

# table talk



creating  
abundance  
in the midst  
of want

creative resources for your church's hunger emphasis 2008

Sacred Seasons, a quarterly series of worship packets with a peace and justice emphasis,  
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# Sacred Seasons:



## Creative Worship Tools for Your Church

These unique worship resource packets are available for the liturgical year, four packets a year for \$150 (\$165 for non-US subscriptions), one packet for \$60 (\$75 outside of the US).

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

### Editorial Address

Seeds of Hope is housed by the community of faith at Seventh and James Baptist Church. The mailing address is 602 James; Waco, Texas 76706; Phone: 254/755-7745; Fax: 254/753-1909; E-mail: [seedseditor@clearwire.net](mailto:seedseditor@clearwire.net).  
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# table talk:

## creating abundance in the midst of want

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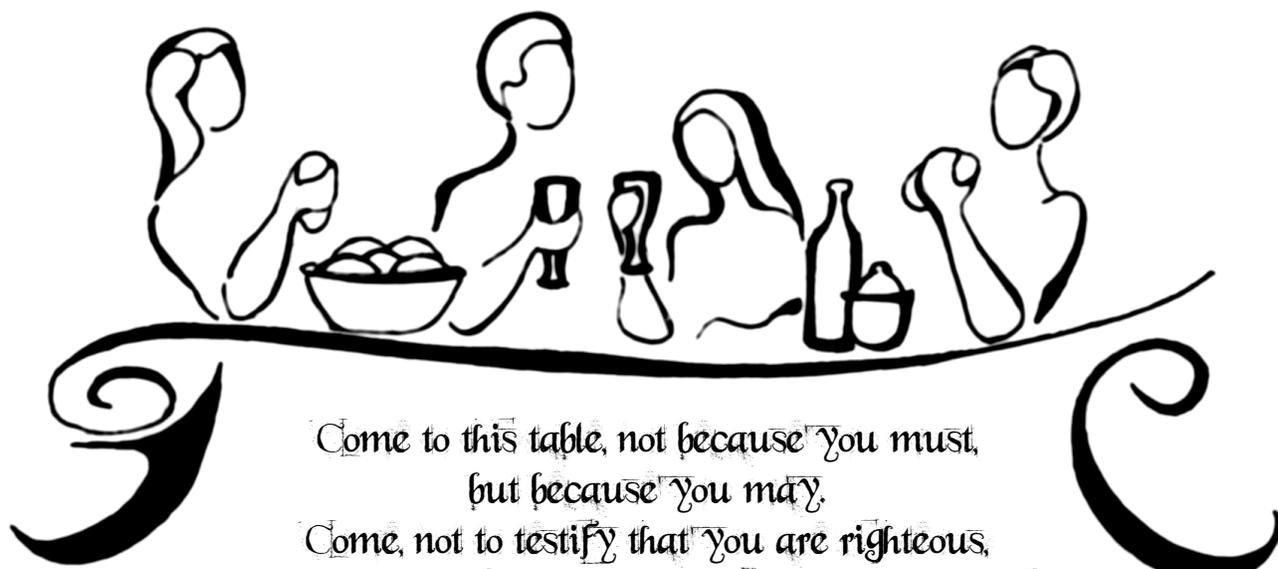


## a word about this packet

The cover art for this packet was created by Sallylynn Askins, who is now President of the Seeds Council of Stewards. The packet was designed to help us respond to the global food crisis that has been growing since the beginning of the year. Hunger activists and advocates, along with relief and development workers both in the US and abroad, are alarmed by the increase in food insecurity. We have tried to pull together worship resources and information to help you lead your congregation in responding to this crisis with hope and creativity.

As always, the material in this packet is your congregation's to use freely. May we together find ways to bring about abundance for all of God's people.

Gratefully, *The Staff and Council of Stewards*



Come to this table, not because You must,  
but because You may.  
Come, not to testify that You are righteous,  
but that You sincerely love our Lord Jesus Christ,  
and desire to be his true disciples.  
Come, not because You are strong,  
but because You are weak;  
not because You have any claim on heaven's rewards,  
but because in Your frailty and sin  
You are in constant need of heaven's mercy and help.  
Come, not because You are fulfilled,  
but because in Your emptiness  
You stand in need of God's grace and assurance.  
Come, not to express an opinion,  
but to seek a presence and to pray for a spirit.  
Come, sisters and brothers,  
to this table to partake and share.  
It is spread for You and me  
that we may again know that  
God has come to us,  
shared our common lot,  
and invited us to join the people of God's reign.

—John S. Ballenger

*art by Sallylynn Askins*

# table talk

## a theme interpretation

by Charley Garrison

Table talk, for me, doesn't always occur at the table. Within the Bible it has taken place in such varied places as in a garden, in a field and on the beach. So, although the "table setting" may vary, one thing is constant: table talk always takes place over food.

What is it about the sharing of a meal that allows us to get to the heart of the matter? What is it about eating food with someone else that allows us to be

What is it about the sharing of a meal that allows us to get to the heart of the matter?  
What is it about eating food with someone else that allows us to be authentic?

authentic? Why is the breaking of bread a conduit for the expression of the important things in life? I don't know. And maybe it's a mystery that I don't need to understand, but rather, feel satisfied simply in the experience.

The first table talk that is recorded in the Bible took place in a garden between the serpent and Eve (Genesis 3:1-3). And interestingly, it was a discussion over the meaning of God's words: theology.

It happens all the time—whether it takes place between two friends at the local IHOP or between Jesus and some Pharisees in a grain field (Matthew 12:1-7). Theology just seems to be a natural dinner topic.

But the table (or any meal setting) is also an ideal environment for expressions of love:

- **Eros love:** "At mealtime Boaz said to her, 'Come here, and eat some of this bread, and dip your morsel in the sour wine.' So she sat beside the reapers, and he heaped up for

her some parched grain. She ate until she was satisfied, and she had some left over." (Ruth 2:14)

- **Filial love:** "I have compassion for the crowd, because they have been with me now for three days and have nothing to eat." (Mark 8:2)

- **Agape love:** "When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, 'Simon, son of John, do you love me?'" (John 21:15a, 18)

Sometimes it's at the table that we receive encouragement and advice about the journey that lies before us:

"Suddenly an angel touched [Elijah] and said to him, 'Get up and eat.' He looked, and there at his head was a cake baked on hot stones, and a jar of water. He ate and drank, and lay down again. The angel of the Lord came a second time, touched him, and said, 'Get up and eat, otherwise the journey will be too much for you.'" (1 Kings 19:5-8)

But some of the best table talk is that which involves memories. For the disciples who lived in Emmaus, Jesus' post-resurrection breaking of bread and giving thanks brought back a rush of memories that enabled them to see clearly who it really was they were sharing the meal with.

"When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him." (Luke 24:30-31)

Table talk is not casual conversation. It may sound casual to an outside observer, but it's more than just a filler of the vacuum of silence between the appetizers and the main course. It is an expression about the important things in life: theology, love, encouragement and memories.

—Charley Garrison is a pastor in Waco, Texas, and a frequent contributor to *Sacred Seasons*.

# the worship of God in a time of want

a liturgy by Katie Cook

## Processional Hymn

"Praise God for the Harvest"

Words: Brian Wren, 1978

Music: Cyril V. Taylor, b. 1907, MINIVER

*Hope Publishing Company*

## Call to Worship

LEADER: Come now, O Israel, come into the presence of the Lord. What does the Lord your God require of you?

PEOPLE: Only to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all God's ways, to love God,

LEADER: to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul,

PEOPLE: and to keep the commandments of the Lord your God.

LEADER: Heaven and the heaven of heavens belong to the Lord your God, and the earth with all that is in it,

PEOPLE: yet God's heart is set in love on you and your ancestors.

LEADER: This is what the Lord says, "Bring my laws into your heart, and do not be stubborn any longer." For the Lord your God is a God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome.

PEOPLE: God is not partial and takes no bribe,

LEADER: God executes justice for the orphan and the widow.

PEOPLE: As God loves the strangers, providing them food and clothing, you shall also love the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt.

LEADER: And what does the Lord require of us?

PEOPLE: To love the Lord our God with all our hearts and minds and souls, and our neighbors as ourselves.

— Adapted from Deuteronomy 10:12-19;

Luke 10:26-27

## Reading from the Prophets

Isaiah 1:12-17

## The Confession

What more can we say, God, that you don't already know? You long for justice for all people, but it is washed away by the flood of violence in our world. You hope that righteousness will walk with us, but you hear the clear cries of those we mistreat. You ask us to speak up for those in need, but we shut our mouths and turn away. Forgive us, God. Have mercy on us.

— Sharlande Sledge

## Litany of Confession

LEADER: The responsibilities of faith and love at times disturb our easy peace. We ask forgiveness from the Lord that we have not allowed ourselves to be disturbed. Lord, have mercy.

PEOPLE: Christ have mercy.

LEADER: "Do not disturb," we say, and we close our eyes to the needs of our neighbor. Lord, have mercy.

PEOPLE: Christ have mercy

LEADER: "Do not disturb," we say, and we tolerate injustice and discrimination.

Lord, have mercy.

PEOPLE: Christ have mercy.

LEADER: Have mercy on us, Lord, and forgive our complacency.

ALL: Light in us the fire of your Spirit.

— Sharlande Sledge

## Hymn of Confession

"I Hunger and I Thirst"

Words: John S. B. Monsell

Music: Bertram Louard Selby, 1904, ECCLES

(Hymns Ancient and Modern)

## The Word of Hope

Beloved, I don't believe I preach the best without knowing the worst, that's all I mean. I know it, beloved—a flop of a son, comedian of a priest. But the worst isn't the last thing about the world. It's the next to the last thing. The last thing is the best. It's the power from on high that comes down into the world, that wells up from the rock-bottom worst of the world like a hidden spring. Can you believe it? The last, best thing is the laughing deep in the hearts of the saints, sometimes our hearts even. Yes. You are terribly loved and forgiven. Yes. You are healed. All is well.

—Frederick Buechner, *The Final Beast*

## Reading from the Epistles

Romans 12:9-21

## Readings from the Gospel of Luke

1. What to do when you are invited to a feast:  
Luke 14:7-11
2. Whom to invite to your feast:  
Luke 14:12-14
3. What to do when your guests don't respond:  
Luke 14:15-24
4. The people with whom Jesus ate:  
Luke 15:1-2

## Hymn or Anthem

"The Lord Hears the Cry of the Poor"  
Words: John Foley, S.J., 1978, rev. 1990  
Music: John Foley, S.J., 1978,  
THE CRY OF THE POOR

## Sermon

"Reverberations from a Meal"  
by John S. Ballenger  
page 7-10.

## Invitation to the Table

See "Communion Words" by John Ballenger  
on page 10.

## Hymn for the Table

"My Life Flows on in Endless Song"  
Words: Traditional  
Music: Traditional, arr. Ed Gutfreund,  
ENDLESS SONG  
*North American Liturgy Resources*

## Benediction

See the benediction by Sara Miles  
on page 20.

## The Next New Thing

The food pantry has always been communion:  
a Great Thanksgiving for a great love.

It's embodied the glorious, disturbing reality  
at the very center of our church:  
Jesus' Table, where all are welcomed  
without exception.

If we stand together at that Table  
and receive the next new thing  
God is making for us and through us,  
what will happen?

—Sara Miles, in her book

*Take This Bread*, relates how she  
and others founded a food pantry  
in her San Francisco church,  
literally distributing food  
from the altar table.



# reverberations from a meal

a sermon by John S. Ballenger

Text: Matthew 14:13-21

This story in today's Gospel text—as familiar as it is—really gets my head to spinning. There are some rather profound affirmations of beauty and value on the other side of the spinning, but it *is* a trek! So I invite you to do whatever it is you have to do to hang with the unfolding of this story. Don't let it go—wrestle with it, stay with it.

Some stories we hear are carefully shaped to contain echoes. There's a resonance to them—a largeness to associations with particular words, settings, happenings—a vastness far beyond the length of any one story, an intentionally created vastness within which significant stories of the past can resound.

And so it is with this passage. Within reverberations, we hear of times *other* than the time of our story—we hear of settings *other* than the setting of our story. And in what we *do* hear, there is more.

Right from the beginning, the verb “to hear” strikes a chord—as the beginning of *our* story echoes the beginning of the preceding story—Matthew 14:1-12. *Our* story begins with *Jesus hearing* about particular current events (the death of John the Baptist). The preceding story began with *Herod*

*hearing* about particular current events (the ministry of Jesus).

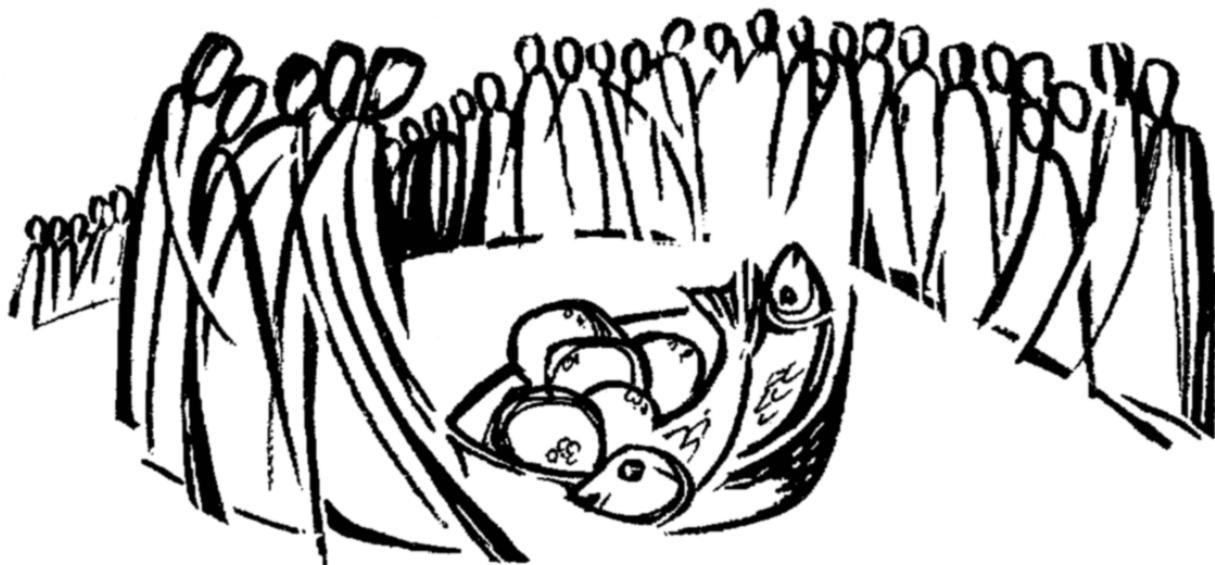
The juxtaposition here becomes a little clearer when we remember that Herod brought about John's death. Herod heard about what Jesus was doing; Jesus heard about what Herod had done.<sup>1</sup>

Both stories begin with a threat represented by someone not actually present. Our story actually begins with what Herod did. Herod's story actually begins with what Jesus was doing.

Herod had not directly threatened Jesus, and Jesus was not directly threatening Herod, but Herod did represent the same threat to Jesus he represented to John—death in the prioritizing of power.

Jesus did represent the same threat to Herod John did—the complete and utter undermining of Herod's authority and power in the prioritizing of God.

We notice, almost in passing, that in the fullness of time, each threat is or will be realized. Jesus will meet death at the hands of those who choose to believe in violence and power. And all who choose to believe in violence and power—well, their power will be undermined by those who choose to believe in God.



art courtesy of Hermanoleon of the Franciscans Cruz Blanca

But that's in the fullness of time. For now, both stories begin the same way (with a threat), but each story is distinctively shaped by the different ways in which first Herod and then Jesus choose to respond to being threatened. Confused? Hang on!

When Jesus heard about John the Baptist's death—what Herod had done—he withdrew. When Herod heard about what Jesus was doing, he thought Jesus was John the Baptist returned from the dead (Matthew 14:1-2).

That's rich. Herod thought Jesus was John the Baptist, so he *thought* he was hearing about John the Baptist; Jesus *was* hearing about John the Baptist. One story begins with a false presumption that then turns out to be true for the next story.

If you really want your head spinning, consider that Herod hears about Jesus, thinking he's John, and presumes the un-presumable (that John was raised from the dead), which will, in fact, turn out to be true for Jesus.

As if all that weren't complicated enough, Herod's response to hearing about Jesus keys the beginning of another story—an earlier story (Matthew 14:3-4). What Herod was hearing back then was John the Baptist's prophetic denouncement of his marriage to his own brother's wife.

In response to this threat to his authority, Herod threw John in jail, where he was, then, conveniently available when Salome danced at Herod's birthday banquet. And it was surely not reluctantly that Herod had John beheaded.

So Herod's response to a threat to his authority in the past had been violence, and it is that violence that leads to his fearful response in the story we look at today—his irrational fear that John had risen from the dead.

If we stop to think about it, this calls into question Herod's own reliance on violence. He himself does not believe that it can deal conclusively with this threat to his authority.

We noted Herod's violent response to John led to fear (that John had returned from the dead)—which, in turn, leads to the prospect of more violence (the threat to Jesus). Remember *Jesus'* response? Jesus withdrew. Matthew uses the verb "to withdraw" three times in his gospel.

My old professor, Eugene Boring, writes that it's used almost exclusively for Jesus' response to threats. Jesus is threatened, and he withdraws.

Boring says, "It is not out of cowardice, self-preservation, or strategy that he withdraws, but a representation of Jesus' alternate vision of kingship, which is non-violent and non-retaliatory...."<sup>2</sup>

Our story begins first connecting two stories, then contrasting two very different responses—two alternate responses, opposite responses, to circumstance and adversity. Herod's response to a

Current events—be they heard or seen or otherwise noticed—always represent a threat, because every situation offers the option of following the way of Jesus or choosing not to.

threat is violent and retaliatory—Jesus' response is nonviolent and non-retaliatory.

We might note that Herod's violent, retaliatory response to John traps him. He's never able to leave the violence, he's locked into the past—not open to the present. He doesn't even know what the present is. He's afraid of the future. Jesus, never having resorted to violence, is free to live fully in the present and embrace the future.

Jesus withdraws to a deserted place, a desert place, a wilderness place. And there's another echo, reaching much further back into the past to a much more ancient story—an echo of the wandering of the children of Israel in the wilderness.

In this echo, we're reminded of the wilderness as a place of testing, a place where people must rely on the leadership and the sustenance of God—and nothing else.

Dr. Boring notes that Jesus withdraws to the other side of the lake, where Herod has no authority. It's another echo of the old, old story—escaping authority by crossing water. Jesus here crossing the lake; the children of Israel then crossing the Red Sea—leaving behind the authority of those who rule by fear and might.<sup>3</sup>

Then, in the telling of the story, the *crowds hear* about particular current events (Jesus' departure).

They perceive in Jesus' departure a threat to themselves—the poor and needy, the weak and wounded, the sick and sore.<sup>4</sup> Who else but Jesus can meet their needs, and what will happen to them if he leaves?

And they choose to respond to this threat by following Jesus—so that Jesus, coming ashore on the other side, *sees* them. And he sees—in the weary, the heaven-laden, the lost<sup>5</sup>—a threat to his plans. Remember, he *withdrew* to a *deserted* place *by himself*. And yet, he is moved and “ready stands to save [them], full of pity, love and power.”<sup>6</sup>

Current events—be they heard or seen or otherwise noticed—always represent a threat, because every situation offers the option of following the way of Jesus or choosing not to.

It gets to be late. The disciples are concerned. “Jesus, it’s getting late. Time for a break. Send the crowds away. Send them back to that little village we passed through on the way in. Tell them to go get something to eat at that bakery.”

“You feed them,” comes the response from Jesus. (The *you* is emphasized in the Greek).<sup>7</sup>

“Well, all we’ve got, Jesus, is some bread and fish.” They can see only the limitations of the provisions they have. From a mundane perspective, their hesitations are understandable; but from the point of view of the narrative, the disciples are ignoring the possibilities inherent in Jesus’ presence with them.<sup>8</sup> They’ve seen Jesus transform person after person, situation after situation.

“All we’ve got is some bread and fish.”

“Well bring me that.” And, taking what the disciples brought him, Jesus fed the whole crowd.

**W**ithin the echoes of the children of Israel wandering in the wilderness, we hear a more explicit echo of God feeding them in the wilderness. The echoes are quite loud at this point. The exodus story resounds throughout Scripture, and our story this morning takes its place among the many echoes—with all the Psalms and with all the hymns that remember and give praise to God for leadership and sustenance.

But as we get to the end of our story this morning, some of our echoes seem to be going out of tune again. The echoes of the past—the Psalms, the hymns and the ancient story being echoed—all stress a total reliance on God. *Total* reliance on God. The bread comes from heaven. Jesus relied on what the disciples brought him.

And now the echoes seem to gravitate to another story. The echoes that don’t fit the Exodus do fit one of the great stories of Elisha (2 Kings 4:42-44)—a story in which Elisha asked for a loaf of bread to feed one hundred men, a story in which a servant expressed doubts about that being enough, a story

Students of worship have noted that four verbs, four liturgical actions, have been a part of the holy meal ever since the beginning of Christian worship: taking bread, blessing bread, breaking bread, and giving bread.

in which there were leftovers. (Remember, in the wilderness, there were never leftovers; the bread wouldn’t keep.) Strange echoes—bouncing from one story to another.

Now that we’ve finished our story, we notice that, within the New Testament framework—within the Gospel tradition—the Gospel of Mark echoes the story in the Gospel of Matthew. The traditional assumption in New Testament scholarship is that Mark is the earliest of the gospels—that the writer of Matthew used Mark as a source. So it’s always interesting to notice changes made in the transmission of a story.

In Mark’s version of this story, 5,000 men were fed (Mark 6:44), and Mark uses a term that literally means “males.”<sup>9</sup> While the word could be understood inclusively, Matthew chooses to hear just “males” and chooses to add women and children.

More than five 5,000 were fed. Is it sensitivity to the excluded that motivates him? Or the common desire of preachers to add as many numbers together as possible? (!) And whatever Matthew did or didn’t intend, doesn’t the inclusion of the excluded constitute a deeper truth included in the story?

Dr. Boring says that students of worship “have noted that four verbs, four liturgical actions, have been a part of the holy meal ever since the beginning

of Christian worship: *taking bread, blessing bread, breaking bread and giving bread...*"<sup>10</sup>

More echoes—now beyond the text, in the faithful living of the text, echoing with all the communions celebrated in the past—with all the communions yet to be celebrated in the future.

And echoing into the future, our story also echoes to the anticipated messianic banquet when God will gather all creation to the table in a festive celebration of the love that makes of any threat the possibility of redemptive transformation.

By the time we sort through all the echoes, our story recalls the preceding story in the gospel, stories of long ago, the same story in the other gospels, the sacramental acts of the church and the redemption of history in the fullness of time.

Our story recalls story after story in echoes, distinguishing itself from each of them in discord, but, as we have moved through the story, what we've discovered is that the *cacophony* has disappeared.

We started, you remember, with echoes that turned out to be competing—the echoes of Herod and the echoes of Jesus. The way of violence and power competing with the way of Jesus.

As the story has progressed, the way of Herod has been silenced, as story after story has chimed in, in support of the way of Jesus. Sure, there have been differences in the stories, that slight discord, but the discordant details fall away. And what we end up with is not so much an echo as a clear bell-like tone that is the consistent affirmation that God meets our needs.

So hear now the good news: in the fullness of time, the absolute contrast to the way of Jesus will be silenced, and the different details of all our various stories will resolve into one ringing affirmation—that God is faithful, always has been, and always will be. Thanks be to God.

## Communion Words

If you include communion in your service, you might include these words as you distribute the elements:

We now partake of bread and the fruit of the vine. If we listen carefully, these elements echo—resounding a meal shared long ago, reverberating 2,000 years of meals shared in communities of faith around the world, anticipating the fullness of the

banquet to come. And, in what we do here, there is more—for we, too, are shaped to contain echoes of a vastness that far exceeds our bodies: our own living.

Holding the bread, looking at his disciples, considering circumstances, Jesus said, "What we hear—what we see—always represents a threat ... or a possibility. Because every situation offers us the option of following in the way of God or choosing not to."

And what we do hear (with our ears), determines what we do here (in this place), and what we do here (in this place) determines what we do hear (with our ears).

For what we do hear, with our ears, is the beginning of a story, and what we do here, in this place, is the way we choose to continue the story—the story of one who, long ago, gathered those who followed him, took bread, blessed bread, broke bread and gave bread, that we might all have what we need to follow.

Holding the bread, looking at his disciples, considering circumstances, looking back down at the bread, breaking the bread, Jesus went on, "This is my body... broken. Threat? Or possibility?"  
—John Ballenger is a pastor in Towson, Maryland.

## End Notes

1. Matthew 4:12; 12:15; 14:13.
2. M. Eugene Boring, "The Gospel of Matthew: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections" in *The New Interpreter's Bible: A Commentary in Twelve Volumes, Volume VIII* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1995) 167.
3. *Ibid.*, 323.
4. Images taken from Joseph Hart, "Come, Ye Sinners, Poor and Needy," in Wesley L. Forbis, ed., *The Baptist Hymnal* (Nashville: Convention Press, 1991) 323.
5. *Ibid.*
6. *Ibid.*
7. Frederick Dale Bruner, *Matthew: A Commentary, The Churchbook, Matthew 13-28, Revised & Expanded Edition* (Grand Rapids: Wm.B.Eerdmans, 1990) 68.
8. Russell Pregeant, "Matthew" in *Chalice Commentaries for Today* (St. Louis: Chalice, 2004) 104.
9. Eduard Schweizer, *The Good News According to Matthew* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1975) 319.
10. Boring, 325.
11. Thomas G. Long, "Matthew" in *Westminster Bible Companion* (Louisville: Westminster, 1997) 164-165.

# Coming On

by David Sparenberg

When the one who is awaited comes  
and you find your face  
within his face  
and your heartbeat  
living inside his heartbeat  
as entwined as lovers' breath;

when the angel that he brings  
bears your name as  
clearly inscribed as his own  
and the animal at his side  
walks peacefully  
in the shadow of your footsteps;  
then will the Earth Revolution being  
like a child  
awakening at the onset of morning  
(a Dawn Child)  
and green will be as red as gold.

And that which starts  
prayerful in a whispered word  
swift as lightning  
or as wildfire consumes  
not but bitterness  
and the lusts of exploitation and war.

And it shall end in this:  
The never ending fertility  
of the dream of God  
and the promise filling the fields  
of holy prophecy. For we  
in the companionship  
of the awaited—of one coming on—  
shall eat at the banquet of our preparations.  
And the one will be invited  
to sit here  
and be among us.

That day shall be called  
Abundance. And that night  
Deliverance from the Apocalypse  
of manmade evils. And the world  
with the one at the center of  
the everywhere from  
now until always will dance.

Dance as people dance  
around a tree of fire  
that does not burn but  
shines with joy. With life.

art by Sharon R. Rollins

—David Sparenberg—a playwright, poet, storyteller, stage director,  
Shakespearean actor and novelist—has just moved from Las Vegas to  
Washington State.

# hunger

by Emily Benton

That pain, that tugging,  
So achingly familiar.  
Another sunrise, another sunset,  
Another empty belly.

I have a false idea in my head  
Of what hunger feels like.  
The pretty, sad girl on my television,  
The beautiful eyes in the magazine.

But I know it's deeper than that.  
It is torment we have not tasted before.  
It is suffering we have not seen.  
It is an emptiness we have never felt.

I knowingly am blessed,  
And am ashamed of that little girl's face.  
Am I haunted by my blessing—  
By that pain I've never had?

That pain, that tugging,  
So achingly familiar.  
Another sunrise, another sunset,  
Another empty belly.

*—Emily Benton, a native of Little Rock, Arkansas,  
studies in the University Scholar Program at Baylor  
University and is a Seeds of Hope intern.*



*art courtesy of the  
Presbyterian Hunger Program*

# quotes, poems & pithy sayings

As for those who in the present age are rich, command them not to be haughty, or to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but rather on God who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. They are to do good, to be rich in good works, generous, and ready to share.

—1 Timothy 6:17-18

Our sense of urgency is balanced by the requirement to wait—to wait on the timing of God, which we can neither predict nor force. And the poor of the world have much to teach us about waiting—waiting with hope, purpose, and active preparation for change; waiting without falling into despair. For activists it may be hard but necessary to thank God for “the darkness of waiting,” and for what we learn “through failing where we hoped to succeed.”

—Janet Morley,

Bread of Tomorrow: Praying with the World's Poor

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

If fair trade is alternative trade, and renewable energy is alternative energy, and sustainable agriculture is alternative agriculture, does that make compassion alternative behavior and honesty alternative speech? We know things have gotten out of balance when what should be the norm is considered progressive and revolutionary.

—Peter Schweitzer, Plenty USA

The revolution isn't over. The revolution started when the first cave man handed a guy a bone to chew on instead of hittin' him in the head—the first act of mercy and trust. And all the other cave men said,

“What are you handin' him a bone for?” And years later, you know why you handed him a bone. Because you want him as a friend, and you don't want him starving.

—Ken Kesey

Hope is, after all, a dimension of the spirit. It is not outside us, but within us. When you lose it, you must seek it again within yourself and in people around you—not in objects or events.

—Vaclav Havel

“It's easier,” Charlotte replied frankly, “and often more emotionally satisfying to be mortally offended on behalf of your God than to serve God by altering one's style and manner of life—and in a short space, it is certainly much more comfortable. One can feel righteous, very much one who belongs, while heaping vengeance on the heads of sinners. It costs a lot less than giving time or money to the poor.”

—Anne Perry, *Farrier's Lane, a Victorian mystery*

Misery exists wherever compassion does not. Poverty is present wherever kindness is extinguished. They can be found wherever men, women, and children—children above all—suffer from hunger, fear, solitude, or disease; poverty and misery grow and keep growing wherever human beings feel useless and rejected, wherever strangers and uprooted fathers and sons, husbands and wives stumble upon organized or individual bigotry, prejudice, and hatred. Misery and poverty triumph wherever the old are conditioned to live without joy and young without hope.

—Elie Wiesel



The only theology worth doing is that which inspires and transforms lives, that which empowers us to participate in creating liberating and blessing the world.

—Carter Heyward

art by Susan Daily

# hunger—more than food

by Nadine N. Doughty

Hunger is everywhere—a natural desire.  
It's a need that assails us in so many forms.

Hunger—the basic craving for food  
—the baby's cry for milk  
—the starving desert child  
—the wait for a bag of pantry donations  
—the prayers for a bountiful harvest.

Hunger—the quest for security  
—the child warmly bundled  
—the mother harvesting corn,  
—the father finding a job  
—the family settling in a safe home.

Hunger—the pursuit of knowledge  
—the student exploring a foreign language  
—the schoolgirl practicing her numbers  
—the grandmother learning to read  
—the chemist developing a new medicine.

Hunger—the longing for caring  
—the phone call from a special person  
—the smile and nod from a new friend  
—the warm muffins from a neighbor  
—the hug that says "I care about you."

How varied is the face of hunger.  
Bodies must be fed, it's true,  
and they come first.  
But how we humans hunger  
in other ways as well.

—Dee Doughty, a longtime contributor to Seeds publications, has worked for many years in ministries for the poor in Evanston, Illinois, through her Episcopal Diocese and other organizations.

# a dozen things you can do

## activities for children & their leaders

by Emily Benton

### A Dozen Things a Child Can Do

1. Tonight when you go to bed, pray for those who go to bed hungry.
2. Whenever your stomach growls, pray for the 834 million people in the world who are chronically malnourished.
3. Give one of your favorite garments to a thrift store or a clothing program.
4. At each meal, pray for those who are hungry and offer thanks for the food that you have.
5. Avoid eating junk food. Skip drinking soft drinks, and save that money to give to a program that gives food to hungry people.
6. Write down a list of all the food that you eat today, and where it came from. Ask your parents, teachers or Sunday school leaders to help you find those countries on a map or globe.
7. Ask your parents about hunger organizations and choose one that you like best. Donate some of your allowance to that one.
8. Make a list of things you have and a list of things you would like to have. Think about which of these things you really need, and which ones you want, but don't need.
9. Talk to your parents about having a "giving" party for your next birthday. Plan to ask your friends to buy food or other things for poor children, and bring them to the party. Then you can take them to a local agency that helps the poor.

10. Talk to your children's minister. Ask him or her, "What do the children of our church know about hunger issues?" Suggest that this be a subject for Sunday school or Vacation Bible School.
11. Pray for the people of Zimbabwe, where crop failure, government corruption and one-thousand-percent inflation are causing a food crisis.
12. Pray for people who work to help get food and supplies to people in need, especially in war-torn places.

### A Dozen Things a Parent Can Do

1. Take your children grocery shopping with you. Buy extra canned foods, peanut butter or other staples for your local food pantry. Have your children pick out their favorites, so that a hungry person can enjoy the foods that they enjoy.
2. Order a *Children's Hunger Educational Kit* for your children, from the Presbyterian Hunger Program (PHP). It includes excellent resources from the PHP, Heifer Project International, World Food Day, Church World Service and Bread for the World. (Go to [www.pcusa.org](http://www.pcusa.org) to find the kit.)
3. At dinner, discuss the issue of hunger with your children. How do they view hunger? Talk with them about how Christ views hunger, the hungry and our responsibility to them.

4. Take your children with you to volunteer at a soup kitchen or deliver Meals on Wheels.
  5. Work with your children to organize a canned food drive at your church.
  6. Find a copy of the *Simply in Season Children's Cookbook* by Mark Beach and Julie Kauffman. Help your children learn where their food comes from.
  7. Teach your children about the importance of recycling.
  8. Take your children with you to buy a meal and, instead of eating it, take it to a homeless person.
  9. Encourage your children to collect some of their blankets and warm clothing. Then take them to deliver the items to a local shelter.
  10. With your children, write a letter of concern to your local government about hunger and poverty in your community.
  11. Discuss this topic with your children: children make up seventy-five percent of the world's hungry people.
  12. Discuss with your children all the luxuries you have compared to the necessities that some lack.
4. Talk with the children about what it must be like to be homeless. (For ideas about this, go to [www.seedspublishers.org](http://www.seedspublishers.org) and look for *Hope Is in Our Hands*, a collection of activities about hunger for youth and children. Look for the suggested activity called "Interruption" on page 8.)
  5. Take a Sunday school class with you to deliver Meals on Wheels.
  6. Ask yourself: What do the youth of your church know about hunger issues? Organize a workshop on hunger. Find a person (or persons) in your community to come and talk to them. Invite other youth groups.
  7. During Sunday school, pass out one piece of bread and a cup of water to each of the children and talk with them about how hunger feels.
  8. With the youth, assemble relief kits for people in war zones or disaster areas. Either the Mennonite Central Committee ([www.mcc.org/respond/kits](http://www.mcc.org/respond/kits)) or Church World Service ([www.churchworldservice.org](http://www.churchworldservice.org)) will tell you how.
  9. With the youth, set up a church-wide "recycling center," a collection point for paper, cardboard, glass and aluminum to take to your city's recycling center. Get the youth to make signs to post around the church, encouraging everyone to recycle. This can save up to 95 percent of the energy needed to make the product from natural sources.

## A Dozen Things a Children's Minister Can Do

1. Encourage and help your church and youth to hold a Thanksgiving dinner for local homeless people, or to help at a soup kitchen during that week.
2. Ask your children and youth to bring toiletry items like toothpaste, toothbrushes, shampoo, soap, combs, etc. Ask them to make cards of encouragement, using scriptures or greetings and drawings or collages of pictures from magazines. Collect the toiletries and cards in reclosable bags. Take them to a local shelter.
3. Encourage your church and youth to be involved with a UNICEF collection for Halloween.
10. Find out if there is a CROP WALK for hunger in your community. Get your youth involved. For more information, see the CROP WALK page at [www.churchworldservice.org](http://www.churchworldservice.org).
11. Three billion people in the world live on less than \$2 a day. Discuss with your children what this really means.
12. Encourage the youth to donate blankets, coats, gloves and scarves to a homeless shelter before it gets cold this winter.

—Emily Benton, a native of Little Rock, Arkansas, studies in the University Scholars Program at Baylor University and is a Seeds of Hope intern.

# hunger & poverty around the world

compiled by the Seeds of Hope staff

• According to the World Food Programme (WFP), of the 6.4 billion people in today's world, an estimated 985 million people live below the poverty line of \$1 per day. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), 862 million people across the world are considered to be hungry. This figure is up from 852 million a year ago. According to the World Bank, almost 1.4 billion people lived below the international poverty line in 2005, earning less than \$1.25 per day. In the past year, skyrocketing fuel prices have sparked a global crisis in which food is more expensive and harder to transport.

• Today, one in nearly seven people do not get enough food to be healthy and lead an active life, making hunger and malnutrition the number one risk to health worldwide—greater than AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis combined. (WFP)

• Among those who live in chronic poverty, many have problems obtaining adequate, nutritious food for themselves and their families. As a result, 820 million people in the developing world are undernourished. They consume less than the minimum amount of calories essential for sound health and growth. (FAO)

• Undernourishment negatively affects people's health, productivity, sense of hope and overall well-being. A lack of food can stunt growth, slow thinking, sap energy, hinder fetal development and contribute to mental retardation. (Bread for the World Institute)

• Economically, the constant securing of food consumes valuable time and energy of poor people, allowing less

time for work and earning income. Socially, the lack of food erodes relationships and feeds shame so that those most in need of support are often least able to call on it. (Bread for the World Institute)

• Hunger is caused by natural disasters and crop failure, armed conflict, chronic poverty, lack of

## Hunger Glossary:

### Nutrition-Related Terms and Definitions

• **Hunger:** the body's way of signaling that it is running short of food and needs to eat something. Hunger can lead to malnutrition. (FAO)

• **Undernourishment:** the status of people whose food intake does not include enough calories (energy) to meet minimum physiological needs. (FAO)

• **Malnutrition/Undernutrition:** a state in which the physical function of an individual is impaired to the point where he or she can no longer maintain natural bodily capacities such as growth, pregnancy, lactation, learning abilities, physical work and resisting and recovering from disease. (FAO)

• **Stunting:** reflects shortness-for-age; an indicator of chronic malnutrition and calculated by comparing the height-for-age of a child with a reference population of well nourished and healthy children. (According to the UN Standing Committee on Nutrition's 5th Report on the World Nutrition Situation—in 2005—almost one third of all children are stunted.) (FAO)

• **Wasting:** reflects a recent and severe process that has led to substantial weight loss, usually associated with starvation and/or disease. Often used to assess the severity of emergencies because it is strongly related to mortality. (FAO)

• **Underweight:** measured by comparing the weight-for-age of a child with a reference population of well nourished and healthy children. (FAO)

• **Food-Insecure:** Likely to miss more than two meals a week because of the lack of income to procure it. (Food Research and Action Center—FRAC)

infrastructure and the eroding of the environment. In 2005, more than 146 million people were caught in disasters with floods, tsunamis and earthquakes among the biggest killers. Even so, natural disasters and armed conflict account for less than 8 percent of those suffering from hunger. (WFP)

- One in every six countries on earth is experiencing crop failure because of global climate change. (FAO)
- Every day, almost 16,000 children die from hunger-related causes—one child every five seconds. (Robert Black, Saul Morris & Jennifer Bryce, “Where and Why Are 10 Million Children Dying Every Year?” The Lancet)

## Hunger, Poverty & Health

- Poor nutrition and calorie deficiencies cause nearly one in three people to die prematurely or have disabilities, according to the World Health Organization. (World Health Organisation – WHO)
- Pregnant women, new mothers who breastfeed infants and children are among the most at risk of undernourishment. (WHO)
- In 2006, about 9.7 million children died before they reached their fifth birthday. Almost all of these deaths occurred in developing countries, four-fifths of them in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia, the two regions that also suffer from the highest rates of hunger and malnutrition. (UNICEF)
- Most of these deaths are attributed, not to outright starvation, but to diseases that move in on vulnerable children whose bodies have been weakened by hunger. (FAO)
- Every year, more than 20 million low-birth-weight babies are born in developing countries. These babies risk dying in infancy, while those who survive often suffer lifelong physical and cognitive disabilities. (WHO)
- The four most common childhood illnesses are diarrhea, acute respiratory illness, malaria and measles. Each of these illnesses is both preventable and treatable. However, poverty interferes with parents’ ability to access immunizations and medicines. (FAO)
- Chronic undernourishment, on top of insufficient treatment, greatly increases a child’s risk of death. (FAO)

- In the developing world, 26 percent of children under five are moderately to severely underweight. Ten percent are severely underweight. Eleven percent of children under five are moderately to severely wasted, or seriously below weight for one’s height, and 32 percent are moderately to severely stunted, or seriously below normal height for one’s age. (UNICEF)

## Hunger, Poverty, & HIV/AIDS

- The spreading HIV/AIDS epidemic has quickly become a major obstacle in the fight against hunger and poverty in developing countries. Because the majority of those falling sick with AIDS are young adults who normally harvest crops, food production has dropped dramatically in countries with high HIV/AIDS prevalence rates. (Population Reference Bureau)
- In half of the countries in sub-Saharan Africa, per capita economic growth is estimated to be falling by between 0.5 and 1.2 percent each year as a direct result of AIDS. Infected adults also leave behind children and elderly relatives, who have little means to provide for themselves. In 2003, 12 million children were newly orphaned in southern Africa, a number expected to rise to 18 million in 2010. (FAO)

## We suggest:

Go to the World Food Programme website ([www.wfp.org](http://www.wfp.org)) and click on either “Counting the Hungry” or “Interactive Hunger Map” for presentations on hunger and poverty around the world. If you have trouble finding those, search for “maps” and go to the bottom of the list of maps.

# hunger, poverty & homelessness in the United States

compiled by the Seeds of Hope staff

## Hunger and Poverty in the US

- 25 million Americans—including 9 million children and 3 million seniors—are provided with emergency assistance by food banks and food pantries.
- Of the 25 million Americans, 66 percent are living below the federal poverty line and 12 percent are homeless. More than 40 percent have to choose between paying for utilities or heating fuel and food. Some 35 percent have to choose between paying for rent or a mortgage and food. Nearly 32 percent report having to choose between paying for medical bills and food.
- Seventy percent of households served by food banks are food-insecure, meaning they do not know where they will find their next meal. Of these households, 33 percent are experiencing hunger, meaning they are completely without a source of food.
- In the summer of 2008, emergency assistance programs reported a 60-percent surge in the number of people coming for help who have never had to ask for help before.
- Hunger in the United States is a condition of poverty. Living in poverty puts tremendous strains on a household, giving families barely enough money to purchase healthy and nutritious foods, as well as other essentials of life. Nutrition research shows that, as income goes down, the nutritional adequacy of the household's diet goes down as well.
- According to the US Census Bureau, 50.9 million people, or 17 percent of all Americans, lived below the federal poverty level in 2007. The US federal poverty guideline for a family of four for that year was \$21,203.

- Data from the latest US Census report shows that 37.3 million Americans—or 12.5 percent of our population—live in poverty. Children continue to be the poorest age group in the country.

- 13.3 million children, or 18 percent of all children under age 18, are poor—a larger percentage than any other age group.

- 20.8 percent of related children under age six in families live in poverty.

- 9.7 percent of all US Americans 65 and over, or 3.6 million elderly, were poor.

- The poverty rate for non-Hispanic Caucasians was 8.2 percent, 24.5 percent for African Americans, 21.5 percent for Latino populations and 10.2 percent for Asians.

- In 2005, the Census Bureau showed that the number of uninsured Americans was at a record high of 46.6 million, with 15.9 percent of Americans lacking health coverage. The number of uninsured children rose from 7.9 million in 2004 to 8.3 million in 2005.

—From the *Food, Research and Action Center (FRAC), the US Census Bureau (Income, Poverty and Health Insurance Coverage in the United States: 2007 and Income, Earnings and Poverty Data From the 2007 American Community Survey), the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, America's Second Harvest (now known as Feeding America) and interviews with emergency assistance workers.*

## Homelessness in the US

- Between five and six hundred thousand people are considered “homeless” at any given time in the US. A homeless person is defined as someone

without a “permanent, safe, decent, affordable place to live.”

- The homeless population consists of four major categories: people who are mentally ill and have no long-term care, people with substance abuse problems who have “hit bottom,” families who have had to choose between housing and food, and people who—for some reason—choose not to live by normal society rules. Many of these people are veterans of US wars.

- The segment of homeless people most likely to leave the streets and establish homes are the families.

- The average age of a homeless person in the US is seven.

- Homelessness in the US has persisted over the past few decades, even during periods of economic prosperity. This is in part because many urban areas remain economically depressed. Housing costs have risen rapidly in the past decade and wages for lower skilled workers have remained stable, while the cost of living has soared.

- Homeless people are food-insecure. Between 20 and 30 percent of homeless families said in a survey that they had gone without food for part of the previous month.

- Homeless people face persistent deprivation and constant threat of harm. They spend more time in the hospital and in jail than their counterparts who live in poverty but have housing. The majority are victims of violent crimes, and often go untreated for injuries.

- Children in homeless families do worse in school and have lower attendance and more long-term absences.

- Although single men constitute about 60 percent of the homeless population, families constitute about one-third of the homeless population and are the fastest-growing segment.

- Elderly people will also be an important segment of homeless people as the US population ages in the coming decades.

- Although about 70 percent of homeless people live in central cities,

rural homelessness is a hidden problem. Homeless people in rural areas are more likely to be families that are homeless for shorter periods of time, often as a result of domestic violence.

- One-fourth of all homeless people, have been homeless for at least five years. This segment of the population is, according to surveyors, very difficult to reach.

—From the *National Alliance to End Homelessness, Solutions for America* and interviews with workers in shelters for homeless people.

## *We suggest:*

**Go to the Central Dallas Ministries web site** ([www.cdm-hope.org](http://www.cdm-hope.org)) to see interviews with homeless people (also available on YouTube.)

**Look for a copy of *Finding Grace: The Face of America's Homeless*, a collection of stunning photographs by Lynn Blodgett.**

# eight goals for ending hunger

compiled by Brittany Brady

Back in September 2000, in Copenhagen, the United Nations (UN) agreed to adopt eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

A council of 189 nations, including the United States, signed the United Nations Millennium Declaration, affirming an international set of development goals focused on the devastation caused by global hunger and poverty.

The aim is to end this type of affliction around the world. The UN believes these goals are achievable and, with the help of economist Jeffrey Sachs, has established indicators to mark and monitor progress along the way.

Many countries face limited or scarce resources. Despite these difficulties, numerous countries are still making progress.

The initiative shown by countries facing major resource oppression might be encouraging, but all efforts will be for naught if additional supplies and funding are not offered.

To make matters worse, drastic hikes in food and fuel prices in the past year have sparked a serious global food crisis. Food riots have broken out around the world.

It is obvious that, if we continue at our current rate of progress, none of the MDGs will be met by their projected dates.

The eight goals range in ambition from ending poverty, increasing education to minorities (especially women) and ending the spread of HIV/AIDS.

The anticipated date of completion in 2015 requires the effort of all world leaders and members of every country around the globe.

In the Millennium Declaration, all UN member states pledged to:

1. Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger
2. Achieve universal primary education
3. Promote gender equality and empower women

4. Reduce child mortality
5. Improve maternal health
6. Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases
7. Ensure environmental sustainability
8. Create a global partnership for development

"We will have time to reach the Millennium Development Goals—worldwide and in most, or even all, individual countries—but only if we break with business as usual," said Ban Ki-Moon, the United Nations Secretary-General. "We cannot win overnight. Success will require sustained action across the entire decade between now and the deadline."

The UN, along with global relief and development organizations—as well as supporting citizens and peacemaking individuals from all countries—are issuing a call to action in support of these goals.

—Compiled by Brittany Brady. Sources: *Bread for the World*, the United Nations ([www.un.org](http://www.un.org)), National Anti-Hunger Organizations (NAHO), Washington Post, USA Today.

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1. Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger
  2. Achieve universal primary education
  3. Promote gender equality and empower women
  4. Reduce child mortality
  5. Improve maternal health
  6. Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases
  7. Ensure environmental sustainability
  8. Create a global partnership for development
- JKR

art by John Richardson

# praying toward the Millennium Development Goals

From Bread for the World  
Adapted by Jon Singletary

As we consider ways our nation and others can support the Millennium Development Goals, let us hear what they mean and how we can use them to pray:

## **MDG 1 is to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger.**

Fact: More than 1 billion people around the world live on less than a dollar a day, and most of them are not sure where they will find their next meal. As a result of extreme poverty, more than 10 million children die each year.

*Prayer: Loving God, you love us more than we can comprehend, and you weep because of the world's injustices—whether they are rooted in hunger or poverty, ignorance or violence, pollution or disease, discrimination or apathy. Give us the strength to struggle for justice for all people. Amen.*

## **MDG 2 is to achieve universal primary education.**

Fact: Children of women with five years of primary education have a 40 percent higher survival rate than children of women with no education. AIDS spreads twice as quickly among uneducated girls as it does among those with minimal schooling.

*Prayer: Gracious God, help us to share our blessings of health, education, food and clean water with all of your people, offering a more hopeful life for millions of your children. Amen.*

## **MDG 3 is to promote gender equality and empower women.**

Fact: According to UNESCO, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, more than 850 million people in the world do not have the opportunity to learn to read and write. Two-thirds are women.

*Prayer: The Apostle Paul writes that there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female; for we are all one in Christ Jesus (Galatians 3:28). Precious God,*

*enlighten us to provide women everywhere with equal dignity and opportunity. Inspire every society to oppose violence against women and strengthen gender justice. Amen.*

## **MDG 4 is to reduce child mortality.**

Fact: More than 25 percent of children under age five in developing countries are malnourished.

*Prayer: "Whoever welcomes one of these little children in my name welcomes me; and whoever welcomes me does not welcome me but the one who sent me" (Mark 9:37).*

*Loving God, we pray for the tens of thousands of children who will die today as a result of poverty and other preventable causes. Strengthen us to not tolerate this reality. Give us the compassion to meet their basic needs for food, clean water, health care, education and freedom from exploitation. Amen.*

## **MDG 5 is to improve maternal health.**

Fact: A woman in sub-Saharan Africa has a one-in-16 chance of dying in pregnancy. This compares with a one-in-3,700 risk for a woman from North America. More than half a million women die each year from pregnancy-related causes.

*Prayer: Dear God, lead us to advocate for suffering mothers and families around the world, whose health, dignity and choices are in jeopardy because of illness, poverty, hunger and violence. Amen.*

## **MDG 6 is to combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases.**

Fact: Every day, 8,000 people die of HIV/AIDS. Every 30 seconds an African child dies of malaria, a treatable disease. Education and low-cost prevention programs can drastically decrease these statistics.

*Prayer: "[Jesus] welcomed them and spoke to them about the kingdom of God, and healed those who needed healing" (Luke 9:11). Compassionate God, open our eyes*

to the plight of people, especially children, who will lose their lives today because of HIV/AIDS and malaria. Empower us to be instruments of your healing by advocating for affordable medicines for our brothers and sisters who do not have the means to cope with their illnesses. Amen.

**MDG 7 is to ensure environmental sustainability.**

Fact: More than 2.6 billion people—more than 40 percent of the world's population—do not have basic sanitation, and more than 1 billion people have no access to safe sources of drinking water. Forests—which contribute to the livelihoods of more than a billion people living in extreme poverty—continue to shrink in Africa, Latin America and parts of Asia due to unsustainable practices.

*Prayer: "The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it" (Psalm 24:1). Creator God, thank you for the earth and for its beauty and abundance in which we partake. Help us return this gift by being good stewards of your creation. Equip us to seek justice for your creation and for the world's poorest people. Amen.*

**MDG 8 is to develop a global partnership for development.**

Fact: Although trade generates a larger share of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) than ever before, global trade has yet to yield sustainable benefits for a majority of the world's poorest countries. Low-income countries account for only three cents of every dollar generated through exports in the international trading system, and the world's poorest countries have seen their share of global trade decline over the last 25 years.

*Prayer: Reflect on Proverbs 31:8-9, our charge to speak up for the poor and hungry. God of Justice, inspire us to urge our government to take this charge to heart and commit the United States to take seriously a commitment to care for our neighbors. Great Spirit, may the world be ONE in solidarity with our neighbors who are hungry and poor. Amen.*

— Jon Singletary is a professor in Baylor University's School of Social Work and a member of the a Seeds of Hope Council of Stewards.

## 2008 Bread for the World Offering of Letters:

# The Global Poverty Act

**B**read for the World (BFW) is inviting churches, campuses and other organizations to participate in the 2008 Offering of Letters to Congress. They hope to increase the US budget for programs that give citizens in low-income countries the opportunity to focus on areas such as agricultural development, nutrition, clean water, health care and primary education.

In the past several years, Congress has increased funding for poverty assistance by about \$1 billion per year. BFW is requesting that Congress increase funding by \$5 billion per year.

BFW, along with the ONE Campaign—an organization founded by rock singer Bono—supports the passage of the Global Poverty Act (S. 2433), passed by the House of Representatives in 2007. This act would be a significant step toward completing the first Millennium Development Goal set forth by the United Nations (UN) in 2000—to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger. At press time, the bill had been endorsed by the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) consist of eight individual goals created to improve conditions in poor areas of the world. Advocates are urging the US government to help meet these goals by 2015.

BFW is encouraging concerned citizens to write personal letters and e-mails to their legislators, asking them to increase annual poverty-focused development assistance by \$5 billion, and finalize the Global Poverty Act. This will make a critical difference in lives of the 980 million people who survive on less than \$1 per day.

Send letters to:

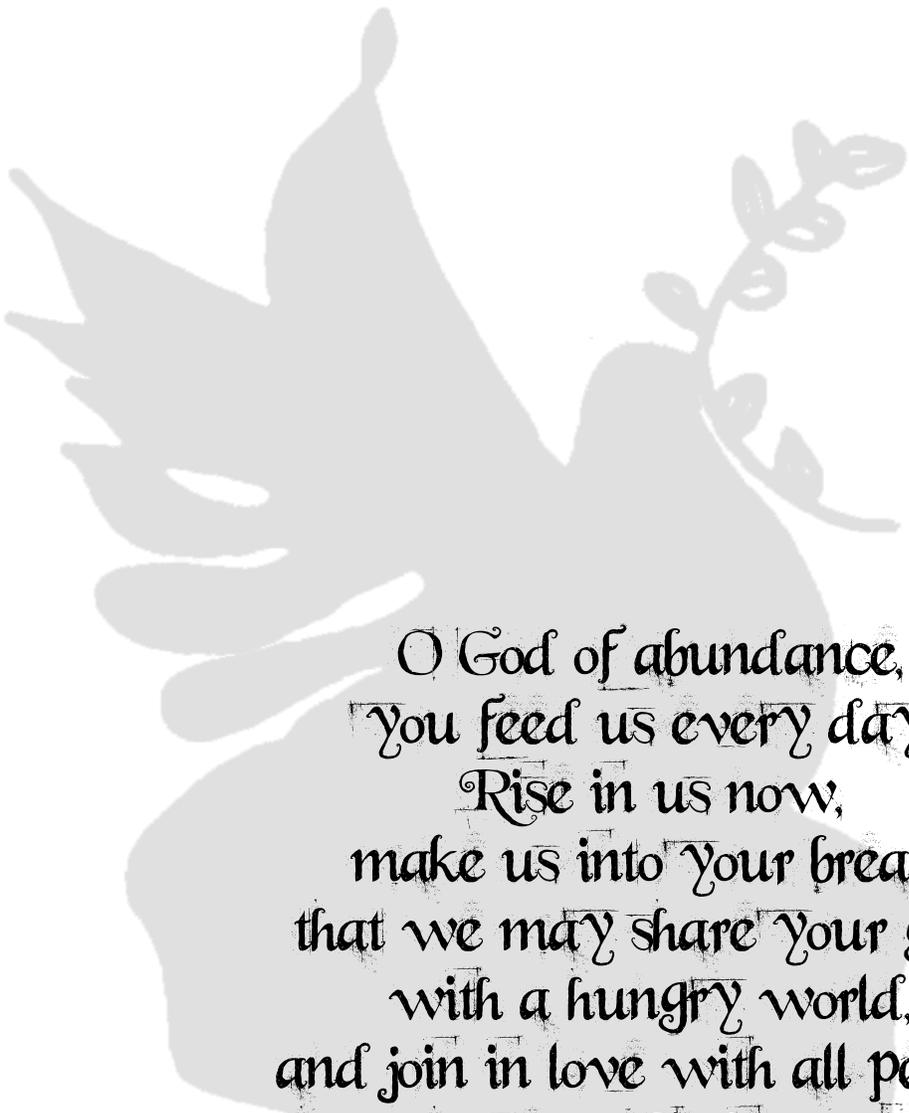
US Senate  
Washington, DC 20515

US House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Capitol Switchboard: (202)224-3121

— Compiled by Rebecca LaFlure from Bread, a publication of Bread for the World, the BFW web site ([www.bread.org](http://www.bread.org)), and the ONE Campaign ([www.one.org](http://www.one.org)).

# benediction



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 food pantry  
at St. Gregory's Episcopal Church  
in San Francisco.  
From the book *Take This Bread*  
by Sara Miles.

art by Andy Loving