

Hunger News & Hope

...a Seeds of Hope publication

A Special Worship Resource Edition **Bread for All**

There is something mystical about sitting across a table from someone. We place a great deal of meaning on the sharing of meals together. Those of us who are passionate about social justice issues find an almost cosmic meaning in the sharing of a cup of soup with a hungry person. Sure, we want to help people to clothe themselves, to find shelter, to find meaningful occupation and livelihood. We are concerned with their emotional well-being, their physical health—all of those components for a full and vibrant life.

But many of us can recall that moment in a soup kitchen line when the bells of our hearts rang out and the doors of our minds flew open—that somehow magical moment of handing a cup of steaming soup to a guest, walking with her to a table, sitting with her, even allowing her to share with us from her portion. It is the holiest of encounters, that moment when our hands touch as we steady the steaming bowl, or as we share a piece of cornbread.

“Let all who are hungry come in and eat,” says the Talmud. We are prepared as if for a momentous meal, and we set a place at the table for the stranger who may come to the door, the stranger who just might be Elijah. We extend the table and the circle of our family to include all of the human family—the Zimbabwean mother who watches helplessly as crops fail and inflation spirals ever higher, the coffee farmer in Guatemala who is forced to sell his beans at a loss, the children of the Palestinian West Bank who long for a meal eaten in peace, the man sleeping under the interstate bridge by the university, the elderly woman living alone in the old farmhouse on that distant hill. They are all our brothers and sisters, and we want to open the door to them. We want to set a place at the table for them.

This is a special issue of *Hunger News & Hope*, with resources designed for you to use with your congregation or group in a hunger emphasis. In these 12 pages, you will not find news. Instead, you’ll find ideas for activities, art, a sermon, dramatic readings, a liturgy, organizing ideas for churches, and activities for children. We hope they will be helpful to you in inspiring your faith communities to creative and meaningful responses for hungry people, near to them and around the world.—lkc



art by Sharon R. Rollins

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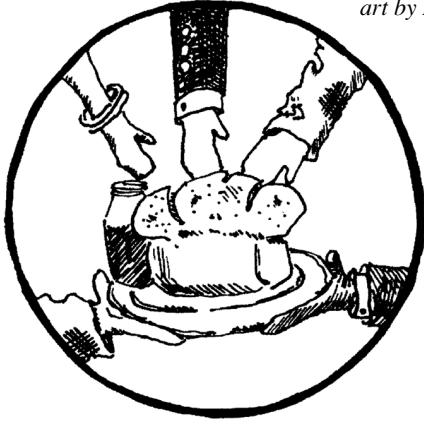
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art by Erin Kennedy Mayer



Bread for All

A Liturgy

by Katie Cook

important than personal piety.

This story is held up as an example of ideal hospitality and is contrasted with the story of Lot at Sodom. Abraham was not doing wrong by breaking off his prayers. Spirituality IS service to others, care for others. All of this was later put into law: the need of a human being is more important than your prayer or ritual. And don't give the stranger just anything; give him your best.

—adapted from observations by Rabbi Paula Reimers

Reading from the Prophets

FIRST READER: This is what the Lord says through the prophet Isaiah:

SECOND READER: What have you made of the vineyard that I planted? I had hoped for justice, but all I see is bloodshed.

THIRD READER: Woe to you who add house to house and field to field, until there is room for no one but you.

SECOND READER: The desert is full of refugees, says the Lord, people fleeing from the horrors of war.

THIRD READER: Bring water to the thirsty, says the Lord. Meet the fugitives with bread to eat.

FIRST READER: This is what the Lord says through the prophet Ezekiel:

SECOND READER: Hear me now; do not repeat the sin of your sister Sodom—the sin of inhospitality.

THIRD READER: She and her daughters had pride, excess of food, and prosperous ease, but did not help the poor. But she was not as bad as you are.

FIRST READER: This is what the Lord says through the prophet Amos:

SECOND READER: I don't want your sacrifices. I don't want your noisy songs or your solemn assemblies.

THIRD READER: You have turned justice into wormwood. You have sold the needy for a pair of shoes.

SECOND READER: At these words we cry out, "We didn't know this is what you wanted. What shall we do? What do you command of us?"

FIRST READER: This is what the Lord says through the prophets:

THIRD READER: Share your bread with the hungry. Bring to your house the poor who are cast out. Cover the naked. Take care of your families.

SECOND READER: If you do these things, you will shine like the noonday sun; you will bring the new heaven and the new earth; you will be the healers, the repairers of broken walls. You will be my people; you will be called by my name.

—from Isaiah 5:1-10; Isaiah 21:13-16; Ezekiel 16:49; Amos 2:6; Amos 5:7, 21-23; Isaiah 58:7-14

Hymn

Suggestion: "Let Justice Roll Like Flowing Streams"

Call to Worship

ONE: Time after time we come into this place,
into the house of God.

MANY: Time after time, we sing and pray and tell stories.

ONE: Time after time, we listen for a word from God.

MANY: What will we learn today?

ONE: What word of comfort and hope will we hear?

MANY: What word of indictment?

ONE: What challenge will we receive?

MANY: Today, let us open our hearts to the voice of God.

ALL: Let us hear the word for us today.

Musical Invocation

"O God of Vision"

Words: Jane Parker Huber, 1981

Music: Stralsund Gesangbuch, 1665

TUNE: Lobe Den Herren

(A Singing Faith, Westminster Press)

Reading from Hebrew Scripture

Genesis 18:1-15

Reflection on the Hebrew Scripture

Desert hospitality was a life and death matter. For these nomadic people, food and water and relief from the blazing sun were necessities to be shared. In this story, Abraham is resting at an oasis, and he sees three men, traveling alone across the scorching sand.

Rabbinic tradition says that he breaks off talking to God to see to their needs. He washes their feet. He asks Sarah to make cakes for them. He personally goes to select a calf to slaughter and gets milk for them. Then he stands under the trees and talks with them while they eat. He understands that this is more

Words: Jann Aldredge-Clanton
Music: Bohemian Brethren's *Kirchengesang*, 1566
(*Inclusive Hymns for Liberation Christians*, Eakin Press)

Gospel Reading

John 6:1-14

Epistle Reading

Hebrews 13:1-3

Anthem/Special Music

Suggestion: "Christ Among the Poor"

Music by Peter Cutts,

Words by Brian Wren

Selah Publishing Company, Pittsburgh PA, 15227

Sermon/Homily

"Storing Grain and Starving People"

by Brett Younger [see page 4]

Meditation of Confession

We have made money our god and called it the good life. We have trained our children to go for jobs that bring the quickest corporate advancements at the highest financial levels. We have taught them careerism but not ministry and wonder why ministers are going out of fashion. We fear coddling the poor with food stamps while we call tax breaks for the rich "business incentives."

We make human community the responsibility of government while homelessness, hunger, and drugs seep from the centers of our cities like poison from open sores for which we do not seek either the cause or the cure. We have created a bare and sterile world of strangers where exploitation is a necessary virtue. We have reduced life to the lowest of values so that the people who have much will not face the prospect of having less.
—Joan Chittister, *OSB*

Litany of Confession

ONE: We miss the mark so often, Lord,

Ignoring the needy who reach out to us,

MANY: Judging those who are different from us,

Asking more of others than we ourselves
are willing to give.

ONE: Open our eyes to the meaning of love.

MANY: Let our feet be quick to answer the cries
of the wounded,

ONE: Let our hands lift up the fallen,

MANY: Let our wealth bring healing to the sick.

ONE: So we shall live the meaning of love, O Christ.

ALL: Amen.

—from "Communion Prayer" by Mary Ruth Crook,

Fall Fresh on Me

Assurance of Grace

ONE: Comfort, O comfort my people, says your God. Speak

tenderly to Jerusalem and cry to her that she has served her term,
that her penalty is paid. (Isaiah 40:1-2)

MANY: Let us hear the good news: in the grace of God, in Jesus
Christ, we are forgiven.

Prayer of Gratitude

ONE: O God, as we commit ourselves to you,
Fearful and hesitant, strengthen us,

Feed us with your manna in the desert places.

Keep our eyes bright and our voices joyful

As we praise your name. Amen.

—adapted from "Prayer of Commitment"

by Mary Ruth Crook, Fall Fresh on Me

Invitation to the Table

ONE: I invite you now to the Table of the Lord. Let us now share
the bread.

MANY: This is bread that is necessary for life, bread which
comes as a gift from God, bread broken and shared to remember
Christ's body broken for us.

ONE: We have not earned this bread; it is a gift from God.

MANY: But what if we feel unworthy to receive this bread?

ONE: Hear this word, you who are created by God, everyone
here is welcome to this bread, not because of our worthiness, but
because God loves us and wants us to have it.

The Sharing of the Bread

ONE: So let us pass the baskets of bread to one another and be
filled with the bread of heaven. Let us say to each other: God
wants you to have this bread!

ONE: Now let us pass the cup, the fruit of the vine, the drink that
is poured out, to remind us of Jesus' love poured out.

MANY: May we be filled with the Holy Spirit; may we be
infused with new life; may we be inebriated with that love.

ONE: Let us say to each other: God wants you to be filled with
love.

Passing of the Peace

Benediction

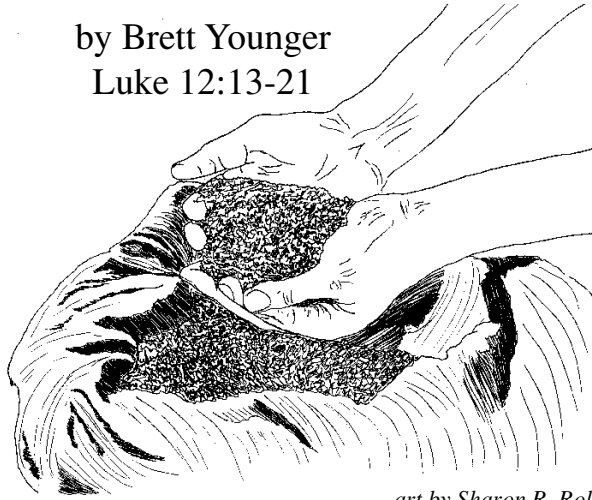
ONE: Go in peace from this place, and may all of you be
drenched with the spirit of God. And everywhere you go,
through your lives, may these things come true: no one will go
hungry; no one will shiver in the cold; and no one will cower in
fear.

—Katie Cook is the editor of the *Seeds of Hope* publications
Hunger News & Hope and *Sacred Seasons*, as well as Baptist
Peacemaker, the newspaper/journal of the Baptist Peace
Fellowship of North America. The "Invitation to the Table" and
"Sharing of the Bread" sections are adapted from the communion
liturgy of the Agape Meal, a meal for homeless people at
Broadway Baptist Church in Fort Worth, Texas.

“Storing Grain and Starving People”

A Sermon

by Brett Younger
Luke 12:13-21



art by Sharon R. Rollins

Someone in the crowd said to Jesus, “Teacher, tell my brother to divide the family inheritance with me.”

But he said to him, “Friend, who set me to be a judge or arbitrator over you?” And he said to them, “Take care! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of possessions.”

Then he told them a parable: “The land of a rich man produced abundantly. And he thought to himself, ‘What should I do, for I have no place to store my crops?’ Then he said, ‘I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry.’ But God said to him, ‘You fool! This very night your life is being demanded of you. And the things you have prepared, whose will they be?’ So it is with those who store up treasures for themselves but are not rich toward God.”

Most of Jesus’ parables leave some wiggle room: “It might mean what it says, but it could also mean...” or “While the most obvious interpretation of the story is troubling, it’s possible to read this in a less disturbing way...” The problem with the parable of the rich fool is that there isn’t any room to negotiate.

One of Mark Twain’s best known quotations is, “It’s not the parts of the Bible that I don’t understand that bother me; it’s the parts that I do understand.” This story is too easily understood. It’s about people who have food in the pantry they don’t need, clothes in their closet that they never wear, and more money

than 95 percent of the world’s money. It’s about people with IRAs, annuities, and mutual funds. I wish there was another way to read it, but this story is about you and me.

A young man pushes through the crowd toward Jesus. He walks with urgency and purpose. He’s wearing a purple linen robe. As he passes the fire, the signet ring on his right hand gleams. Everyone’s eyes follow him.

Jesus asks, “May I help you?”

“Rabbi,” the young man’s voice is as imposing as his walk, “make my brother divide the inheritance with me. I want my share.”

“You are lucky enough to have an inheritance? I have no where to lay my head.”

The young man isn’t amused: “I’m not an heir yet. My brother refuses to comply. All the rabbis since Moses have insisted that if one of the sons wants it, the inheritance must be divided. All I want is what’s rightfully mine.”

Now Jesus isn’t amused: “Friend, who made me a judge between you and your brother?”

“Rabbi, I just want what is coming to me.” His voice is as logical as a ledger: “I’m not asking for what isn’t mine. I’m not asking you to be a judge.

I just want you to tell my brother to follow the law.”

Everyone is impressed with the legitimacy of his claim—everyone except one.

The story is already on its way. Once there was a rich farmer. He was well into his middle years—not like you. He was rounded from the good life, as fat as a banquet calf—not like you.

One evening, the foreman of his farm knocked at the door: “The wheat has sprouted in a strange way, tripling what we had expected.”

The farmer said, “I have to see this.” He had a servant bring him a torch. He and the foreman went out into the fields. The blaze of the torch pushed back the darkness enough for the farmer to see that somehow the seed had multiplied.

The foreman said, “The earth is generous. You are the heir of a miracle.”

But the farmer didn’t hear him. Thinking to himself, having only himself to think to, he thought, “I need bigger barns to hold my wheat.”

The farmer commanded, “We have to build more barns to hold what’s rightfully mine.”

He hired carpenters to build special locks for the barns. When they came to his land and saw the incredible abundance of wheat, they told the farmer, “You are blessed.”

The farmer asked, “Will the locks be strong enough?”

There was no celebration on the final day of the harvest. As soon as the workers had finished, the farmer dismissed them. He wanted to secure the locks himself. When the last wooden bar slid into place, the farmer thought, “I will never be hungry.”

Jesus stares directly at the young man who thinks himself nothing like the farmer: “He never was hungry. That night he died. What will happen to all that was rightfully his? Whose inheritance will it be now?”

It seems likely that not long afterwards one of the disciples discreetly took Jesus aside and said: “You know that I’m a big fan of your parables. I think they’re great. But I hope you don’t mind if I offer just a little constructive criticism on this last one, the rich farmer who dies. You may not realize how people hear that. When you tell that story it sounds like you’re trying to make rich people feel guilty.

“People think that you’re insinuating that they’re somehow responsible for starving people. I know that money is a big issue for you, but if you want them to give, tell them it will feel good, make them happy, and contribute to their sense of fulfillment. You need to realize that when you make people feel guilty they also get angry.”

Jesus would have replied, “People who are storing grain while others starve should feel guilty until they share what they have.”

This story is so harsh. The rich man is a successful businessperson who worked hard and has been rewarded. He sets aside savings so that he can enjoy his retirement. What’s wrong with that?

Yet Jesus insists on calling the man a fool. Maybe Jesus thinks he’s a fool because only fools pretend not to see the people who need what they have. In the forty-six Greek words in this parable the farmer refers to himself—I, my, or mine—twelve times. When he realizes that he has more than enough the one thing that never enters his mind is to give some away.

It’s hard for people like us to see people who are starving. The gap between the rich and the hungry is increasing. We are in the thirty-four percent of the world’s population that uses eighty-seven percent of the world’s resources. The poorest one fifth of the world—more than a billion people—receives about one and a half percent.

The Dow Jones is at an all-time high and we’re in the group that has trouble choosing which restaurant while others starve. We count calories, because we eat too much while others don’t get enough to stay alive.

Development and aid agencies report that about 27,000 people die every day from hunger-related diseases. Famine and wars cause about 10 percent of hunger deaths, and these tend to be the ones you hear about most often.

The majority of deaths from hunger are caused by chronic malnutrition. Families facing extreme poverty are unable to get enough food to eat. Three-fourths of the deaths are children under the age of five. During this hour of worship over 800 children will die. That’s too horrible to imagine.

On the United Nations hunger website, they used to begin with a map of the world with countries lighting up one at a time—India, Mexico, China, Thailand, Russia, India again, Romania, Indonesia. When a country lit up it represented

someone in that country dying of hunger. It happened every 3.6 seconds.

They received complaints until they took the map down and replaced it with merchandise you can purchase. The map was too depressing. It was hard to watch those lights coming on and think about all that we have. Should we be spending money the way we do while children starve? The rock star Bono said, “Where you live in the world should not determine *whether* you live.” But it does.

We are appropriately appalled by violence aimed at children in schools. We should be just as angry at the violence of hunger. What’s more violent than children starving to death? What are we going to do to help?

Feeling guilty won’t do anybody any good if it leaves us feeling helpless. Thinking “that’s so sad” doesn’t help, but deciding, “I can’t let that happen to my sister, my brother” will lead us to make a difference.

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN says that the world already produces enough food to provide everyone

So what should we do? Praying honestly is a good start. “God, show me how I can help” is a prayer God always answers.

with at least 2,700 calories per person per day. We need to reduce poverty through shared economic development. We can help people in poor countries train for jobs where they can make enough money to survive. We can provide information, seeds, and tools that make farming more productive.

In John’s Gospel, Jesus says, “I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry.” Did Jesus believe that it was possible for everyone to have enough? Some scholars argue that Jesus is insisting that no one should go hungry, because his followers shouldn’t allow it to happen. We should hear the cries of the poor and not turn a deaf ear. We should share our resources and not hoard them.

We should simplify our lifestyles and not ignore the hungry. We should become advocates for the oppressed, creating a world built upon economic and social justice. Why did Jesus think his disciples would do this? Perhaps Jesus believed they would see the sacrifices he made to help others and follow suit.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer preached, “To allow the hungry person to remain hungry would be blasphemy against God and one’s neighbor, for what is nearest to God is precisely the need of one’s neighbor. It is for the love of Christ, which belongs as much to the hungry person as to myself, that I share my bread with him.”

So what should we do? Praying honestly is a good start. “God, show me how I can help” is a prayer God always answers. God will lead us to take some of the grain out of our barns and share it with people who need it. Our hunger offering won’t make a difference for everyone who is hungry, but it will make a life-saving difference for a few of God’s children.

Jesus ends his gruesome parable with the death of the farmer. Maybe he thinks that reminding us that we're going to die will push us to get on with things that matter. A grim Spanish proverb says, "There are no pockets in a shroud."

Luke doesn't tell us how the people who heard Jesus' parable responded. It's such a difficult story that we tend to assume that most people tried to explain it away or just ignored it, and that's probably true.

But it's also possible that there was in the crowd a man who had a barn filled with grain who was considering building a new barn. His accountant told him that he should look for places to put his wealth. The rich man was used to thinking only of himself, but when Jesus told this parable, he decided he didn't want Jesus' story of the rich man to be his story. He looked at his bank statement and knew that he had money he could give away and never miss it, but he wanted to give enough to miss it. He wanted to stop buying luxuries for himself and start living generously for others.

And so he did. He gave money to buy a grinder to grind meal, provide livestock, and feed homeless children. His accountant didn't like it. He assumed his rich employer was now less rich, but the rich man knew his accountant was wrong. In learning to give, he became richer than ever before.

We can imagine a better ending to the story. Imagine hungry children in Romania sitting down to a nutritious meal at the only school that will allow them to attend. Imagine the members of the Kinigi Church in the Congo sharing grain with the mothers of malnourished children. Imagine a farmer in Thailand listening to a missionary explain how these new seeds will enable the farmer to feed his family. Imagine a homeless child in Russia getting medical attention from a caring doctor. Imagine a family in Indonesia walking to church to receive the gift of a goat that will make the difference between life and death.

There are far more important questions for us to ask than "How much do we have stored away?" We need to ask: How much do we have in common with the rich fool? Will we share what we've been given? How can we miss this opportunity to help God's children?

—Brett Younger is the pastor of Broadway Baptist Church in Fort Worth, Texas.

Responding to Hunger in God's World

Seven Steps for Churches

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

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

3. Study your own community. What are the needs in your city or county? What are local churches and groups already doing? Where can your congregation's energy best add to the work being done?

(For resources on this, contact the Food Research and Action Center, 1875 Connecticut Avenue NW, Suite 540; Washington, DC 20009; 202/986-2200. They have current information about hunger and poverty in your area.)

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

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

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

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

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

art by Sharon R. Rollins

Some Facts About Hunger

- Malnutrition contributes to 53 percent of the 10.6 million deaths of children under five each year in developing countries. This amounts to one child dying every five seconds.
- Malnutrition inhibits the ability to learn. A condition of malnutrition called “wasting” affects up to 52 million pre-schoolers in developing countries. Stunting affects 160 million pre-schoolers in developing countries. In addition to this, up to 60 percent of all pre-school children in the developing world are anemic.

Inherited hunger, which causes malnourished mothers to give birth to malnourished children, is a major impediment to development. Maternal malnutrition endangers mothers and children alike:

- Every year more than 60,000 mothers worldwide die in pregnancy and childbirth as a result of iron deficiency.
- More than 20 million children are born annually with low birthweight, the result of their mothers having inadequate nutrition before and during pregnancy. Low birthweight babies are four times more likely to die in the first week of life from infections such as diarrhea.
- Low birthweight babies who survive are more likely to remain malnourished throughout childhood, and to face health and learning difficulties throughout their lives.

Vitamin and mineral deficiencies are among the leading causes of death and disability in developing countries, particularly among children. Iron deficiency is the most prevalent form of malnutrition worldwide, affecting an estimated 2 billion people. For each US\$1 spent on iron fortification of food there is a US\$84 return in increased productivity and decreased disability:

- Iron deficiency is of particular concern among women of reproductive age and children because of the severe consequences on health, productivity and learning.
- Vitamin A deficiency affects approximately 40 percent of the developing world’s pre-schoolers. Vitamin A de-

fiency is associated with blindness, susceptibility to disease, and higher mortality rates. It leads to the death of approximately one million children each year.

- Iodine deficiency is the greatest single cause of mental retardation and brain damage. Worldwide, 1.7 billion people are at risk of iodine deficiency, which can easily be prevented by adding iodine to salt.

—*From the World Food Programme of the United Nations*



Farmers in the United States

- In the United States, rural people are more likely than their urban counterparts to live in poverty.
- In 2003, 14 percent of the population, or 7.5 million people, living in rural areas were poor. This poverty rate has remained unchanged from 2001 and 2002. The poverty rate in metropolitan areas was 12 percent in 2003. —*US Department of Agriculture (USDA) 2004*
- The 2003 child poverty rate in rural areas was 20 percent, higher than the 17 percent in metro areas. —*USDA 2004*
- Poverty rates for African Americans and Native Americans are more than 10 percentage points higher in rural areas than in metro areas. —*USDA 2004*
- The poverty rate is highest in counties that are completely rural counties, with 17 percent of the population poor, compared with 12 percent of the population poor in urban counties. —*USDA 2004*
- Ninety percent of the counties where 20 percent or more of the populations have lived in poverty over the last 30 years are rural (360 counties of 400). —*USDA 2004*
- African-American farmers are the principal operators of 29,090 farms (compared to more than 2 million farms operated by white farmers). Latino farmers operate 50,592 farms. Women farmers operate nearly 238,000 farms. —*USDA 2002*

Farmers Around the World

- Nearly three-quarters of the world’s poor people live in rural areas. Most of these people depend on agriculture for their livelihood. In 2000, more than half (55 percent) of workers in developing countries labored in agriculture.
- More than two-thirds of sub-Saharan Africans were farmers or employed by farmers. —*UN Food and Agriculture Organization 2006 (FAO) 2001; UN Economic Commission for Africa 2005*
- Eighty percent of the world’s hungry people live in rural areas. Smallholder farmers comprise 50 percent; landless people account for roughly 20 percent; and livestock herders, fishers and forest-dependent people make up 10 percent. —*UN Millennium Project Hunger Task Force 2005*
- Growth in the agricultural sectors of developing countries reduces hunger more effectively than do urban and industrial growth. The countries that made progress during the 1990s toward reaching the hunger Millennium Development Goal were the ones where the agriculture sector grew. —*FAO 2005*

—*From Bread for the World’s 2007 Offering of Letters kit, “Seeds of Change,” a campaign to make the 2007 US Farm Bill more helpful for hungry people in the US and overseas. For more information or a copy of the kit, go to www.bread.org.*

Remind Us of Your Face

A Responsive Call to Awareness

by Daniel G. Bagby

LEADER: Return our minds and hearts
to gratitude, O Lord!

PEOPLE: We live comfortable lives,
enjoy many freedoms,
share abundant resources,
and struggle daily not to lead
self-centered and protected lives;

LEADER: Teach us again the truth
about ourselves:
that we were born
for more than self-entertainment,
for active, and not passive, care;

PEOPLE: Teach us, who so often
remain spectators in life,
to cast aside our carelessness
and fear of service;

LEADER: Remind us of Your face in others,
when we see the eyes of hunger,
abandon, and hopelessness;
help us to recognize Your features
in the friendless stare
of a neighbor;

PEOPLE: Open our hearts
to Your silent presence
in the want of those
who tread the city streets;

LEADER: And teach us once again
that You were not crucified
in a clean cathedral
between two candles,

PEOPLE: but on a garbage dump
between two abandoned thieves;

ALL: That we may share Your passion
for changing wretchedness
into treasured living.

—Dan Bagby is a dean and director of pastoral care studies at Baptist
Theological Seminary in Richmond, Virginia.

art by Rebecca S. Ward

How He Broke the Bread

A Dramatic

Reading for Youth

FIRST READER: Who was this man from Galilee? Was he the one? Several times people asked him that. "How do we know you're really the one?"

SECOND READER: Yes, how do we recognize him?

THIRD READER: I don't know; there was just something different about him. You knew somehow that he was set apart, and you wanted to be around him as much as you could.

FOURTH READER: There were lots of people who followed him around, listening to him and watching him, and trying to get close to him.

FIRST READER: Somebody said it was the way the dust motes danced around his feet when he walked¹

THIRD READER: Somebody said it was the way he talked, the way he touched people.

FOURTH READER: But I think it was the fact that he was so...real. He was so real that he seemed, well, it's hard to describe what I mean. So real he was, I don't know, holy or something.

SECOND READER: I think I know what you mean. Like when he went to people's houses and ate with them, and laughed and told stories. And yet they came away changed forever.

THIRD READER: Even Zacchaeus; do you remember that? That little weasel. I couldn't believe it! Jesus went to his house and had supper with him.

FOURTH READER: And then Zacchaeus gave everything away. All of that money he had hoarded all those years.

SECOND READER: A lot of people did that when they got to know Jesus.

THIRD READER: The time I remember, though, is when Jesus is sitting beside the lake late one night, making breakfast for the gang.

FIRST READER: The Light of the World getting a fire going for breakfast by sheltering a spark with a pair of cupped hands and blowing on it.²

FOURTH READER: We knew him in the everyday, ordinary—and yet somehow extraordinary, and maybe even cosmological—act of sharing food.

THIRD READER: Yes! Do you remember when Cleopas and his friend were walking to Emmaus? It was after Jesus was executed, and then there were stories about people seeing him alive. They were walking along, and this stranger showed up out of nowhere and walked with them.

SECOND READER: Yeah, can you imagine? It was their leader, and they didn't even recognize him!

FOURTH READER: Not until they talked him into staying for supper. There was something about that, the way he broke the bread.

FIRST READER: That's what they said; it was the way he broke the bread.

SECOND READER: Maybe they were onto something. Maybe that's how we recognize him.

THIRD READER: Maybe that's how we know each other. In the breaking of the bread.

FIRST READER: The sacred in the ordinary. The sharing of food.

ALL READERS: (pensively, thoughtfully) The sharing of food...

—From Sacred Seasons, *Hunger Emphasis 2002*, "In the Breaking of the Bread"

1. This is from Canadian musician/poet Bruce Cockburn's "Creation Dream," a song on the album *Dancing in the Dragon's Jaw*.

2. This is from the monograph on *Darkness in Whistling in the Dark* by Frederick Buechner.

The Rice Bag Lesson

A Hunger Awareness Activity for Children

This is an activity that will help your children to realize that many people in the world don't have enough to eat. They will also be able to share this knowledge with the adults in your congregation.

You will need enough rice to make bags of two ounces each for every family in attendance on, say, a Wednesday evening or a Sunday morning. You will also need enough plastic recloseable "baggies" for each. (The "snack" size works best.) Bring several one-fourth-cup measuring cups and several large bowls.

You will also need cards or pieces of paper printed with something like the following:

This two ounces of rice represents the daily diet of 852 million in the world. More than half of these are children. Imagine that you have this small bag of rice as your only food for the day, and that you probably have to walk a distance to get the water in which to cook it.

You might want to add something about supporting a hunger project in your church or denomination, with contact information. (If that is not applicable, you might suggest that they support one of the development projects such as Church World Service or Oxfam, or get involved in the closest CROP Walk.)

You might also consider asking the children to write notes on the cards, encouraging folks to help these hungry people. Have the cards or pieces of paper ready when the activity begins.

Empty the rice into the large bowls, separate the children into teams, and ask them to measure it into the snack bags. Ask them to put one-fourth cup (two ounces) in each bag. Once they've done that, ask them to insert a card in each bag, or attach a card to each.

While they are working (you could also do this before or after), discuss with the children about how Jesus talked a lot about giving food to hungry people. You could read the Matthew 25:31-40 passage to them if you'd like. Explain that these bags are to remind all of us of the hungry people we have been asked to help, so that none of us forgets our responsibility as Christians.

When all the bags are ready, plan a time for the children to distribute these bags to the adults. You might consider asking one of the children to explain what the project is about. The impact should be significant.

—This activity was inspired by CROP Walk materials produced by Church World Service. For more information, go to www.churchworldservice.org.



art by Peter Yuichi Clark

Just a Few Sandwiches

A Monologue for an Adult Male

by Katie Cook



art by Robert Darden

I was just going down there to pass out some sandwiches. That's how the whole thing started. I didn't really want to go, but I kept running into all these scriptures, and I kept hearing it from the pulpit, how I should somehow connect myself with the poor. Quotes from Mother Teresa saying the poor are our salvation. Tapes of Tony Campolo saying if you don't have poor people in your life, you're impoverished.

I just couldn't stand to hear all that stuff any more. I thought that, if I'd just go down there this one time, then I could say, "Okay, yes. I did it. And I was right; those people are there because they want to be. They're all lazy and they're a drain on society." I could say it because I'd seen it for myself.

So I decided to go with a group from the church. It was a Thursday evening. Thursday was the day our church sent a group. I didn't say anything in the van driving down there because I'd gotten the impression that to say anything bad about poor people was some kind of cardinal sin with this bunch. So I kept my mouth shut.

We went first to the kitchen. One of the women heated up some soup, another started making sandwiches. Some of the men were putting paper on the long tables. They told me to roll the flatware into napkins. So that's what I did. Then I helped cut a big cake that came from a grocery store. It had some kind of message on it; I guess somebody didn't pick it up or something.

After about 45 minutes, the first of Them came in. A scruffy-looking guy who looked about sixty years old. I asked one of the women if she knew him, and she said he was more like thirty. "They age fast out there," she said, and went on making sandwiches.

"What's his problem?" I said.

"He's mentally retarded. It's hard for him to hold a job."

"He looks normal to me," I said.

"Uh, huh," she said, and went on making sandwiches.

Several others came in: a man who kept a running argument with himself, a woman with a bunch of stuff in a shopping cart who wouldn't let the cart get more than three feet from her, another older man with an incredibly long beard and a face that looked like it had seen everything. All of them had on too many clothes for that warm evening. It looked like they were wearing three or four layers.

I asked the sandwich woman about that. "I don't know," she said. "I've always thought that it was psychological. Like insulation from the world. But it's probably because they have no place to keep their clothes. So they wear all of them."

"Well, I think it's weird," I said.

"Mm, hmm," she said, and moved the sandwich tray over to the serving line.

I was stationed to hand out cake, so it was a little while before my serving job actually began. So I watched as the line grew longer and people got their food and sat down to eat. The sandwich woman got a cup of coffee and sat down next to an African-American man. I watched them talk. She looked him in the eye—something I hadn't tried yet. And he smiled at her, an indulgent sort of smile. "Odd," I thought.

Then I noticed how many children there were. Mothers with two and three small children. Lots of them. "The average age of homeless people in this country is seven," another server told me.

Seven!

One of the children came to ask for cake. I put a piece on a small paper plate for him, and tried looking him in the eye. He smiled at me, showing several front teeth missing. That was when something started happening inside me.

"You're new," one of the scruffy God-knows-how-old guys said, holding out a paper plate.

"Yes, I am," I said, trying the look-them-in-the-eye experiment again.

"This is nice of you. I'll bet you have a job that keeps you working all the time."

"Well, yes, I do..."

"I'll bet you're tired."

"Well, yes..."

"Well, thanks," he said, and walked off.

A woman in the corner started quoting a prayer that sounded familiar. Another woman was crooning what sounded like a hymn. One of the volunteers sat down with her and they started

humming together. Everybody smiled. “How can these people keep their faith in God when they have nothing?” I thought.

We finished serving, so I thought I’d try the get-some-coffee-and-sit-down-with-one-of-them experiment. The sandwich woman (I finally sneaked around and found out that her name was Ruth and that she worked here all the time) really seemed to enjoy it. I sat close to her so I could hear what she said and maybe pick up some pointers.

“You took him in off the street?” she was saying. “Joanie, you don’t have enough food for yourself and your family! Is he going to help with the rent?”

“With what? He’s got no money.”

“Is he a relative?” I was horrified to hear myself asking.

“Oh, no. But my boy knew him in school. It’s just for a while. He didn’t have any place to go. I don’t think he’s strong enough for the street.”

“What does Billy think?” Ruth said. Billy, I found out, was Joanie’s husband.

“He agrees with me,” Joanie said.

“Please be careful that you don’t get burned. You’re just a paycheck away from the streets yourself.”

“I know. We’ll be okay. I couldn’t just turn him away. I couldn’t. He’s the same age as my boy.”

“What is that? Twenty-four?”

“Sixteen.”

“Oh.”

Then Joanie patted Ruth on the shoulder, as if to assure her that all was well, said goodbye to me, and left with an older man, two teenagers, and a small child.

“She works?” I said.

“Not for much,” she said. “She cleans rooms in a motel for 30 hours a week. God knows what she gets for it. Billy got hurt in a roofing accident. He tries to find day work, but he’s not as strong as he used to be, so they usually pass him over. They come for a meal now and then when they run out of food.”

“What about those able-bodied boys?” I said.

“Johnny works evenings and weekends as a busboy. Most of his pay goes toward the medical bills that piled up when his dad got hurt. I don’t know about this other boy. I worry. She does this kind of thing. She’s got nothing, NOTHING, and she takes people in.” She shook her head.

“What about the child?” I said.

“Belongs to her niece. She’s in jail.”

I shook my head. “Drugs?”

“I don’t know,” she said. “Probably.”

A teenager who looked like a punk rocker sat down where Joanie had sat. “Did you get something to eat?” Ruth said.

“I thought it might be too late,” the boy said.

“I’ll bet there’s something left,” Ruth said.

I got up to go to the kitchen. I found a sandwich and some chips and fruit juice. “Hey, thanks, man,” the kid said.

I drew Ruth aside. “Why is he here? Does he live on the streets?”

“Ask him,” she said.

I took a deep breath, tried not to look at the red spiked hair or the tattoos, and said, “Do you have someplace to go?”

“I’m stayin’ at the shelter tonight,” he said.

“Why don’t you have a home?” I said, and immediately I wished I hadn’t said it.

“My old man beats the crap out of me. I finally decided to ditch that dump,” he said.

“Do you have a job?”

“Well, I’ve been lookin’ for one.”

I took another deep breath and said, “Did you know that the way you’re dressed might affect whether you get a job or not?”

He looked me straight in the eye and said, “Do you really care?”

I suddenly, to my utter amazement, realized that I DID care. “Look, man. I’ll try to help you find a job, if you’ll let me coach you a little.”

“For real?” His steely blue gaze was fixed on me with hope mixed with disbelief.

“For real.”

Great merciful heavens,” I thought to myself, “What am I doing?” Then we proceeded to make plans for him to come to the church, where I would meet him and go over some plans.

“Hey, have you eaten?” he said.

“No...” I said.

“Are you hungry?”

“Well...”

“Have half of my sandwich.” And he began to cut his sandwich in half. He handed me one of the halves.

“Oh, no, I couldn’t do that,” I said.

“Really, I want you to have it,” he said.

“Oh...”

“Really.”

So I took it, and ate it, and washed it down with the rest of my coffee. And I looked at this boy who looked to me like the Number One Menace to Society. Then he handed me a potato chip.

“Well, you and Tony really hit it off,” Ruth said, as the volunteers were preparing to leave for the church. “That’s the first time I’ve seen him actually talking to anybody—especially an adult male. You must have a knack for this.”

A knack, indeed.

I went back the next week, and the next, and I helped Tony get a job (it wasn’t easy, but it turned out all right, if I do say so), and I scolded Joanie for giving away what little she had, and I passed out cake to the many beautiful children who came in. That was a year ago. Thursday is my favorite day of the week now.

They come in and pat me on the back and call me “Wall Street Man.” I really don’t know why. But I love it.

I love that place.

And I only went down there to pass out some sandwiches.
—Katie Cook is the *Seeds of Hope* editor.

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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.

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Quotes, Poems, & Pithy Sayings

Without love, the outward work is of no value; but whatever is done out of love, be it ever so little, is wholly fruitful. For God regards the greatness of love that prompts a man, rather than the greatness of achievement.

—*Thomas a Kempis*

People seem to be surprised and appalled by violence among children in the US. Children in Mexico are not shooting each other in schools in Mexico. But children are starving to death. That is very violent. Children can't study because they have had no food. That is also very violent. If you are going to abhor violence, you must also abhor this.

—*Ramona Shawver, missionary to Mexico*

However much concerned I was at the problem of misery in the world, I never let myself get lost in brooding over it; I always held firmly to the thought that each one of us can do a little to bring some portion of it to an end. Thus I came gradually to rest content in the knowledge that there is only one thing we can understand about the problem, and that is that each of us has to go his or her own way, but as one who means to help to bring about deliverance.

—*Albert Schweitzer*

When bread is broken, Jesus is known in the hands that break the bread. He is known in the hungry who take the bread. He is known in the bread that is broken and taken.

—*Clyde Tilley, "Knowing Jesus in the Breaking of Bread"*

Jesus said, "The next time you put on a dinner, don't just invite your friends and family and rich neighbors, the kind of people who will return the favor. Invite some people who never get invited out, the misfits from the wrong side of the tracks. You'll be—and experience—a blessing. They won't be able to return the favor, but the favor will be returned—oh, how it will be returned!—at the resurrection of God's people.

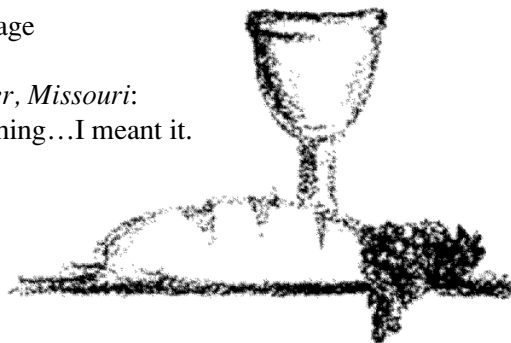
—*Luke 14:12-14,*

Eugene Peterson, The Message

Seen on a billboard in Dexter, Missouri:

That 'Love Thy Neighbor' thing...I meant it.

—*God.*



art by Rebecca S. Ward

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Seeds of Hope Publishers also produce quarterly packets of worship materials for the liturgical year—with an economic justice attitude. These include litanies, sermons, children's and

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