

Forty days to better understanding

The folks at Seeds of Hope believe that authentic work towards healing hunger comes from an inner strength, which comes from spiritual disciplines. We also believe that a concerted effort, even by a small number of people, to observe a time of prayer together can make a huge difference in how we all face the problems of hunger and poverty. This forty-day calendar is designed to help you prepare spiritually for the work ahead of us. We challenge you to use the scriptures and suggestions on these two pages to make these forty days a holy season. —with blessings from the Seeds of Hope staff and Council of Stewards

Proverbs 14:21

7 Every time you go grocery shopping, buy extra canned foods, peanut butter, or other staples for your local food pantry. Pantries across the US are serving more and more people each month, making it increasingly hard to keep the shelves stocked.

11 Matthew 25: 31-46

Look for **Finding Grace: The Face of America's Homeless**, a book of stunning portraits of homeless people in Dallas, photographed by Lynn Blodgett

14 Find out if your local restaurants and grocery stores give their extra food to feeding programs. If they don't, help them organize a food reclamation project. Go to www.foodrescue.net for more information.

1 Luke 9:10-17
Get a Bible commentary and look up all of the references to feeding the poor. Compare this with references to other prominent issues today.

4 *Hunger for the Word: Lectionary Reflections on Food and Justice*, edited by Larry Hollar, is now available for Lectionary Years A-C. Order Year B now for yourself or your pastor at www.litpress.org.

8 **Hold a Spamfest!** The Red Door Pantry, a food pantry for HIV/AIDS patients in Waco, Texas, has discovered that their recipients love the canned meat Spam. You can organize a SpamFest by showing a Monty Python movie, charging an admission of 2 cans of Spam. Then find a pantry nearby that distributes to HIV/AIDS patients, and give them the Spam you collected.

12 Carry an extra apple or sandwich in your lunch or briefcase. Give it to people who ask for money.

15 **Are you a youth or children's leader?** Check out the new Seeds of Hope resource, HOPE IS IN OUR HANDS: Lessons & Activities about Hunger for Children & Youth, at www.seedspublishers.org.

2 Leviticus 23: 22
Find out how many things you buy are made in China. Contact the company from which you bought it, and ask about the working conditions of the people who made the product. Share your information with your church group by showing the movie listed on Day 3.

5 Psalm 41: 3
Go to bed hungry and pray for those who have to do this every night.

9 1 Cor. 4:9-13
Volunteer to work at a soup kitchen and then sit down and talk to the guests.

16 Job 5:1-16
Learn what you can about fair trade coffee. See if your church is involved in the Equal Exchange interfaith coffee program (see www.equalexchange.com). Write to the Folger's, Maxwell House, and Nestle companies and urge them to give their farmers a decent price for their beans. If you use a local brand, ask the store manager to find out what their buying practices are.

3 Watch the movie **WHAT WOULD JESUS BUY?** from Reverend Billy and the "Church of Stop Shopping." The film is humorous and poignant. If you do the task on Day 2, it will prepare you for the movie. Go to www.revilly.com to find the movie.

6 Drink only water for one week. Most people don't have the luxury to choose what to drink. Many people don't have access to water that's safe to drink, and many have to walk two miles to get water.

10 Bread for the World's 2008 Offering of Letters is concerned with the Millennium Development Goals. Go to www.bread.org to find out how to write your legislators about the Global Poverty Act.

13 Jeremiah 22:13-16
Find a copy of the *Simply in Season* Children's Cookbook by Mark Beach and Julie Kauffman. Help children learn where their food comes from. From Herald Press: www.heraldpress.com, 800-245-7894

17 Organize a group in your church to assemble kits for workers helping to clean up after the recent hurricanes hit the US East Coast and Gulf Coast. Church World Service (www.churchworldservice.org) will tell you how to assemble them and where to send them.

18 Deut. 14:28 -15:11
Read about the UN's Millenium Development Goals, and what progress has been made in eight years, in *Hunger News & Hope*, Vol 9, No 4. Go to www.seedspublishers.org to download the issue.

19 Ezekiel 16:48-49
After three years, the people of New Orleans are still struggling to rebuild—especially in poor neighborhoods. Contact your denominational missions office and find out if you can do something through their ministries. Or you could look up CHURCHES SUPPORTING CHURCHES, a group of churches across North America who are helping minority churches to rebuild in New Orleans. Go to www.cscneworleans.org for more information.

25 Luke 19:1-10
Pray for the people of East Timor, the world's newest country. After the election in which the people voted to become independent of Indonesia, government-backed militias burned most of East Timor to the ground. Pray for a return of abundant harvest and peace.

29 1 John 3:16-18
Set up a church-wide collection point for recyclable materials. Suggest that each person bring his or her own mug to use—or volunteer to wash dishes, so that you can avoid using styrofoam.

33 2 Kings 4:42-45
Look up the country of Burma (Myanmar) and find out about the Karen people who are being systematically oppressed and expelled by the ruling *junta*. Find out what your denomination is doing to help the Karen, and what you can do to help.

34 1 Timothy 6:17-19
Pray for people who work in relief and development, especially in war-torn places.

38 Matthew 19:16-23
Look at the labels on your clothing. Did it come from a sweat shop? (See www.fairtrade-federation.org or www.sweatshops.org.)

22 Proverbs 14:31
Discuss this with a church group: The UN World Food Programme says that 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.

26 Isaiah 61:1-4
Buy a meal, and, instead of eating it yourself, take it to a homeless person.

30 Isaiah 58:6-12
Try to make a budget for four on minimum wage in your community

35 Esther 9:20-23
Find the chocolate in your pantry and look up the company to see if they are involved in child slave labor. If you can't tell, write to them and ask if they have signed the International Harkin-Engel Protocol, and what they have done to end the exploitation of children in cocoa farming.

39 Leviticus 25:8-17
Don't eat between meals today.

20 1 Samuel 2:1-8
Join the ONE Campaign (www.one.org) launched by celebrities like Bono to respond to AIDS and poverty. Wear the white bracelet or T-shirt and explain the campaign to anybody who asks about it.

23 Luke 16:19-31
US Americans give 15 cents per day in government assistance to poor countries. We spend 60 cents a day on soft drinks. See if you can do without soft drinks for a week, and give the money you save to your church's benevolence fund.

27 Job 31:16-28
Three billion people in the world live on less than \$2 a day. See if you can do it today.

31 Luke 4:14-21
Check out a curriculum called *Just Eating? Practicing Our Faith at the Table*, produced by Church World Service, Advocate Health Care, and the Presbyterian Hunger Program. Look on the PHP web site: www.pcusa.org/hunger.

36 Luke 10:29-37
Shop for your clothes at a thrift store instead of a trendy shop.

40 Zechariah 7:8-12
Hunger seems like such an insurmountable problem that it is tempting to turn away and simply not think about it. You and I can't do everything, but we can do something. Write down a SHORT list of the things on this calendar that appealed to you, or that you think you might be able to do well and consistently. Place the list somewhere where you'll see it daily. Pledge to do what little you can. Everything—EVERYTHING—you do will make a difference.

21 Deuteronomy 10:12-19
Find out if your community has a CROP Walk to raise money for hunger causes. If so, get involved. If not, talk to people about organizing one. For more information, see the CROP Walk page at www.churchworldservice.org

24 Galatians 6: 7-10
Go through the Gospels and find all of the "miracles of abundance," such as the feeding of the multitudes. How many times is that story told? What other miracles of abundance can you find?

28 Romans 12:9-21
Organize a blanket and warm clothing drive in your church. Give the items to a local shelter. Donate one of your favorite garments.

32 Amos 8:4-7
Think about this for an alternative youth retreat: **LIVING ON THE OTHER SIDE**, a poverty experience at World Hunger Relief's Training Farm in Elm Mott, Texas. Go to www.worldhungerrelief.org for information.

37 Matthew 6:25-34
Look a homeless person in the eye.

—Katie Cook, editor, Seeds of Hope