.

Organizers planned to start the wells in late July, 2007, in conjunction with another CABC mission trip to the area. Unfortunately, the drilling equipment available and the ground at the selected sites just did not mix. The ground was too rocky for the Living Water rigs. So, at this time, new plans are being made

for accomplishing the drilling in these locations where the wells are needed. Digging wells in these sites will be more expensive than anticipated, but the group from CABC is dedicated to getting the job done.

Then the righteous will answer him, "Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink?" ... The King will reply, "I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me."

—Matthew 25: 37, 40

—Becky King is a member of CABC and works as Director for Information Systems at Baylor University in Waco.

Author's note: Donations to this cause are certainly welcome and can be sent to Columbus Avenue Baptist Church, PO Box 345, Waco, TX 76703.

Please mark them as being for the Uganda Water Well Project.

For more information about Hope Focus Ministries, go to www.hopefocusministries.org. For more about Living Water, go to www.water.cc. For more about CABC, go to www.cabcwaco.org.

What's the Big Deal about Water?

compiled by Bessie Hilliard

- Across the world, water is scarce due to many different ecological issues, such as the groundwater sinking, as well as human-made reasons, such as pollution and wasting.
- One billion people do not have clean water; 2.4 billion have no sanitation.
- Water is used for transportation, harnessed for electricity, and offers hope for pollution-free energy.
- Weather and climate are centered on water in its various states such as rain, snow, clouds, and humidity.
- Water is a centralized theme that has always dominated developing communities, who base their livelihood upon both the scarcity and abundance of this resource.
- Urban populations are growing and water is being routed away from rural populations in order to satisfy the growing numbers in the cities.
- Crops suffer because water is being redirected into urban areas. This hurts the food supply and the people in the urban areas begin to suffer as well.
- Globally, water is being privatized and taken over by major corporations who are putting a price on this precious resource. This means that poor people are having a difficult time gaining access to water.
- Water is necessary for all living things. It's a human right and a public good.

—Bessie Hilliard is a former *Seeds of Hope* intern. She now works for a sustainable agriculture project in Utah.

Water Stewards: A Toolkit for Congregational Care of Local Watersheds

A Resource from the National Council of Churches

The National Council of Churches USA's (NCC) Eco-Justice Program recently released a new water stewardship resource for congregations: *Water Stewards: A Toolkit for Congregational Care of Local Watersheds*.

The resource provides theological foundations for water stewardship and an adult water curriculum for churches wishing to do further reflection and study.

"There are over 500 references to water in the Bible," said Cassandra Carmichael, director of Eco-Justice Programs at the NCC. "As Christians, we have a moral obligation to care for God's gift of water and protect our nation's waterways."

This resource is available for downloading at the NCC web site: <http://www.nccusa.org>. For more information, contact: Cassandra Carmichael, 202/481-6928, cassandra@ncccecojustice.org.

A Glass of Water

by Nadine N. Doughty

art by Peter Yuichi Clark



Thirsty, I turned the kitchen faucet on,
let the water run a bit
to cool it down.
More refreshing that way.

Taken for granted that it is
clean, fresh, and tasty,
and available,
this water awaits and fills our needs.

Easy to forget
or ignore
the fact of water's
scarcity, impurity, staleness
in some other parts of the world.

To walk a mile to fill a bucket
or boil each gallon before it can be drunk
and hike once more to sprinkle
the garden vegetables
is hard to visualize.

Surviving drought and rationing each cupful,
with frantic seeking for another source
of water just for sheer survival
is hard to visualize.

Newly aware of its value
and of our good fortune
I savor my glass of water
and drink it slowly.

—Dee Doughty, a longtime contributor to *Seeds* publications, has worked in soup kitchens and ministries for the poor in Evanston, Illinois for many years.

Global Network Takes Food Banking Around the World

by Bessie Hilliard

America's Second Harvest (ASH), the huge food-banking network, provides food for 25 million people across the US. In 2006, ASH helped launch a new anti-hunger organization, expanding the food-banking concept around the world.

The Global Food Network (GFN) was created in order to provide food the way Second Harvest has done it, on a much larger scale. They plan to assist current food banks and food bank networks, while also establishing new organizations wherever there is a need. One foundational block that they have embraced is the idea of leverage.

They work at leveraging relationships with major corporations as well as existing food networks and national governments. By helping provide financial support along with practical training needed to sustain these food banks, the GFN strives to help communities become more self-sufficient while reducing product waste.

Robert Forney, former president and CEO of America's Second Harvest, is the founder and current head of the GFN. While at ASH, he helped establish partnerships with many of the corporations that are currently financially backing the GFN—companies like Cargill, ConAgra, Kellogg, Kraft Foods, Procter & Gamble, and Sodexo.

Their contributions have enabled ASH to provide more than 34 million people with 2.8 billion pounds of food every year. But corporations are not the only support needed to create successful food banks.

Other organizations—such as Mazon: A Jewish Response to Hunger, the Alliance to End Hunger, and the US Congressional Hunger Center, just to name a few—have partnered with the

Global Food Banking Network and intend to help where they can.

The GFN wants council members and general involvement to be diverse, representing the world, not just the US. Countries originally involved with the GFN include Argentina, Canada, Mexico, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

With the help of Ricardo Bond, a produce industry specialist for HEB, approximately 63 food banks were set up in Mexico within the first few months of operation.

Organizations in Mexico and Argentina have recently received funding to launch a program called "Food for Kids." The plan for this endeavor is to increase awareness of malnourished children in both of these countries, and thus to establish local support for the program.

Food bank networks in both Canada and the UK are working hard to provide children with essential vitamins they need for healthy development. By supplying food for child-related organizations and clubs, such as after school programs, there is the availability of a nutritious snack or meal that may not have existed otherwise.

The GFN has also begun establishing food-banking networks in areas such as Colombia, Eastern Europe, Ghana, Guatemala, India, Israel, Japan, South Africa, and Turkey. In Ghana, the US Alliance to End Hunger is working with local farmers to provide food for regional schools.

Another project involves development of a new water purification system. This purifier provides clean drinking water by extracting microbial pathogens and is being tested in countries such as Guatemala, Kenya, Pakistan, and

Liberia. Also, the GFN is hoping to venture into Lithuania, Poland, Romania, and Ukraine, and has received funds to start helping the 200 million hungry people in India.

Israel is another country where the work of the GFN is helping to get food to those who need it. The poverty rate in Israel is twice as large as that of the US. Israel has one of the largest percentages of child hunger among so-called developed countries. War expenses have slowly absorbed funds that were originally allocated to fight hunger.

A ray of hope, however, has reemerged as the beginnings of an Israeli Food Bank Network are well underway with help from Mazon, as well as GFN's involvement with the Forum to Address Food Insecurity and Poverty in Israel.

According to the GFN, this network is becoming stable and has a strong foundation but requires substantial government support to flourish properly.

By developing these food bank projects, the GFN hopes to form a global continuity that will work together in the fight to end world hunger. Forney explained that one challenge is adapting ideas and methods according to each country's needs.

This means that the GFN requires not only substantial financial support, but a strong volunteer base to assist the 852 million people, or 13 percent of the world's population, classified as malnourished.

An encouraging amount of support has already materialized for the Global Food Banking Network so, hopefully, food banks will continue to multiply worldwide.

—Bessie Hilliard is a former *Seeds of Hope* intern. She now works for a sustainable agriculture project in Utah.

Simply in Season: A World Community Cookbook

reviewed by Naomi Sonne

The Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) recently released its third cookbook published by Herald Press. *Simply in Season: A World Community Cookbook* follows the tradition of *More-With-Less* and *Extending the Table*, the first two “world community cookbooks” that center on living simple-yet-contented lifestyles.

This volume focuses on electing to prepare meals that utilize fresh produce from our own backyards and community farms.

Although this is primarily a cookbook, its 352 pages contain more than recipes for tasty meals. Authors Mary Beth Lind and Cathleen Hockman-Wert avidly farm or purchase local foods themselves.

The pages of *Simply in Season* are peppered with stories of their own experiences with food, God, and God’s creation.

They and other contributors include blips of advice on gardening, meditations on Christian stewardship, and reflections on the state of the world, as both previous volumes have done.

(*More-With-Less* focuses on Christian frugality and the ways we can reduce the amount of food and resources, especially unhealthy processed items, we consume. *Extending the Table* is comprised of recipes and anecdotes from around the globe that connect people to one another and promote awareness of world hunger issues.)

Most of the recipes are selected with a supply of local produce in mind. Recipes are built on seasonality: each season is color-coded, and most of the recipes call for several items that are in season at the same time.

The recipes themselves come from a variety of individuals who contribute both

traditional family recipes and new food combinations.

In addition to the recipe section, *Simply in Season* includes a fruit and vegetable guide for beginners. The guide provides a breakdown of how to identify, store, and prepare most local produce, as well as the nutrient value of each item.

Perhaps most importantly, *Simply in Season* emphasizes the importance of supporting local economies, in order to build a more just and sustainable planet.

Family farms and CSAs (community-supported agriculture organizations) are sources of fresh, healthful foods, available in season, which reduce our environmental impact enormously.

The effects of purchasing organically-grown and fairly-traded goods are also visited, with a resource guide included for those interested in further information.

At the end of each season’s section are suggestions for meal menus and invitations to act in small but meaningful ways appropriate for each season.

MCC is an organization founded by Mennonite and Brethren in Christ churches in America and Canada. The work of MCC includes peacemaking, community development, and relief efforts. More information can be found at www.mcc.org.

This year, Herald Press printed the *Simply in Season Children’s Cookbook* by

Mark Beach and Julie Kauffman. For information about that new resource, visit www.heraldpress.com.

—Naomi Sonne is currently a senior at Eastern University (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania) studying Missions and Anthropology. She wrote this while volunteering at World Hunger Relief, Inc in Elm Mott, Texas. Her future plans include community development and missions work with a focus on sustainable agriculture.

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Lack of Security Drives Oxfam from Darfur's Largest Camp

GEREIDA, DARFUR, SUDAN—Because of security concerns, the International aid agency Oxfam decided in June to permanently phase out activities in Gereida, the largest camp in Darfur where more than 130,000 people have sought refuge from violence.

In its announcement, the agency criticized local authorities' lack of action to improve security in the area. Six months earlier, an unprecedented attack forced the evacuation of staff and suspension of humanitarian operations. Oxfam urged the international community to do more to pressure all parties to the conflict in Darfur to end attacks on civilians and aid workers.

Last December, armed men raided the compounds of Oxfam and Action Against Hunger/Action Contre La Faim. The men raped a female aid worker, savagely attacked an Oxfam staff member, and staged mock executions on other aid workers.

The men also stole 12 humanitarian vehicles, communications equipment, and money. Oxfam staff members were among 71 aid workers evacuated from the town as a result. Since then, Oxfam has maintained some basic public health services through local staff in the town, but most operations have been suspended.

While the incident in Gereida was particularly serious, targeted attacks on aid workers have now become a daily occurrence in Darfur, gravely threatening the entire humanitarian response on which 4 million people depend.

Oxfam began working in Gereida in mid-2004 as people began to seek shelter there from attacks on villages in the surrounding area. In early 2006, work increased considerably to respond to escalating violence that more than tripled the population of the camp within four months' time. Until mid-2006, Oxfam

was one of only three agencies working in the town and provided tens of thousands of new arrivals with access to clean water, sanitation, and other essential items such as blankets and shelter materials.

"The humanitarian need in Gereida remains enormous, and we have been extremely keen to return..." said Caroline Nurse, Oxfam's Sudan Program Manager.

"But the local authorities have not lived up to their responsibility to ensure our staff can work safely. Despite our repeated requests, none of the perpetrators have been held to account, none of the assets stolen in the attack have been returned, and we have not received credible assurances that similar attacks would not take place if we did return."

Gereida is under the control of the Minni Minnawi faction of the Sudan Liberation Movement (SLM), a signatory to the Darfur Peace Agreement in May 2006. Since the signing of that agreement, the situation in Darfur has deteriorated significantly.

Oxfam has reached an agreement with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) to take over maintenance

of water and sanitation services on a long-term basis.

However, Oxfam's important health-education-and-livelihoods work in the town will cease after August. This work has helped prevent the spread of disease in the vast, crowded camp and also provided opportunities for people to improve their livelihoods and reduce their dependency on aid.

"As usual in Darfur, the people who will suffer most are the civilians who have already been attacked, forced from their homes and had their lives thrown into turmoil. For the last six months they have not had the level of assistance that they need," added Nurse.

Despite the withdrawal from Gereida, Oxfam is still assisting around 400,000 people affected by the Darfur-Chad crisis. It is now looking at new areas of South Darfur state in which to extend its work.
—*from Oxfam*

Starbucks and Ethiopia Sign Agreement; Oxfam ends Campaign on Starbucks

WASHINGTON, DC—Starbucks and the country of Ethiopia, over the summer, signed a distribution, marketing, and licensing agreement that ends their trademark dispute. The action begins a partnership between the two to help Ethiopian coffee farmers.

International relief and development agency Oxfam had been working toward such an agreement, which will hopefully give farmers a fairer share of the profits for their world-renowned coffee brands, Sidamo, Harar and Yirgacheffe.

"Congratulations to our Ethiopian coffee farming partners, and to Starbucks, on an agreement that recognizes Ethiopians' right to control the use of their specialty coffee brands," said Raymond C. Offenheiser, president of Oxfam America.

"This agreement represents a business



approach in step with 21st-century standards in its concern for rights rather than charity and for greater equity in supply chains rather than short term profits.”

Nearly three years ago, Ethiopia’s coffee sector launched a plan to take better advantage of its intellectual property. The country applied for the trademark registrations of its specialty coffee brands in the United States, Canada, and other countries.

At the same time, Ethiopia began negotiating with coffee roasters to sign agreements acknowledging the right of Ethiopians to control these brands.

Oxfam began working in 2006 to raise awareness of Ethiopians’ efforts to gain control over their fine coffee brands. More than 96,000 supporters called on Starbucks— emails, faxes, phone calls, postcards, and in-store visits—to sign a licensing agreement, thus bringing global attention to the issue.

“With this agreement, Ethiopians can build the value of their coffees and farmers can capture a greater share of the retail price,” Offenheiser said. “This should help improve the lives of millions of poor farmers, allowing them to send their children to school and access healthcare.”

With the signing of the agreement, Starbucks became one of the first in the industry to join the innovative Ethiopian trademarking initiative.

“Harnessing market forces and allowing poor countries to benefit from intellectual property rights are keys to creating fairer and more equitable trade,” continued Offenheiser.

“In a modern economy, companies must bring their business models in line with the demands of good corporate citizenship, which goes beyond traditional philanthropic approaches to dealing with poverty.”

—From *Oxfam America*

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them. Opponents, outweighing supporters 53-46, maneuvered the bill from the Senate floor. Analysts say the bill has little hope of being salvaged under the current administration—even though President Bush was a supporter.

One of the bill’s most controversial aspects would provide some 12 million illegal immigrants with the opportunity to achieve citizenship. The bill also included a temporary guest-worker program and new border control measures.

Among those most disappointed with the bill’s defeat were Hispanic and church groups working diligently to gain a wide range of support. However, even among Hispanic populations, immigration issues are controversial. Questions concern seasonal field workers returning to their country after harvests are over, and the need to persuade Mexico’s government to relieve poverty in that country.

Supporters of immigration reform continue efforts to salvage parts of the bill.

First Minimum Wage Increase in 10 Years Will Come Slowly

On July 25, Congress implemented the first stage of a new Minimum Wage law passed in May, having determined a gradual increase was more feasible than one lump sum. The measure would raise the minimum wage from \$5.15 to \$7.25 in three stages over two years.

The Senate approved the increase—as part of a spending bill that includes Iraq and Afghanistan, as well as hurricane relief—two hours after the House passed it.

Most anti-poverty advocates agree that this increase, though a helpful step in the right direction, is not enough—especially considering inflation over the past 10 years. Many states already have legally mandated minimum wages that are higher than the new federal minimum wage.

About 13 million workers (10 percent of the US workforce) will receive an increase in their hourly wage if the minimum is actually raised to \$7.25 by 2009. Women make up 59 percent of workers who will gain significantly from the raise.

Bush Vetoes Children’s Health Bill

The US Congress passed a bill in October that would provide \$60 billion in health insurance over the next five years to the country’s most vulnerable children, but President George W. Bush vetoed it. This was the President’s fourth time to use his veto power.

President Bush and his supporters have argued that the bill would be a movement toward the federalization of health care, and that the program would lose sight of its central purpose of providing insurance for poor children.

The veto was met with anger from Republicans and Democrats alike. Senator Gordon Smith (R-Oregon) called Bush’s decision “an irresponsible use of the veto pen.” Senator Charles E. Grassley (R-Iowa) said that Mr. Bush’s vision for the insurance plan “won’t even cover kids on the program today, much less reach out to cover more kids.”

Senator Edward M. Kennedy (D-Massachusetts) said, “Today we learned that the same president who is willing to throw away a half trillion dollars in Iraq is unwilling to spend a small fraction of that amount to bring health care to American children.” Senator John Kerry (D-Vermont) said, “Today with a single stroke of his veto pen, President Bush single-handedly jeopardized health care for millions of poor children.”

—Sources: *Food Research and Action Center, Bread for the World, Coalition for Comprehensive Immigration Reform, New York Times, Washington Post*

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Statement of Purpose

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

Editorial Address

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quotes, poems, & pithy sayings

Make us worthy, Lord, to serve those throughout the world who live and die in poverty or hunger. Give them, through our hands, this day their daily bread; and by our understanding love, give peace and joy.

—*Mother Teresa of Calcutta*

There must be a thousand and one ways to remove poverty from the earth. We may or may not know some of those ways already. Obviously there are many more ways yet to be designed. When we shall find them, how many of them we shall find, how quickly we find them, will depend on how eager we are to find them.

—*Muhammad Yunus, founder the Grameen Bank in Bangladesh and Nobel Peace laureate*

Hunger is as much a lack of power as a lack of food. When the poor have a voice in the decisions that affect them, hunger can be eliminated.

—*Ken Regal*

Truths about society can be discovered only if one takes sides. You must stand somewhere in order to see social reality, and where you stand will determine what you see and how you see it. The poor, I suggest, see a different social world than the rich—and so do those who think, whether consciously or not, from the vantage point of the poor or the rich.

—*Michael Harrington*

I am the people, humble, hungry, mean—

Hungry yet today despite the dream.

Beaten yet today—O Pioneers!

I am the man who never got ahead,

The poorest worker bartered through the years.

—*Langston Hughes*

The test of a first-rate intelligence is the ability to hold two opposed ideas in mind at the same time and still retain the ability to function. One should, for example, be able to see that things are hopeless and yet be determined to make them better.

—*F. Scott Fitzgerald*

Compassion is not a sloppy sentimental feeling for people. It is an absolutely practical belief that regardless of a person's background, ability, or ability to pay, he should be provided with the best that society has to offer.

—*Neil Kinnock*



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Seeds of Hope Publishers also produce *Sacred Seasons*, quarterly packets of worship materials for the liturgical year—with an economic

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