

Twelve Baskets Full



Sharing with a Hungry World

Worship Resources for the Creative Church--Hunger Emphasis 2009

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Sacred Seasons:



Creative Worship Tools for Your Church

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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. Web address: www.seedspublishers.org Copyright © 2009

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a word about this packet

This worship resource was prepared with much thought prayer, with hopes that it will help you and your congregation prepare to respond with innovation and passion to the troubling food crisis around the world and in our own communities. We continued to develop our theme of abundance in the midst of great scarcity, searching for new ways of looking at the miracle of loaves and fishes told so many times in the Gospels.

The concept for the cover was created with the help of Lauren Elder, our Professional Writing intern for the summer. Lauren also updated the 40-day Hunger Emphasis calendar, adding new activities and matching each day's scripture with the activity of the day. She also created this year's place mat and a Hunger IQ quiz.

Some of the writing in the packet is taken from very early Seeds publications—such as the reflections from Walker Knight, Gene and Jolene Roehlkepartain, and Larkin Rossiter. Some of it is making its world debut here—such as the children's sermon by Rachel Scirreti. Some of the art is adapted from earlier publications, and some of it was created this summer by the children of Seventh & James Baptist Church (the church that houses the Seeds ministry in Waco).

As always, 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. The material in this packet is your congregation's to use freely and share with others as the need arises. May we together bring the news of God's extravagant love to a world of fear and struggle. May we together find ways of creating abundance for those who live in scarcity. —*Gratefully, The Staff and Council of Stewards*

Bulletin Art

After this, Jesus went across the Sea of Galilee

(some call it Tiberias). A huge crowd followed him, attracted by the miracles they had seen him do among the sick. When he got to the other side, he climbed a hill and sat down, surrounded by his disciples. It was nearly time for the Feast of Passover, kept annually by the Jews.

When Jesus looked out and saw that a large crowd had arrived, he said to Philip, "Where can we buy bread to feed these people?" He said this to stretch Philip's faith. He already knew what he was going to do.

Philip answered, "Two hundred silver pieces wouldn't be enough to buy bread for each person to get a piece."

One of the disciples—it was Andrew, brother to Simon Peter—said, "There's a little boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish. But that's a drop in the bucket for a crowd like this."

Jesus said, "Make the people sit down." There was a nice carpet of green grass in this place. They sat down, about five thousand of them. Then Jesus took the bread and, having given thanks, gave it to those who were seated. He did the same with the fish. All ate as much as they wanted.

When the people had eaten their fill, he said to his disciples, "Gather the leftovers so nothing is wasted." They went to work and filled twelve large baskets with leftovers from the five barley loaves.

The people realized that God was at work among them in what Jesus had just done. They said, "This is the Prophet for sure, God's Prophet right here in Galilee!"

—John 6: 1-14, *The Message*



art adapted from a piece by Hermanoléon of the Franciscanos de Cruzblanca

What God Can Do with Little Things

It *has* to be significant that the miracle of the loaves and fishes is the only miracle of Jesus included in all four canonical gospels.

Scholars note that there are actually two different occurrences of the feeding of a multitude reported in the gospels. The first, found in all four gospels, is also the only miracle, other than the resurrection, included by the Synoptic gospels as well as the Gospel of John.

All four accounts speak of Jesus teaching large crowds in a rural area. (In the Synoptics it is a desert location near Bethsaida. John, however, reports that there is a good bit of grass in the place.) The end of the day draws near, and the people grow hungry. Jesus instructs his disciples to feed them.

In all of the canonical gospels, the disciples find only five loaves of bread and two fishes. John alone mentions a boy having given up his lunch. In all of the accounts, Jesus blesses the food, breaks it and gives it to the disciples to distribute.

In all of the accounts, the food is passed out to 5,000 people (not counting women and children) and all are

fed and satisfied. In all of the accounts, the disciples collect what is left, which amounts to 12 baskets of food.

The references to this event are Matthew 14:13-21, Mark 6:31-44, Luke 9:10-17 and John 6:5-15.

The second miraculous feeding of the multitude is reported by Mark and Matthew. In this case, Jesus is teaching about 4,000 people in a remote location. In this case, the disciples find seven loaves and a few small fish. After the food is blessed and distributed, seven baskets of food are left over.

The references to this event are in Matthew 15 and Mark 8.

The great British preacher Charles Spurgeon wrote that this story is told so many times in the Bible "to make quite sure that we should never forget how much God can do with little things." May it be so.

—Katie Cook is the editor of the *Seeds* publications *Sacred Seasons* and *Hunger News & Hope*, as well as *Baptist Peacemaker*, the magazine of the *Baptist Peace Fellowship of North America*. She lives and works in Waco, Texas.



art by children of Seventh & James Baptist Church

The Miracle of Sharing

A Liturgy
by Katie Cook

Call to Worship

LEADER: Our God, make of our living a habit of giving.

PEOPLE: *May the basic needs of others be a priority in our culture of magnified personal wants.*

LEADER: And may we be uneasy eating the Lord's supper as long as there are those that hunger—

PEOPLE: *As long as there are the least of these whose needs are not yet met—
as long as Jesus is not fully present.*

LEADER: All this we pray in the name of the one whose voice disturbs us from the very back of where we're comfortable.

ALL: *Amen.*

—John S. Ballenger

Reading from Hebrew Scriptures

2 Kings 4:42-44

Meditation

We look at our resources in terms of their scarcity, not their abundance. In other words, we look at what we have like it's a blueberry pie to be apportioned out, and carefully so, for when it's gone, it's gone. We're always looking at our resources—our money, our talents, our time, our energy, our very persons—and wondering, fretting, worrying about whether we have enough.

I know this tendency exists. I get caught up in this scarcity business. I constantly worry about time. I worry that I don't have enough of it. So I grasp it close to me, guard it vociferously, only seeing the potential lack, never the possible overflow. And I truly believe this is one of my weaknesses, failings, sins.

Perhaps you get caught up in the scarcity business as well. Perhaps you feel stretched almost beyond capacity as you meet life's demands. Perhaps you think whatever it is you have is simply not enough.

—From a sermon by Nancy R. Easton, minister at Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church, Camp Hill, PA

Hymn*

"The Lord Hears the Cry of the Poor"

Text: John Foley, S.J., 1978, revised 1990

Music: John Foley, S.J., 1978

Tune: THE CRY OF THE POOR

(Published by North American Liturgy Resources)

Reading from the Prophet

Isaiah 61:1-4

Epistle Reading

James 5:1-6

Hymn

"Come, Let Us Share the Harvest of Peace"

Text: Joel Underwood, 1990

Music: Traditional English melody; harmony by Gary P. Davison, 1990

Tune: SUSSEX CAROL

(Published by Bread for the World)

Meditation

When trusting only in ourselves, the things we consider ours—our possessions, our energy, our strength, our capacity to forgive, our patience and

(continued on page 7)



A Walk Through the Crowd

A Dramatic Reading for 12 People

by Katie Cook

Author's note: The concept for this reading came from Charley Garrison, a pastor in Waco, Texas. The reading can be done with the players in costume and with props, if you choose. You will need a narrator, someone to play Jesus, Philip and Andrew, the small boy and his friend, and six other people in the crowd. If you are short on players, it is possible to double up on some of the parts.

You might consider giving Players 1 through 6 bread—pita, perhaps, or tortillas, or barley rolls—which they bring with them when they come to the front. Then, while the narrator tells the last part of the story, all of the players could distribute the bread to the congregation. If you want to make it into communion, you might consider adding grape bunches.

The narrator, Jesus, Philip and Andrew are standing to Stage Left. Players 1 & 2 are in a corner on Stage Left. Players 3 & 4 are in a corner in the back of the worship area. Players 5 & 6 are in the other corner at the back. First Boy and Second Boy are in the middle of the worship area, halfway to the front. (You may want to make one of these a girl.) All of the players face away from the congregation/audience until it is time for them to speak. If you have lighting, you may want to light each group as the narrator reaches them. They do not appear to be aware of the narrator, but they see Philip and Andrew as they approach. After the moving group leaves him, they remain standing, in belligerent attitudes.

NARRATOR: Jesus went to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, with a large crowd following him. He went up the mountain and sat down there with his disciples. And the crowd was coming—5,000 of them, not counting women and children. People were starting to get hungry. Jesus turned to Philip and said,

JESUS: What are we going to do about feeding these people?

PHILIP: What?! It would take a fortune to feed all of these people! Six months' wages wouldn't even come close!

Players on Stage Right freeze.

NARRATOR: Let's stop for just a moment and go through the crowd. Let's listen to what they're saying.

Jesus sits. Philip and Andrew follow the narrator. Narrator, Philip and Andrew walk to Stage Left. Two people are standing in the corner.

PLAYER 1: I'm getting hungry. Are you going to get out the lunch we brought?

PLAYER 2: No, you fool! If we do, people will want us to share. This is barely enough for us!

PLAYER 1: Here comes Philip! What are we going to tell him?

PLAYER 2: Don't tell him anything! We're not responsible for these people!

Narrator, Philip and Andrew walk to the back of the worship area.

PLAYER 3: They're asking if we have any food to share. What shall we do?

PLAYER 4: We're the ones who are poor. Why are they asking us to share? Hide the food!

Narrator, Philip and Andrew walk across the back to the other corner.

PLAYER 5: Look at that! They want us to share!

PLAYER 6: Some of these people don't deserve to be fed. Look at them! We work hard. We deserve to keep our food to ourselves.

Narrator, Philip and Andrew walk through the middle of the congregation back to the front.

ANDREW: Does anyone here have any food?

FIRST BOY: Mister Andrew? I have something to share. It's not much...

SECOND BOY: What are you doing? Your mother told you not to let anything happen to that lunch! You're going to be in SUCH trouble!

PLAYER 1 (*Facetiously*): Oh, look. Isn't that adorable? That young boy is sharing his paltry little

meal.

PLAYER 2: Maybe we should—

PLAYER 1: Ugh! It's barley loaves. He must really be poor.

PLAYER 2: But maybe we should—

PLAYER 3: Look—that little boy gave Andrew something. It looks like it's his lunch. Wow! What are they going to do with that little bit of food?

PLAYER 4: Oh!

Well...

Narrator, Philip and Andrew walk toward Jesus, along with First and Second Boy.

ANDREW: Master? This boy has five barley loaves and two fish. But what help is that going to be?

JESUS: Tell the people to sit down.

First and Second Boy sit. Players 1-6 move to the front and sit. The players pantomime as the narrator continues.

NARRATOR: Then Jesus took the loaves, and when he had given thanks, he distributed them to those who were seated; so also the fish, as much as they wanted. When everyone had eaten, he told them to gather the leftovers in baskets, and there were TWELVE BASKETS full of leftovers.

JESUS: What is keeping you from sharing what you have? Are you afraid of going without? Is it because you don't

think you're responsible for others? Do you think that some people don't deserve to be helped? Do you think there isn't enough for everybody? Can you conjure up the courage and love that this small boy showed? He could have gone without. He could have gotten into trouble with his parents. He could have decided that the others didn't deserve his help, or that his help was not enough. But he gave what little he had, which is all I want you to do. —lkc

Miracle of Sharing Liturgy

continued from page 5

love—will never be enough. We will always be afraid, so certain we're going to run out. But suppose that, beginning today, we truly bring all these "things" of ours to Jesus. Let HIS hands daily bless our words and our deeds, our money and our time, our very beings, so that these "things" we consider ours will be made abundant, and bring to ALL peoples the life and love of God.

—From a sermon by Nancy R. Easton, minister at Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church, Camp Hill, PA

Hymn

"Lord of Feasting and of Hunger"

Text: Herbert F. Brokering

Music: Howard M. Edwards III

Tune: CRONMILLER

(Published by Concordia Publishing House, 1989)

Gospel Reading

John 6: 1-13

Interpretive Reading

"A Walk through the Crowd" (see page 6)

Hymn

"Where Cross the Crowded Ways of Life"

Text: Frank Mason North, 1903

Music: "Sacred Melodies," William Gardiner, 1815

Tune: GERMANY

(Can be found in *The Worshipping Church*, Hope Publishing Company)

Benediction

My sisters and brothers, go from this place in peace, and may the spirit of the living God empower you and me to look for the face of Christ everywhere we go. Let us go into the world and share what we have. Let us go into the world and not grow weary until all God's children are fed.

—Katie Cook is the editor of the *Seeds* publications *Sacred Seasons* and *Hunger* News & Hope, as well as *Baptist Peacemaker*, the magazine of the Baptist Peace Fellowship of North America. She lives and works in Waco, Texas.

*All of the suggested hymns were found in *Banquet of Praise*, edited by Joel Underwood and Gary P. Davison, published by *Bread for the World* in 1990.

Enough

a sermon about miracles

by Raymond Bailey

Text: John 6:1-21

The word was out. Jesus was doing wonderful things. He was healing the sick, making whole those who needed it in so many different ways. And now he is going to feed the hungry. Multitudes gathered everywhere he went to see what he was going to do next and to have their own needs met.

Other accounts of this story give us a little different impression, a little different twist to the story. They seem to suggest that all these people came just to hear Jesus teach, and after Jesus taught all day, then the people became hungry, and Jesus had to feed them. But John's account tells us that the people *came* hungry. And those who had followed the brief career of the young healer would not have been surprised.

People often comment on the fact that Jesus did not do his ministry in Jerusalem, in the Holy City. He did not do it in the city where business was profitable, where people were employed, where people were doing well. He did it in Galilee. Galilee was the poor part of the country. Galilee was that place where many fled who found themselves unable to find employment, unable to make a living in Jerusalem. It was a place where many people lived in poverty and, undoubtedly, where many people who were hungry. They were the unemployed, the underemployed and the underpaid population of their day.

We are sometimes critical of the audience, because we say that the people came for the wrong reason. They came because of the miracles. They did not recognize Jesus as the Messiah, the one to offer spiritual salvation, eternal life, hope in the life to come. They came because he was one who could meet their immediate needs. "Spiritual" folks are critical of that. They wanted food when

they should have wanted food for the spirit. They wanted their bellies filled. They wanted their wounds healed, their sicknesses cured. Why did they not see that the promise of the kingdom of heaven is more important?

I once taught with a professor of evangelism who said, "If we just get their souls saved, then they will go to work, and they will not be hungry and they will not have any need." Indeed, I have to confess that sometimes I have struggled with this a bit myself. The unseen soul is easier to treat than the broken body. At one time I served a church in South Florida where the sanctuary was located at one end of the church campus, and my office was located at the other end. Every Sunday morning I had to make that long trek from my office to the sanctuary at the time to worship.

It was a difficult few minutes, because, as I focused on what I was going to say in the pulpit, someone would stop me and say, "Do you know that the toilet in the women's restroom is broken?" I would say, "I will take care of it next week." Or, "You know, there is a light out up on the third floor." Another would say, "The nursery is not as clean as it ought to be. Could you speak to the custodian this week?"

And perhaps what was the most aggravating was the dirty, unkempt person, looking for a handout, saying, "I am on the road. I am hungry. Preacher, can you help me?" He or she would say this, knowing how vulnerable I would be, on the way to the pulpit with my mind on the Bible, thinking about what Jesus had taught me.

There was one person in particular who lingers in my memory. The first three or four times he spoke to me, I could not understand what he was talking about. He would start just as I came



art by Tom Peterson

out of my office door. He followed me every step of the way, speaking over and over again, mumbling in a way that I could not understand. I finally said, "Slow down. Tell me what you are saying." He said, "I am the least of your brethren, and you have to help me."

Boy, that is arresting, is it not? He knew how that would affect me. "I am the least of your brethren, and you have to feed me."

Why does it trouble us that people come to the church to be fed, that they seek out the people who

*I finally said, "Slow down. Tell me what you are saying."
He said, "I am the least of your brethren, and you have to help me."*

claim to represent the Christ? In our own church office in the last two weeks, we have received more than 50 appeals for help of one kind or another: people who cannot pay their rent, cannot buy prescriptions, do not have grocery money, or have special needs of one sort or another. They call saying, "We have tried every other agency." For varying reasons, none of the public agencies could or would help.

We were only able to help six out of the 50 people who appealed to us. Our funds are limited. That is the sad part of it, is it not? Is it not appropriate that people in the world who have needs, whatever those needs may be—spiritual, physical, psychological needs—come to us for help?

Is it not right that people who are hungry, that people who are hurting reach out to those of us who say that we are followers of Jesus Christ?

"Give me what your Lord would have given me," they say. "Treat me as Jesus would have treated me. Care for me as your brother, because Jesus has said we are all brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ."

We have no trouble identifying with the irritated disciples. We know that the disciples were trying to protect Jesus out of their devotion to him, out of their desire to learn from him. They wanted to keep people away who might bother Jesus. They tried to watch and to control who approached Jesus. They tried to allow Jesus to determine who would come near him. I am sure that the disciples were upset that the multitudes were gathering, pushing each other, pushing on Jesus, pushing on them.

When Jesus turned to Philip and said, "These people are hungry. How are we going to feed them?" Philip said, "My goodness. We cannot feed them. There is not enough food. It would take six months' wages

for us to feed them. We cannot possibly do it."

That is our word today, is it not? "I cannot feed all the hungry people. I do not want to see the hunger. I do not want to see the ugliness." We drive routes to avoid those parts of town that are an embarrassment to us and our city. We try to avoid looking upon those people who are suffering. If we see a beggar on one side of the street, we cross the street and walk on the other side. We do not want to see it. We do not want to be involved in it. Maybe we are just following in the steps of the first followers of Jesus who said, "We cannot possibly do the job."

Jesus undoubtedly anticipated that. Jesus said, "Do what you can do. You can do these things. Gather them all together and tell them to sit down. You can do this. Find what there is and bring it to me." They brought the little boy, his fishes, his five loaves.

Think what a sacrifice was asked of the little boy. Maybe we do not think enough about that.

Philip had said, "It cannot be done." The little boy, as children often do, saw only the problem and the need, and he was willing to do whatever he could. Jesus said, "Give me your loaves and fishes." And the little boy said, "Here, Jesus. Use this." How much better world it would be and how much more effective would be our evangelical outreach, how much more would the gospel be believed if we offered what we could, if we did what we could, if we said literally, "What I have is yours. Jesus, you can take what I have and use it. I trust you to use it wisely."

Jesus gave thanks and blessed it, and there was enough. There was plenty.

I read, just four weeks ago, that in the midst of the global economic crisis, the number of hungry in the world has now reached the figure of one billion—one billion people who are chronically malnourished. In the United States and around the world, one out of every six living human beings is hungry. The number has increased by 100 million in the last 12 months.

Many of them, of course, are children. In fact, three-fourths of them are children. Many of the children who will die this year will die of malnutrition or they will die of diseases that are brought about because of malnutrition. Indeed, there are estimates that as many as 10,000 people will die today from the lack of food.

But you say, "Oh, do not tell me about that. There is nothing I can do about that. What can I do?"

Jesus performed a miracle. Jesus used what was there. We have everything we need. The miracle in our case is the miracle of natural resources, the miracle of technology, the miracle of modern science, the miracle of the human mind and the human ingenuity that God has given to us.

There is enough food to feed every hungry person in the world. The problem today is as it has always been—distribution. In the US alone, we could provide much of what is needed.

It is estimated that it would take \$13 billion per year to feed everybody. Wow! What an astounding figure—three percent of the defense budget. *Three percent of the defense budget.*

We in the US still pay farmers not to grow food, because we have too much, and we want to control the economy. I have just finished reading a wonderful book by Jonathan Alter on the early days of the Roosevelt Administration. [*The Defining Moment: FDR's Hundred Days and the Triumph of Hope*, Simon & Schuster Paperbacks: 2007.] According to the author, one of FDR's greatest frustrations in the depression of the 1930s was that neither he nor anyone in his cabinet figured out a way to get the excess food to people who were hungry. So they paid people not to grow crops. They stored crops. They destroyed crops, and left people in America and around the world hungry.

We still have not figured it out. We worry about how it is going to unbalance the economy. People can go to the moon—this year was the 40th anniversary of putting a man on the moon! Neil Armstrong said, "One small step for man, one giant leap for mankind." We can go to the moon and outer space. We can create a better mousetrap, a better automobile, a better weapon, but we cannot figure out how to distribute food to people.

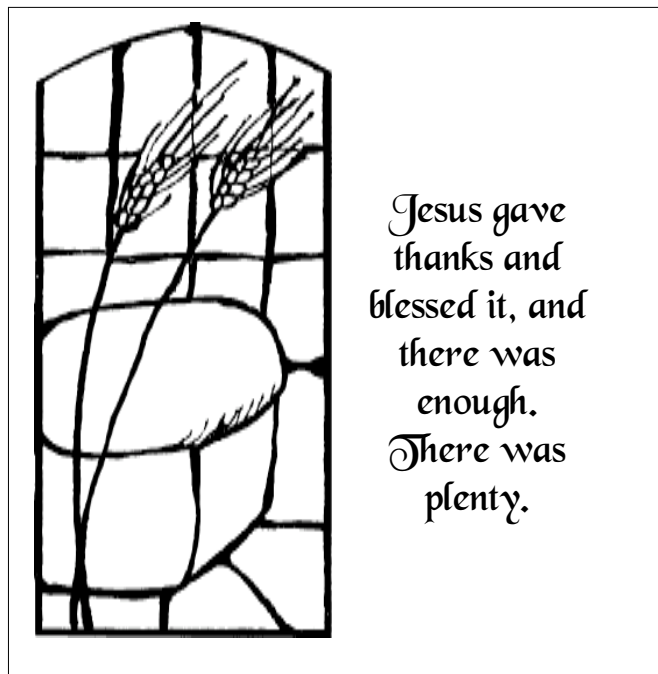
Most of you are probably counting on a pretty good lunch. Some of you have a roast in the oven. Others of you have it laid out ready to go. Some of you are trying to decide in your own mind which restaurant you are going to today. Did you know that in one Big Mac there are 850 calories? That is more calories than many people around the world have for a whole day or even in a whole week. If you prefer Burger King, and you are really hungry, and if you have a double burger with cheese, that is 1,100 calories. That does not include French Fries. That does not include a sugared drink.

No food. No nutrition. No resources. About 35 or 40 years ago, a preacher on the east side of New York City was constantly barraged by people coming to his church wanting help. The church was doing all they could to feed people. He realized that one church, one person could not do it all, but he did not give up. He did not say, like Philip, "We can't do anything about it. It is more than we can afford." He said, "What we need is a larger answer, a larger solution, a larger approach."

So, Arthur Simon founded Bread for the World. He recognized that, although churches everywhere were already raising money and collecting food to give

to people, there also needed to be a lobby representing the poor and the hungry of the world to our government. He realized that changes in public policy were crucial to help people help themselves.

Jesus wants to work a miracle, a miracle through us. Miracles are sometimes just insights. Miracles are



sometimes just what we do with something we already have. The earth does not have to shake. The sky does not have to open for a miracle to occur. It would be miraculous for people of any nation to become Christian enough, selfless enough, willing to share enough to really work on this hunger problem. Enough. There is enough. Enough and more.

We would much rather talk about Jesus walking across the water, had we not, than Jesus feeding the multitude? There is not much chance that any of us is going to walk across a pond today, but there is a good chance that one of us is going to run into somebody who is hungry. We will not want to be inconvenienced by it. There is a good chance that we are going to have some challenge in our community, in our neighborhood, in our country, in our world.

Let Jesus Christ be seen in the feeding of hungry persons. The hardest part of the gospel is that we should follow in the way of Jesus. Later in the Gospel of John, Jesus says to the disciples, "You will do greater things than I have done." Jesus said, "I only fed 5,000 men. How many will you feed? I have given you the wherewithal in the world. How will you use it?"

—Raymond Bailey is pastor of Seventh & James Baptist Church in Waco, Texas. He has played a significant role in the housing and support of the Seeds of Hope ministry at Seventh & James.

Hope in the Face of Hunger

by Walker Knight

If then there is any encouragement in Christ, any consolation from love, any sharing in the Spirit, any compassion and sympathy, make my joy complete: be of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves. Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others. Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness.

--Philippians 2:1-7

World hunger provides the context in which a Christian lifestyle of simplicity, sharing and unity makes more than just common sense to me. If my "manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ," it means I am willing to put others first, ahead of my interests and advantage.

That's not easy. I want the pleasures of our affluent, technological society. I'm also at the place in life where I think more about security than I once did. The hope for anything different, however, has its roots in the encouragement from my life in Christ, with its promise of freedom—from selfishness, from conceit, from over-concern for my interests.

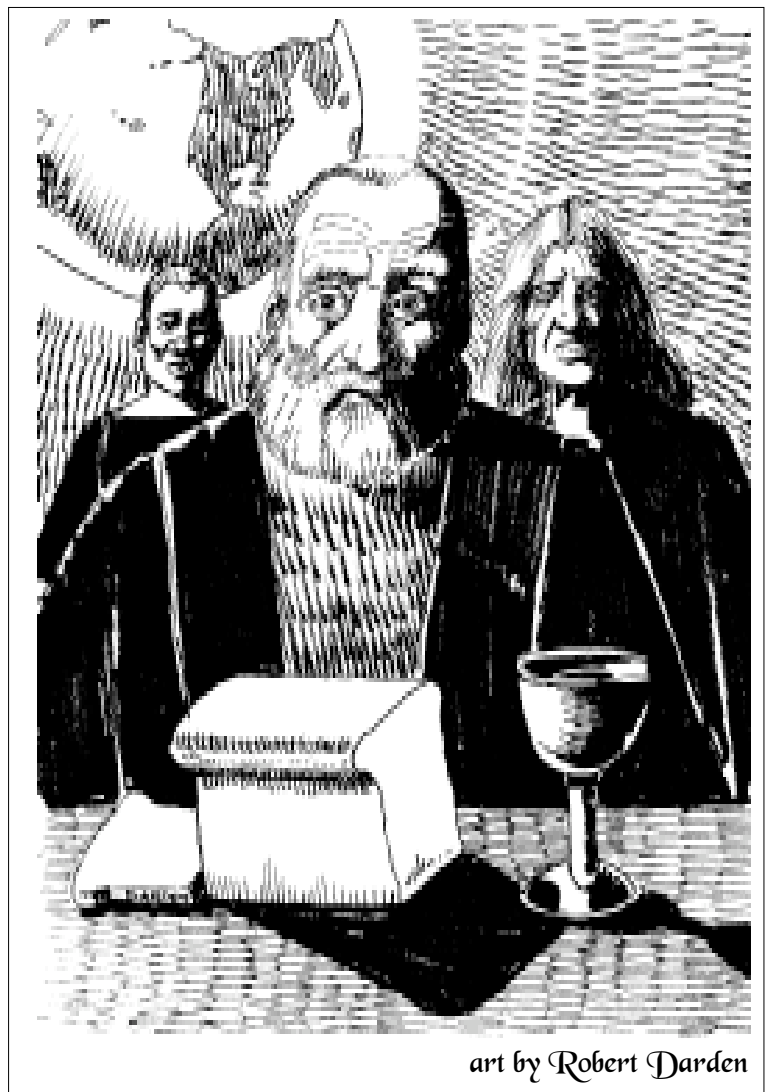
I am free actually to love others. That is, to do what is best for them regardless of the cost to me. I realize that is extremely difficult all of the time, but maybe in my better moments—in those times when the mind which governed Christ governs me—then I live this way.

Christ once again becomes my example. Emptying himself of all privilege, he became a servant. His was no act. No grandstand play. No teaching one thing and doing another. His life was lived as a servant.

That challenges me as few things do, and if I and my Christian brothers and sisters have this mind among us and live as obedient servants, there is hope in the face of hunger.

—Walker Knight is a retired journalist. In the 1960s and 1970s, he edited the highly acclaimed Home Missions magazine, later known as Missions USA. In the early 1980s, he founded the newspaper that is now known as Baptists Today. He attends the church in Decatur, GA, where the Seeds ministry

was born in 1979. He worked closely in those early years with the founding editors. The above reflection is taken from a Seeds publication called Roots of Hope.



art by Robert Darden

Sharing

A Children's Sermon

by Rachel Sciretti

You will need a container of cookies or crackers or fruit, enough for every child. Homemade bread would be a treat, too. As children come to the front, open up the food container and start eating. Really savor and enjoy the food. Ham it up! Do not offer any. Hopefully children will ask questions throughout the sermon and want to have some of the food, too. It is a brief sermon, but the point is powerful.

Mmmm. This is so good. Good morning. I'm so glad to see you. Today we are going to talk about sharing. Man, this cookie is yummy. Sharing is something we learn about when we are pretty young, right?

What kinds of things do you share?

Is it hard to share, or is it easy to share?

I guess it just depends on what it is we're talking about sharing. On Wednesday night after church I brought a piece of cake home and told _____ (family member) he/she could have half of it. Well, the next day, I told him/her that the cake was so good, that I didn't want to share it with him/her anymore. That wasn't very nice was it?

What, you want a cookie? You mean you want me to share? Let me think about it.

To self:

Let's see. If I give him one, then I'll need to give everybody one, and then I won't have very many left. I guess that's okay. I mean, these kids are my friends and after all, I know that is what God would want me to do. Who knows, it might even feel good to share, and it would make all of these children happy.

To group:

Yeah, okay, I'll share with you. But first, let's pray.

Dear God, thank you for all of the good things you give us. Please help us to share what we have with others so that everyone may enjoy your good things. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Pass out the cookies as the children leave.

— Rachel Sciretti is Minister to Children at Lake Shore Baptist Church in Waco, Texas.



art courtesy of the Franciscanos de Cruzblanca

The Best Intentions

A Reflection

by Gene and Jolene Roehlkepartain



Thus says the Lord of hosts: Render true judgements, show kindness and mercy to one another; do not oppress the widow, the orphan, the alien, or the poor; and do not devise evil in your hearts against one another. --Zechariah 7:9-10

You couldn't ignore him. Duct tape and rubber bands held his shattered glasses together. Seven hats decorated his long, matted hair. Three pairs of pants and three shirts covered his gaunt skeleton. His chest bulged because his shirts were stuffed with all his prized possessions. Everything else he owned filled plastic grocery bags that took six trips to bring down the stairs to the church basement.

While others told about their days on the cold December streets, Spencer settled in for the night. He would fish an old, white candle and a plastic rose out of one of the bags, and set them on the table. Then he would read the newspaper, mumbling incoherently about the communists and the Israelis and the war and the end of the world.

No, you couldn't ignore Spencer.

But most people tried.

The city council tried, refusing to acknowledge that the middle-class Chicago suburb had a homeless problem. Spencer and his friends kept showing up conspicuously on cold park benches, in the library or in mass transit stations. Eventually the council had to notice.

Some church people tried to ignore Spencer too. Though they opened their basement for a shelter, they made sure the shelter was empty before the worship service.

But they couldn't ignore Spencer when he wandered into a service and restlessly sorted his belongings during the sermon. Or when he stuffed the extra bread from the communion table into one of his

grocery bags. Or when he came to a church potluck and crammed dinner rolls and chocolate-chip cookies into his pockets.

No, you couldn't ignore Spencer. We tried to be kind to Spencer. After all, we were shelter volunteers. We had read about health problems among the homeless. We wanted to make a difference. We wanted to help.

But Spencer.... How could we help Spencer?

We tried talking to him. But whenever we asked a question, he would pick through his belongings and mumble incoherent answers. No one knew where he came from. No one knew his last name. He was an alien to our world, and we were alien to his.

So we tried at least to keep track of him, hoping the shelter would at least give him some safety. But the shelter only gave him refuge at night. During the day, Spencer meandered the cold streets of his world, while we escaped to the warm security of ours.

No, you couldn't ignore
Spencer. But most
people tried.

When Spencer wasn't waiting outside for the shelter doors to open one night, we tried to ignore it. Maybe he had gone somewhere else that night, we thought. Maybe the warmer weather had enticed him to set up his candle and rose outside. After all, homeless people roamed, right?

But one night turned into two, then three. Other guests commented that they hadn't seen Spencer on the streets lately.

Spencer never came back to the shelter. No one ever saw him again. The only clue we have as to what happened to him was the contents of his grocery bags littering the ground around one of his regular park benches.

We had good intentions... didn't we?

—Gene and Jolene Roehlkepartain are both writers and editors. Jolene is also an artist, and Gene is a photographer. They live in St. Paul, Minnesota. This reflection was part of a *Seeds* publication called *Roots of Hope*, Volume II.

Dressed for the Occasion

a poem

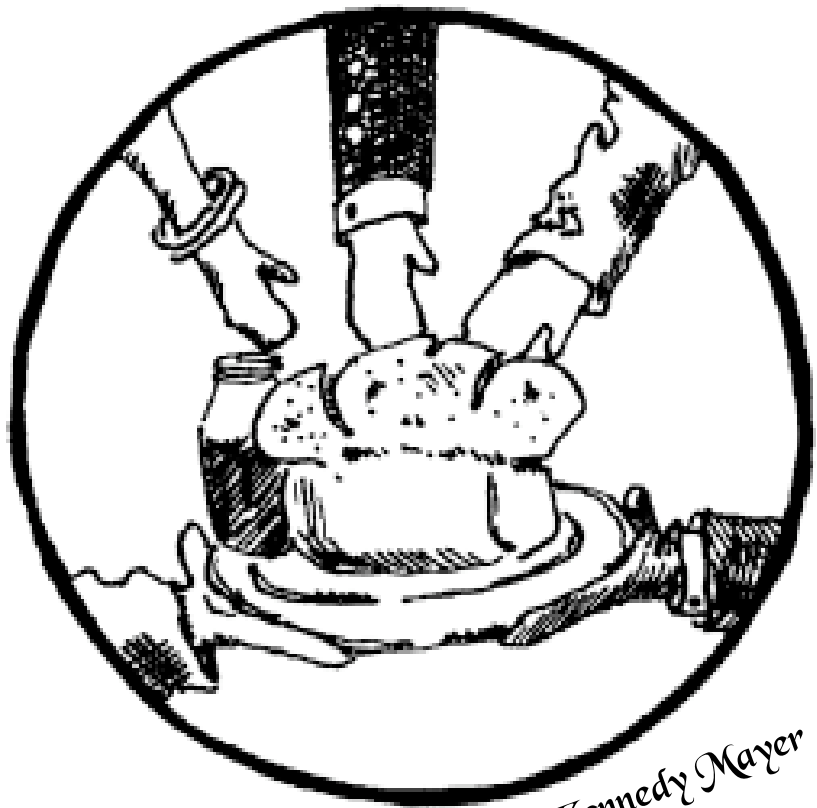
by David Sparenberg

Not everyone comes wearing

a red dress.
Many are content with
white shirts, plaid skirts, blue jeans.
The wounded are wearing
overcoats,
because for them
the world is prematurely cold.
The silly and the cleverest
are dressed as clowns.
And the angels are
naked, between the eyelashes
of our setting sun.

Not everyone comes wearing
the reminder of black,
although pain is everywhere
and loss attends us.
Those who are painted in blood
have wept in the wasting of war.
And those who are
painted with light
are here to heal us.

Friend,
even if I came to you
in the rags of weariness,
the cloak of invisibility or
dust of neglect, the
web of a spider,
would you offer me a drink of water
seeing thirst,
and help to decide
a way, at the crossroads of life?
If I look into your
hands, what will I find:
a golden thread,
the strength of beauty,
a loaf of bread?



art by Erin Kennedy Mayer

—David Sparenberg—a playwright, poet, storyteller, stage director, Shakespearean actor and novelist—works in Seattle. He uses his craft to help people cope with life-threatening illness and loss.

Quotes, Poems & Pithy Sayings

The human is created for transcendence.

It is the Jewish and Christian belief that we are meant for a selfhood that is more than our own selves—that we are by nature created to envision more than we can accomplish, to long for that which is beyond our possibilities.

—from *Gravity and Grace*
Linda-Marie Delloff

Open my eyes that they may see the deepest needs of people.
Move my hands that they may feed the hungry;
touch my heart that it may bring warmth to the despairing;
teach me generosity that welcomes strangers;
let me share my possessions to clothe the naked;
give me the care that strengthens the sick;
make me share in the quest to set the prisoner free.
In sharing our anxieties and our love, our poverty and our prosperity, we partake of your divine presence.

—Canaan Banana, Zimbabwe (from *Church World Service*)

Lord, for today's encounters with all who are in need, who hunger for acceptance, for righteousness and bread, we need new eyes for seeing, new hands for holding on, renew us with your spirit, Lord, free us, make us one!

—Fred Kaan, from the hymn "Help Us to Accept Each Other"

One night our youth minister shared

with us a new perspective on what might have happened in the story of the feeding of the multitude. It is possible, she said, that some of the people watching the boy that day were so moved that they shared their own fish and bread that they had brought. To me, that is no less of a miracle than if the five thousand had been physically fed by the few loaves and fish. Maybe instead of sitting around waiting for the miracle, we should begin the miracle.

—Corley Sims, "Preaching the Gospel without Words," *Sacred Seasons, Hunger Emphasis 2004*

Prayer for Compassion

There is so much suffering, Lord;
Open our eyes to see the need around us.
Open our ears to hear the crying,
Open our hands to lift up the fallen.
Open our hearts to share our blessings.

We sing of your grace—
Give us opportunities for service;
We sing of your love—
Give us opportunities to share;
We sing of you life—
Fill our lives with your compassion.
Amen.

—Mary Ruth Crook, *Fresh from the Word*



art by children of Seventh & James Baptist Church

Little child,

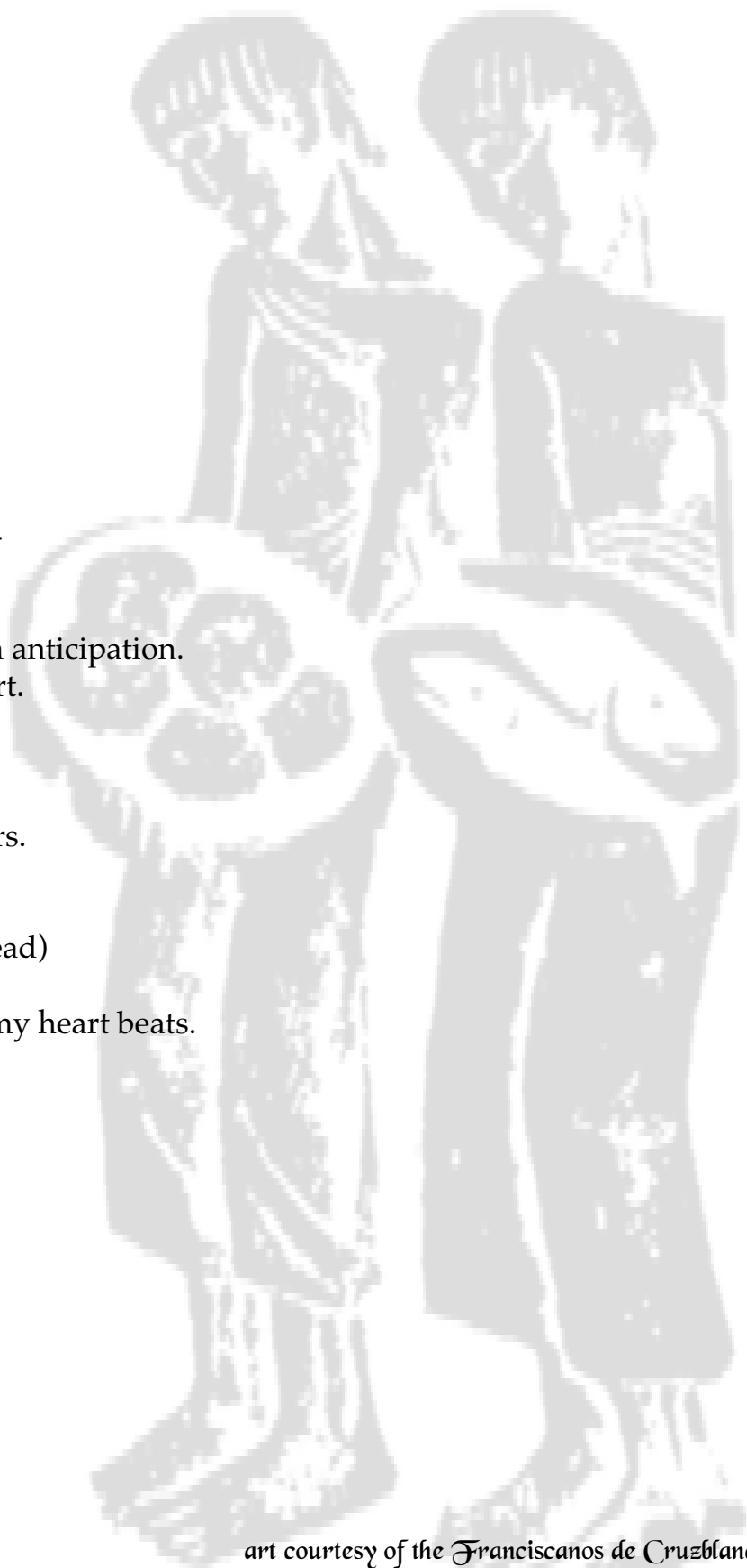
When he took your fish—
When he took your bread—
And broke them I know

I know your heart beat with anticipation.
Anticipation glazes my heart.

As you see and feel
Him feed all those faces
All those brothers and sisters.

My heart is glazed,
Because if you saw (and I read)
Him feed those who follow,
He can move me to where my heart beats.

by Heather Herschap



art courtesy of the Franciscanos de Cruzblanca

—Heather Herschap is a poet who lives in Laredo, Texas. She is preparing to leave for India in May to work as a missionary.

A Case for Smaller Portions

by Nadine Doughty

“Dinner out” is a most popular pastime. Most people in the United States find it a treat to go out and enjoy a meal without the effort of buying the ingredients and cooking them. Sitting at a table and being served is a welcome experience. There’s no cleanup to contend with, either.

However, I don’t understand why so many restaurants present a meal that is far bigger than the average person can eat comfortably. (I recently heard a radio ad boasting a one-pound pork chop!) Three kinds of action can result from this too-large meal; one is okay. Two are not:

- the diner eats part of the meal and takes the leftovers home, where it becomes another meal, or part of one.
- the diner eats the whole portion, and feels overstuffed afterwards. He or she gains unwanted weight.
- the diner eats what he or she can consume comfortably, and leaves the remainder, which sanitary laws dictate must be tossed in the garbage.

Could we press for reducing the quantity of food served? Or, perhaps, as a very small number of restaurants already does, offer “light eater” portions of some menu choices? They would cost moderately less, reflecting the smaller amount of food used.

Not only would smaller portions be healthier for most customers, but there would be less waste of unwanted food.

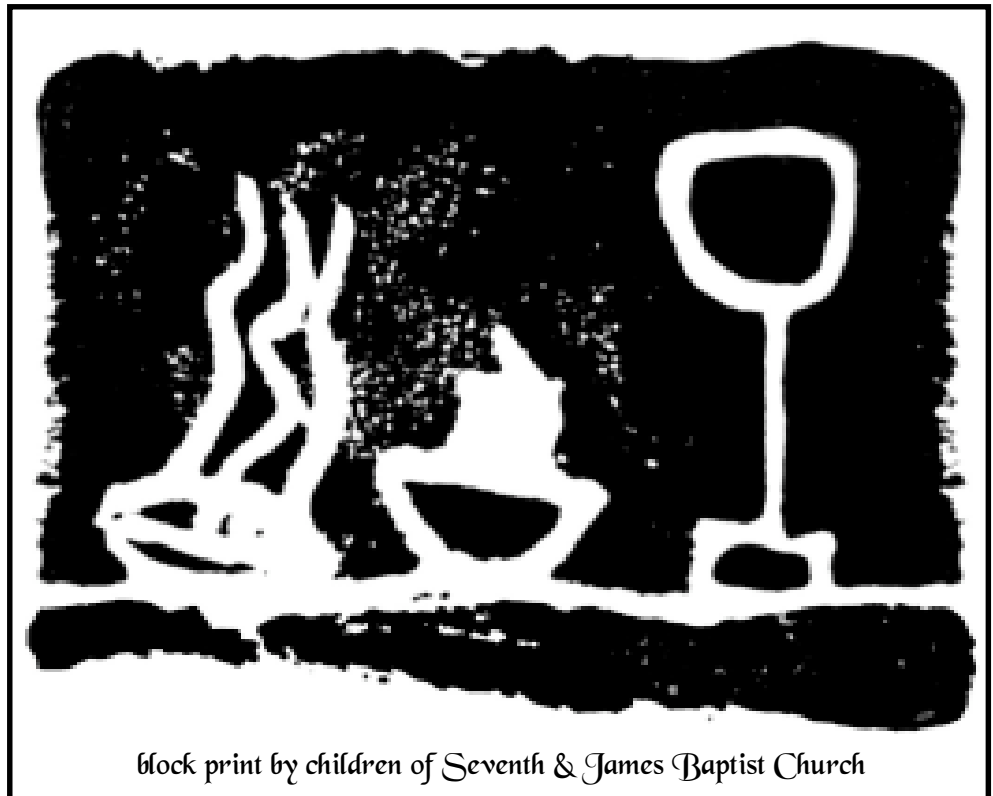
The same suggestion could be applied to our eating habits at home. How

many of us overbuy and cook too much of a dish? How much do we salvage for another meal, and how much is thrown into the garbage? “Buy enough, but not too much,” would be an ideal goal.

With such a habit, we would save money and could use that money for other expenses. Or we could even buy and donate extra food to a local emergency food pantry.

As we read reports of acute food shortages in many parts of the world, it becomes evident that we are in an era of seriously lower food supplies worldwide. Here is one simple way that we could reduce our American consumption and leave more for people who need it, in our own country and worldwide.

—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. The article above was published this summer in *The Evanston Review*.



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Putting People and Pennies Together for Change:

a youth project

by Kristina Harrold and Claire Jansen

Editor's note: The youth group from a church in New London, NH, is asking for change, literally. Striving to raise awareness about the extent of poverty in their town, state, country and world, this youth group has chosen to make a change. They are calling this undertaking The Penny Project. Youth member Kristina Harrold wrote the following account about the birth of this idea.

This very day 20,227 children in New Hampshire will go to bed hungry. That's how many suffer—along with the rest of their family—from poverty. The First Baptist Church (FBC) youth group of New London, New Hampshire, is asking the question, "What are we going to do about this?"

We recently viewed an inspiring movie called *Paper Clips*. The film is about a middle school, in a little Tennessee town, that is studying the Holocaust. Hearing that 6 million Jews were killed, one student asked, "What is 6 million? I've never seen 6 million."

So the story goes on, telling the tale of how these children collected over 6 million paper clips, each representing a life that was lost in the Holocaust.

After seeing this movie, the New London FBC youth group started thinking of ways that they could collect a whole lot of something—something that would affect the community in a positive way. We finally came up with an idea of what we could collect: pennies.

We decided to collect a penny for every single suffering child in the state of New Hampshire. Once all the pennies are collected, we are planning to donate the money to local food pantries, homeless shelters and other organizations, to help those who need it.

Editor's note: Below is Claire Jansen's follow-up on the project.

The No-Eat Retreat

Not long after this, the FBC youth locked themselves into the church for a 24-hour fast. They called it the "No-Eat Retreat." Their challenge was to abstain from eating for a full day.

Their goal was to reflect on poverty and the effect

it has on children who go hungry every day. By the 20th hour, it became apparent that their challenge was not resisting food; it was finding the mental and physical energy to function.

Here's what they reported to the church afterwards:

- We learned that walking to a grocery store on an empty stomach makes the journey much longer—and that most people in developing countries walk much further.
- We learned that living on \$1 a day food budget is almost impossible—and that 1 billion people struggle to live on that amount.
- We learned that poverty is more than a lack of money; it is a lack of opportunity and rights.
- We learned that there is no shortage of food in this world—just a malfunction of distribution.
- And we learned that our generation is the first to have the resources and technology to end poverty.

Update

Within six months of beginning the Penny Project, the FBC youth group had collected 60,000 pennies—one for each child in New Hampshire who lives at or below the poverty level.

All of the pennies filled three Flexible Flyer wagons, which the group—led by FBC youth director Cindy Johnson—rolled to a meeting with Governor John Lynch and several state representatives to discuss their concerns about child poverty in their state.

Since this time, FBC has set a new, higher goal for the Penny Project: collect one penny for each child in the United States who lives in poverty. They are inviting other American Baptist youth groups to get involved.

—This article is reprinted from *Baptist Peacemaker*, the award-winning magazine of the Baptist Peace Fellowship of North America. To learn more about the Penny Project, go to www.penny-project.org. Thanks go to Cindy Johnson for passing along this inspiring story and to Seeds of Hope intern Claire Jansen for compiling it.

Test Your Hunger I.Q.

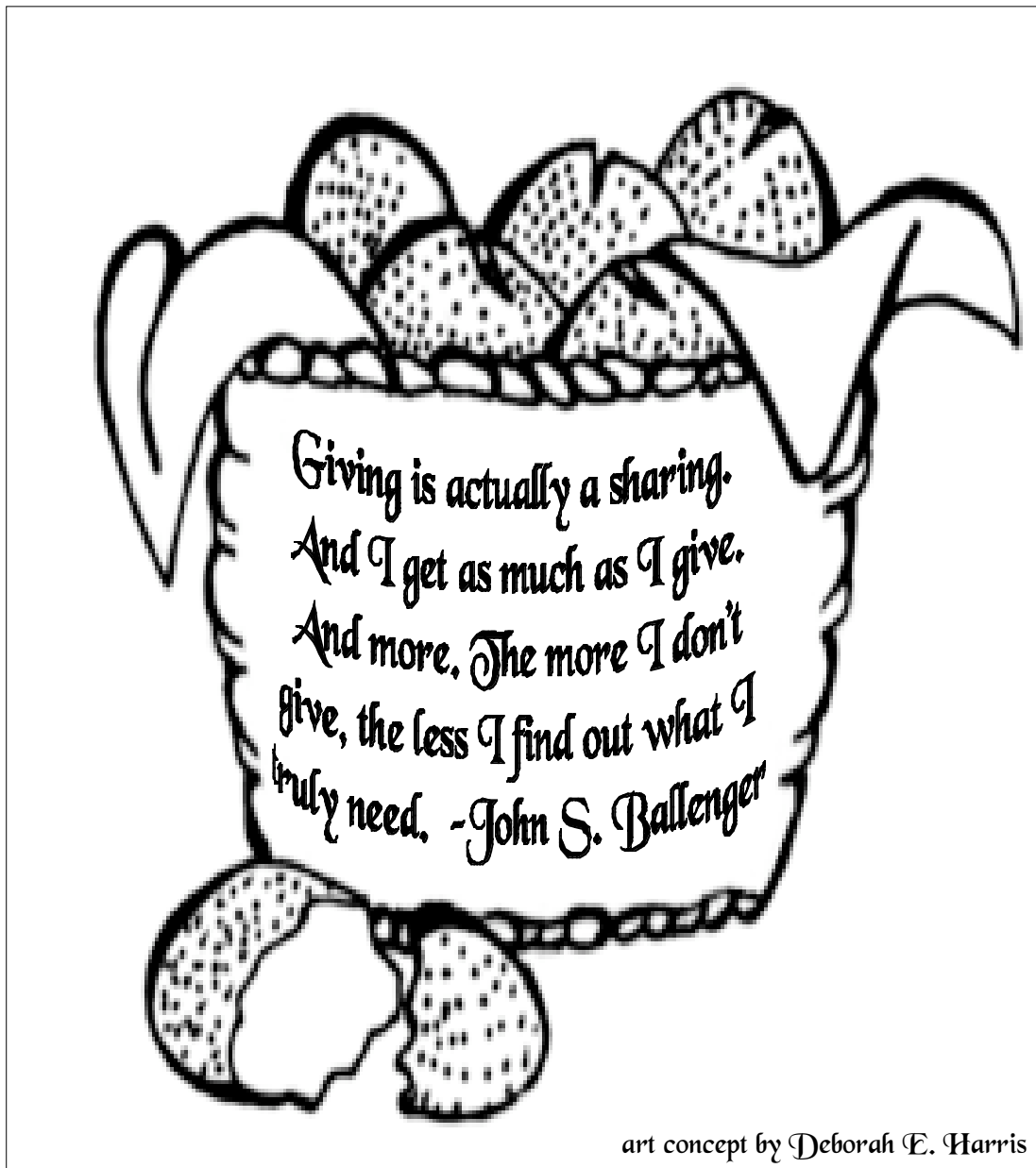
by Lauren Elder

How much do you know about hunger and poverty? The answers to these questions can all be found in the *Sacred Seasons* 2009 Hunger Emphasis packet, so be sure to read closely! Visit our web site (www.seedspublishers.org) for a complete answer list, and be sure to check out our other materials that will allow you and your community to become more aware of the realities of extreme hunger.

1. How many of the world's countries have the potential to grow sufficient food on a sustainable basis?
Virtually all _____ 3/4 _____ 1/2 _____ 1/4 _____
2. The amount of money that the richest one percent of the world's people make each year equals what the poorest _____ percent make.
15 _____ 24 _____ 57 _____ 62 _____
3. What percent of the world's population survives on less than \$1 a day?
5 _____ 12.5 _____ 19.3 _____ 23.4 _____
4. Each day in the developing world, more than _____ die from preventable and treatable diseases, their bodies made weak from malnourishment.
10,000 _____ 20,000 _____ 30,000 _____ 40,000 _____
5. In developing countries, 91 children out of 1000 die before their _____ birthday.
2nd _____ 5th _____ 9th _____ 15th _____
6. What is one of the leading causes of food security crises?
Displacement _____ Job loss _____ High population _____
7. What percent of American households experience hunger or the risk of hunger?
5.2 _____ 10.7 _____ 12.3 _____ 15.8 _____
8. True or false? Children who experience severe hunger suffer from higher levels of chronic illness, anxiety and depression, and behavior problems than do children with no hunger.
True _____ False _____
9. Overall, households with children have nearly _____ the rate of food insecurity as do households without children.
Twice _____ Three times _____ Four times _____
10. True or false? One person or one community cannot make a difference in the fight against extreme hunger and poverty.
True _____ False _____

—Lauren Elder, a native of Tucson, AZ, is a professional writing student at Baylor University

Bulletin Art



What a Prophet Does:

A Lesson for Three Readers

FIRST READER: In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lofty; and the hem of God's robe filled the temple.

SECOND READER: In the year that your leader died, or the year that somebody you loved died, you go into the temple, or you hide your face in the little padded temple of your hands...

FIRST READER: Seraphs were in attendance above him; each had six wings: with two they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they flew. And one called to another and said:

SECOND & THIRD READERS: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of God's glory."

FIRST READER: The pivots on the thresholds shook at the voices of those who called, and the house was filled with smoke.

SECOND READER: And I said: "Woe is me! I am lost, for I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips; yet my eyes have seen the Holy One, the Lord of hosts!"

FIRST READER: Then one of the seraphs flew to me, holding a live coal that had been taken from the altar with a pair of tongs. The seraph touched my mouth with it and said:

THIRD READER: "Now that this has touched your lips, your guilt has departed and your sin is blotted out."

FIRST READER: Then I heard the voice of God saying,

THIRD READER: "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Whom shall I send into a world where people die?"

SECOND READER: And I said, "Here am I; send me!"

FIRST READER: And God said,

THIRD READER: "Go and say to this people: Keep listening, but do not comprehend; keep looking, but do not understand. Make the mind of this people dull, and stop their ears, and shut their eyes.... Go give the deaf Hell till you're blue in the face, and go show the blind Heaven till you drop in your tracks...Go do it."

SECOND READER: Then I said, "How long, O Lord?"

FIRST READER: And God said,

THIRD READER: "Until cities lie waste without inhabitant, and houses without people, and the land is utterly desolate.... Do it until Hell freezes over. Do it until the cows come home."

FIRST READER: And that is what a prophet does for a living, and, starting from the year that King Uzziah died when he saw and heard all these things, Isaiah went and did it.

— Adapted by Katie Cook from *Isaiah 6:1-13*, with excerpts from *Peculiar Treasures* by Frederick Buechner



art by Rebecca S. Ward

Does it Have to be Me?

by Larkin Rossiter

Text: Isaiah 6:1-13

“Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?” asks Yahweh. Not me! I live among a people of unclean lips and unclean hands. But all we want is good food and clean water, a nice car and a well-built house. And oh yes, a boat and a television and jewelry and a computer.

I am not worthy to be God’s witness. I am only worthy to be a hearer of God’s witness by a poor and hungry person. Only the oppressed deserve to be listened to.

God? Try somebody in Ethiopia or China or Haiti, not me. They don’t have a roomful of books or a three-bedroom house or a Cadillac. At least try an African-American or Mexican-American. Their oppressive experiences give them divine perspectives. What could a white, honky, gringo boy like me have to add?

I don’t think that even burning hot coals could purify my evil mouth. If I left them in there long enough, they might burn up my tongue so I could never speak lies again. But such could never take away my guilt, my complicity in an exploitative system of greed.

God, you could take away my past sins, forgive them and remove the guilt. But I’m not truly repentant. I will do these same sins over and over again. My friends and neighbors, enemies and seducers, all hear the cry of the oppressed but do not understand; see the bleeding sores, the skin and bones, but do not perceive.

Maybe that’s what I am supposed to witness to! God, could you want me to tell my child and parents, Christians and Muslims and Jews, that our God deserves better from us? And that we must not let our past sins and guilt stop us from changing in the future?



art by Rebecca S. Ward

Our prayers and fasting can be part of your cleansing our mouths and bodies. Maybe then our minds will be sharp, our ears will hear and our eyes will see what you are revealing to us about the future of our society.

Just as Babylon was burned and Baghdad was bombed, surely our present and future skyscrapers will be strewn about the landscape; Washington will be wasted. The homeless will continue to be houseless, and the householders will become homeless.

So here am I, God, send me. Send me to preach and teach the destruction of our nation. I guess

it takes a corrupted person to prophesy to a corrupt generation. Not that we will change much.

I’ll still give the “illegal alien” from Guatemala food and clothing, after listening to his problems through a translator, but will I really hear your revelation from him about my own society? As violence ravages his country and millions flee, what can I learn from him when the violence ravages my country? Or perhaps the war of the privileged versus the poor has already begun? Great?!? Thanks a lot, God!

So send you me to work unrewarded, to tell a truth I don’t want to deal with and that others don’t want to hear. Thanks, God. But that’s the way it was for Moses and Jesus and Muhammed. So send me, too. Here I stand, in awe before you. And here I go, but you darn well better be with me.

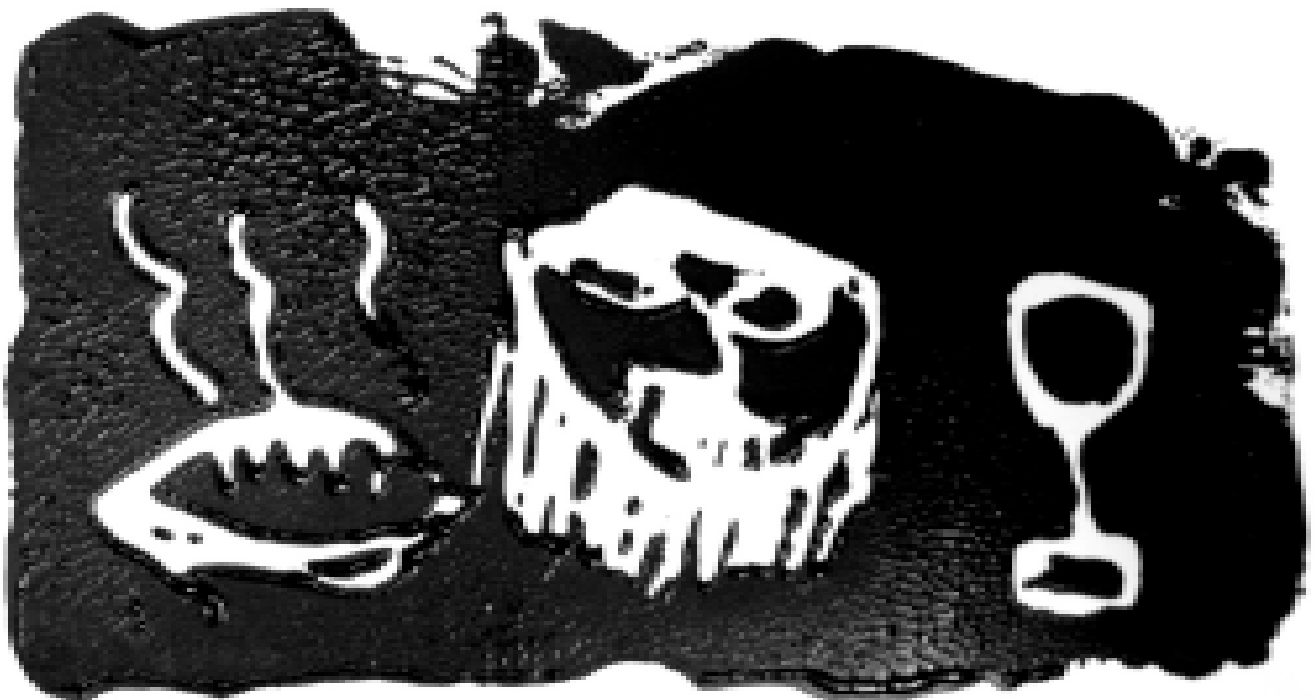
—Larkin Rossiter, at this writing, was pastor of the United Churches Fellowship in Nogales, Arizona. Before moving to the Southwest, he taught and served at Shaw Divinity School in Raleigh, North Carolina. This reflection was part of a Seeds publication called Roots of Hope, Volume II.

**So send you me to work unrewarded, to tell a truth I don’t want to deal with and that others don’t want to hear.
Thanks, God.**

Benediction

Holy God,
Feed us with the bread we need for this day.
Infuse us with the strength and passion
for the days to come.
Walk with us,
sing your song into our hearts,
stay with us
to the end of the journey.
For we cannot make it
without you.
Amen.

—John Garland and Katie Cook



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