

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.

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The original concept came from comments made by Rev. Jim Lawson.

Art is by Rebecca S. Ward.

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