



Hunger News & Hope

...a Seeds of Hope publication

Acts of God: *Giving Those Words New Meaning*

Late last August, we watched footage of long lines of cars on highways stretching to the Gulf Coast from various places. These people were not driving away from Hurricane Harvey—they were driving from their safe homes right into the middle of the devastation. They went to help. Immediately. The stricken cities along the coast would not have made it without their help.

Almost immediately after the hurricane and subsequent flood made their marks on Texas, we heard of more hurricanes sweeping through Florida, wiping out Caribbean islands on their way. Puerto Rico, in the process of bouncing back from Hurricane Irma, was then slammed by Maria. As you will read in this issue, much of the island is still without power. And then, within days, there were earthquakes in Chiapas in southernmost Mexico—and then in Mexico City and Oaxaca. As soon as we heard of these occurrences, we also began to receive reports of people moving in to all of these areas to help clean up and rebuild.

When these natural hazards occur, the lack of infrastructure to minimize the damage, and provide basic necessities for evacuees causes disaster. Sometimes the local community is not prepared. Sometimes conditions are so bad it doesn't matter whether it is prepared or not. Sometimes political maneuvering, and what looks like total apathy on the part of national leaders, delay that assistance.

But all of these bureaucratic tangles, maddening as they are, don't seem to stop ordinary people from pitching in, any way they know how. Churches opened their doors—even though they might be under water or rubble themselves—and became central receiving areas for stranded folks, for goods and supplies. In Houston, the eccentric Jim McIngvale, known as Mattress Mack, opened his chain of mattress stores for displaced people to sleep. He then organized meals for them all. An Episcopal church in The Woodlands, an affluent community about 35 miles northwest of Houston, discovered and rescued immigrant families who were afraid to ask for help.

Insurance companies, the Internal Revenue Service and others refer to these natural hazards as "acts of God," and that is how they are treated under law. However, we would like to propose that those are merely natural hazards. The real "acts of God" are the countless encounters motivated by kindness. In these pages, you will read about the mind-boggling number of devastating natural hazards that occurred globally in 2017. You will also read a handful of stories about the true acts of God. May we remember the innumerable acts they represent. May we find in them inspiration, innovative ideas, strength—and, most of all, hope. —lkc

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Acts of God, Acts of Mercy

by Chelle Samaniego

One player in particular—J.J. Watt, defensive end for the Houston Texans—forged a massive fundraising campaign that gathered more than

\$37 million in donations, substantially exceeding its initial goal of \$200,000. In fact, Mr. Watt was awarded the Sporting Inspiration award at the recent Laureus World Sports Awards for his efforts. In his acceptance speech, Mr. Watt shared these thoughts:

I didn't do anything special. I just gave everybody an opportunity to help. Everybody else did the work. As athletes, we have a great platform. People all over the world watch us. They follow our every move. We need to use that for good. We need to use that to help change the world for the better. We live in a very negative time. But, there's so much positivity out there. The more light we can shine on that positivity the better off this world is gonna be. (NBC News)

Clothing drives, fundraisers, even prayer gatherings—all coming from groups who normally have pep rallies against each other. This is all from teams who have one goal—to win games in order to win championships. As Mr. Watt said, we need to use that for good.

Sources for this story: KFSN-TV (ABC30 Action News, Fresno, CA); New York Daily News; The Huntsville Item (Huntsville, TX); The Tennessean (Nashville, TN); J.J. Watts on the You Caring fundraising website (www.youcaring.com) and on NBC News; University Business Magazine (Trumbull, CT); Laureus Sport for Good Foundation (located in 35 countries).

Teens Take Part in Hurricane Harvey Relief Efforts

Hurricane Harvey came onto the Gulf of Mexico shore just days shy of the 2017-2018 school year. With school set to start on August 28, area students not only lost housing and stability, but some also lost their entire schools, their stadiums and all the supplies they needed to start the year. Teens across the nation sought to change that.

Students as far as Chicopee High School in Massachusetts reached out to fellow teens in the Houston area to see what they could do to help after Hurricane Harvey hit the Texas coast on August 25. During lunch, students collected donations and toiletry items and shipped them directly to Houston's Deer Park High School.

The *Help Comes FIRST* initiative started by the Qbitz FIRST Robotics team of Lakeville South High School sent much-needed school supplies all the way from Lakeville, MN. This six-member team of 15-year-olds started an Amazon.com wish list while working with students in Houston. With everything from backpacks to rulers, the

Football Rivalries on Hold after Hurricane Harvey

If you know Texas, you've heard about its love of football. High school, college, professional—Texans love it all. What we love most are the rivalries. Two teams from different cities competing against each other, fueled by adrenaline and the best fans Texas can offer.

Some may—and have—seen this as idolatry. But, whatever your stance, when Hurricane Harvey hit the Texas coast on August 25, 2017, rivalries old and new were set aside and replaced by assistance and hope. And not just in Texas. All across the United States, teams came together for a common good.

In Tennessee, one Friday night became a united front as the Tennessee Football Coaches Association wanted to do all they could for their friends after the hurricane. One mass email went out to more than 500 members, including high school coaches, assistants and middle school coaches, encouraging that donations be accepted at every single football game in the state. All the proceeds would be sent directly to the Texas High School Coaches Association, which was then filtered to the Red Cross in Texas.

In Hanford, CA, sophomore Noah Frank of Sierra Pacific High School couldn't stand the thought of people being pushed out of their homes. He and his fellow students had an idea. Instead of relaxing at the first home game of the season, students manned stations at the front gate, receiving monetary and clothing donations, while others walked throughout the crowds asking for help for those in need. In the end, \$1,200 was raised at the game, with all proceeds going to the American Red Cross.

Texas colleges were quick to respond. The historically black Prairie View A&M University (in Prairie View, TX, about 48 miles northwest of Houston) distributed emergency grants to faculty, staff and students living in affected areas.

Baylor University in Waco kept college football alive in the wake of the storm by hosting a game between No. 3 Sam Houston State, located in Huntsville, 70 miles north of downtown Houston, and No. 7 ranked Richmond, completely free for fans. Baylor provided the stadium rent-free to bring a little normalcy back to Texas.

Members of professional football teams supported Hurricane Harvey efforts, as well. The Dallas Cowboys, New England Patriots and the NFL Foundation each pledged \$1 million to the United Way of Greater Houston's Flood Relief Fund.

wish list helped donors know exactly what to purchase. Wanting their resources to go to the right place, the group partnered with Trial Lawyers Care, a non-profit organization with previous experience in school supply drives and distribution, to help them get the supplies to the places with the most need.

Students from Hinkley High School in Colorado traveled 1,060 miles to Dickinson, TX in Galveston County. Twenty-five students spent one week in this town of 18,000, repairing homes, carrying out debris and lending a helping hand. Estimates show that 75 percent of homes in Dickinson received water damage in the storm. Just to make the trip, the students spent weeks raising \$30,000 while gathering supplies and donations of tools in order to help rebuild. They also didn't use this as a vacation from school. The students worked all day, then completed their school work at night.

Whatever your age, God can use you to do mighty acts of compassion. These young adults prove that healing and kindness can come from any age.

Sources: WWLP-TV (Springfield, MA); Lakeville Area Public Schools, Lakeville, MN, ABC13 Eyewitness News (Houston,

Below: Salvador Gomez Colon delivers much-needed supplies to a Puerto Rico resident without power. Photo is from his blog.



TX); American Association for Justice. Note: for specific websites, email seedseitor1@gmail.com.

Ninth-grader Brings Light to Puerto Rico after Maria

Fifteen-year-old Salvador Gomez Colon could not believe the struggles he and his family endured after Hurricane Maria decimated Puerto Rico. The Category 4 storm made landfall on Sept. 20, 2017, ripping roofs off of houses, tearing apart lives and putting the island of 3.4 million residents in the dark.

To help his fellow Puerto Ricans, Salvador launched a crowdfunding campaign called “Light and Hope for Puerto Rico” and the C+Feel=Hope campaign, an effort to raise funds to purchase portable solar lamps, phone chargers and hand-operated washing machines to people in the most desperate areas of need. So far, his initiative has raised around \$130,000 by both the crowdfunding platform in addition to a corporate donation.

In a recent post from his crowdfunding page, hosted by Generosity.com, Salvador shared,

Last week, C+Feel=Hope for Puerto Rico team visited Cejas Verdes in Comerío. We were able to provide solar lamps and hand-powered washing machines to over 215 families. It brings us a great joy to help families that have been in the “dark” for almost 200 days since Hurricane María.

Salvador’s ingenuity and the generous hearts of more than 1,200 donors have changed the lives of people affected by the worst storm to hit Puerto Rico in 80 years. He concluded in his latest post,

We are so grateful for the opportunity to provide hope one family at a time! We celebrate the accomplishment of having positively impacted 1,276 families so far. More to come! Grateful for your continuous support.

On March 15, 2018, the Cable News Network (CNN) reported that 120,000 Puerto Ricans were living without power. You can donate to the C+Feel=Hope campaign at <https://www.generosity.com/emergencies-fundraising/light-and-hope-for-puerto-rico-a-citizen-campaign>.

Author’s Note: On April 18, 2018, seven months after Hurricane Maria, Puerto Rico was once again plunged into darkness — this time due to a contractor error. It took 36 hours for power to be restored. Sadly, this isn’t the first time this has happened. With the uncertainty of common amenities, a mass exodus is now occurring on the island. In fact, 300 schools are set to close simply because there are no longer students to fill them. With estimated reconstruction costs already at \$2.5 billion, many Puerto Ricans are still without power at press time, with US national leaders preparing to cut off even more access to help. Sources: World Vision, Fox News, Teen Vogue, CNN, Generosity.com, New York Times.

—Chelle Samaniego is a regular reporter and Social Media editor for Seeds of Hope. Her lead story, “The Perfect Storm: How Aid Cuts, Drought & War Will Kill 20 Million People This Year If We Don’t Help,” printed in the Spring 2017 issue of *Hunger News & Hope*, received an Associated Church Press award. She also works tirelessly with local groups like the Heart of Texas Homeless Coalition, Caritas of Waco, and the McLennan County Hunger Coalition.

How 2017 Natural Hazards Affected Food Security

by Rachel Boyle

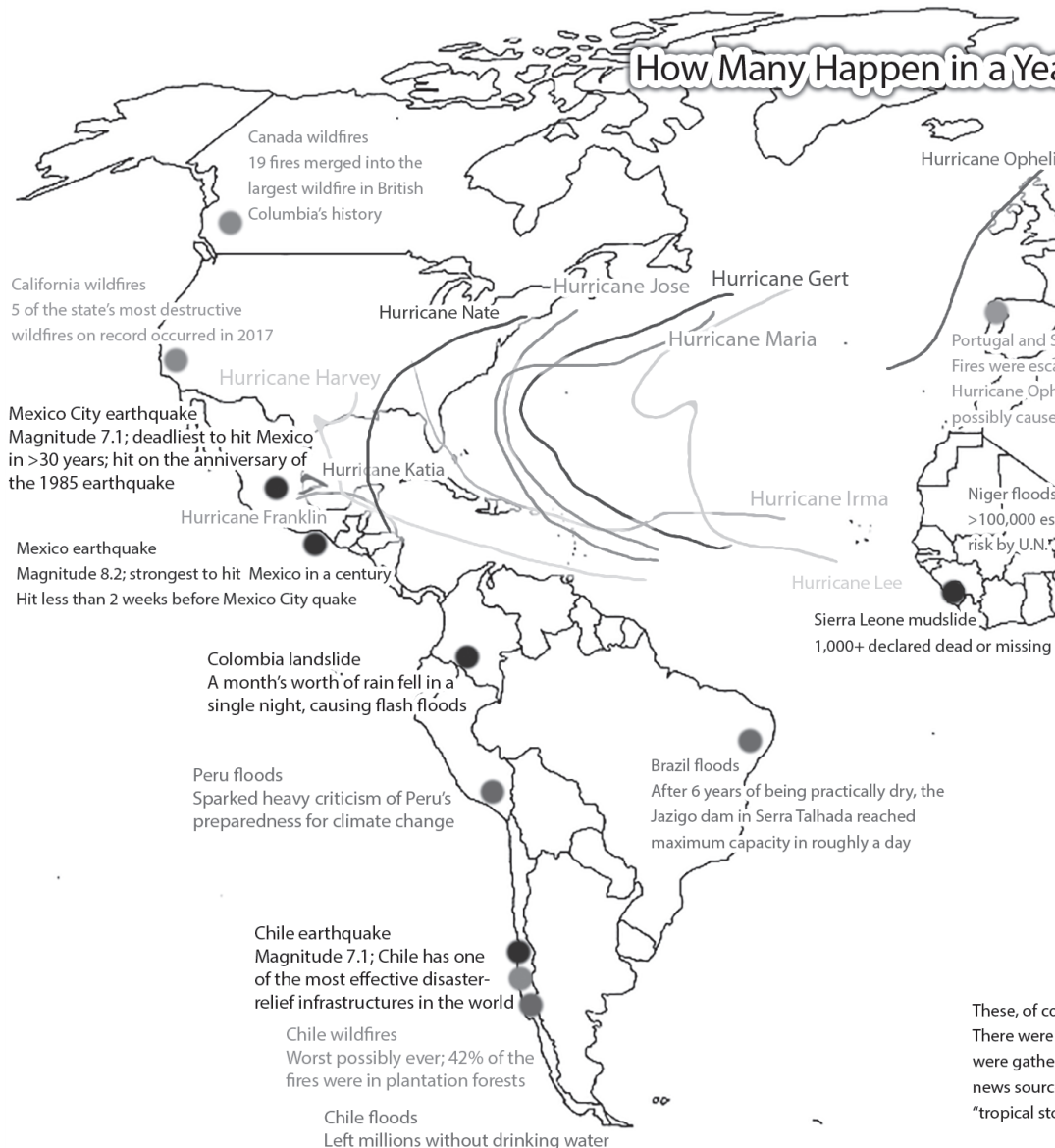
“Water, water, every where / nor any drop to drink.” *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* captures the irony that haunts flood victims. News statistics focus mainly on deaths, but many, many times that number face losses of all kinds, including deprivation of food and water.

The most obvious cause of food insecurity from flooding is the destruction of farmland and contamination of stored food. For example, the Cable News Network (CNN) reported that Bangladesh, which invests almost half its labor force in agriculture, was a third underwater at the peak of the 2017 floods. According to the *Dhaka Tribune*, Bangladesh faced a shortfall of 1.5 million tons of rice, and, as a result, resorted to importing rice from India for the first time in years.

Accessing available food can be problematic as well. Flood damage can cause people to become stranded. Telephone and electrical lines are downed, roads are underwater and bridges are washed away. Emergency vehicles can't reach their targets, whether to bring people out or food relief in. *Al Jazeera* reported that, when Mumbai flooded in summer 2017, even rescue teams were stranded. Those who are stranded have only the food supplies that they can rescue or forage.

An even more insidious obstacle emerges when food is present, but those in need can't afford it. In Mumbai, for example, 60 percent of the population lives in slums, and many are daily-wage laborers. At the end of August, public transit shut down and Mumbaikars had to wade through hip-deep water to get anywhere. Those laborers who can't earn daily wages can't buy food, even if there is food to be had. The homeless face an additional problem, as *The Guardian* revealed in an interview with a Mumbaikar: a lack

of dry places to cook food. Illnesses exacerbate the monetary issues. Some waterborne diseases come from floodwaters polluted by heavy metals and bacteria, while others come from breeding mosquitos. Walking in opaque water risks foot-cuts and tetanus. Snakes, driven to the same dry areas humans are, bite more people than usual. People handling human remains risk tuberculosis and more. Medicines cost money, and poorer victims may have to choose between medicine and food. Those who are ill may or may not be physically able to feed themselves. Children can become vulnerable if their caretakers die, because of youth or illness or monetary deficiency.



“Nor any drop to drink” can become, all too easily, “nor any crumb to eat.”

•••

The longer-term challenge here is going to be food security, as so many of the farms experienced crop damage. This food shortage is already felt here in Matanzas [Cuba], as there are very few food vendors in the street (in the past they were on every other corner), and the bodegas and stores don't have eggs, chicken, and other staples. They expect this problem to worsen before it gets better, with another crop season.

— Stan Dotson, at the Ecumenical Theological Seminary in Matanzas, Cuba, where Hurricane Maria hit

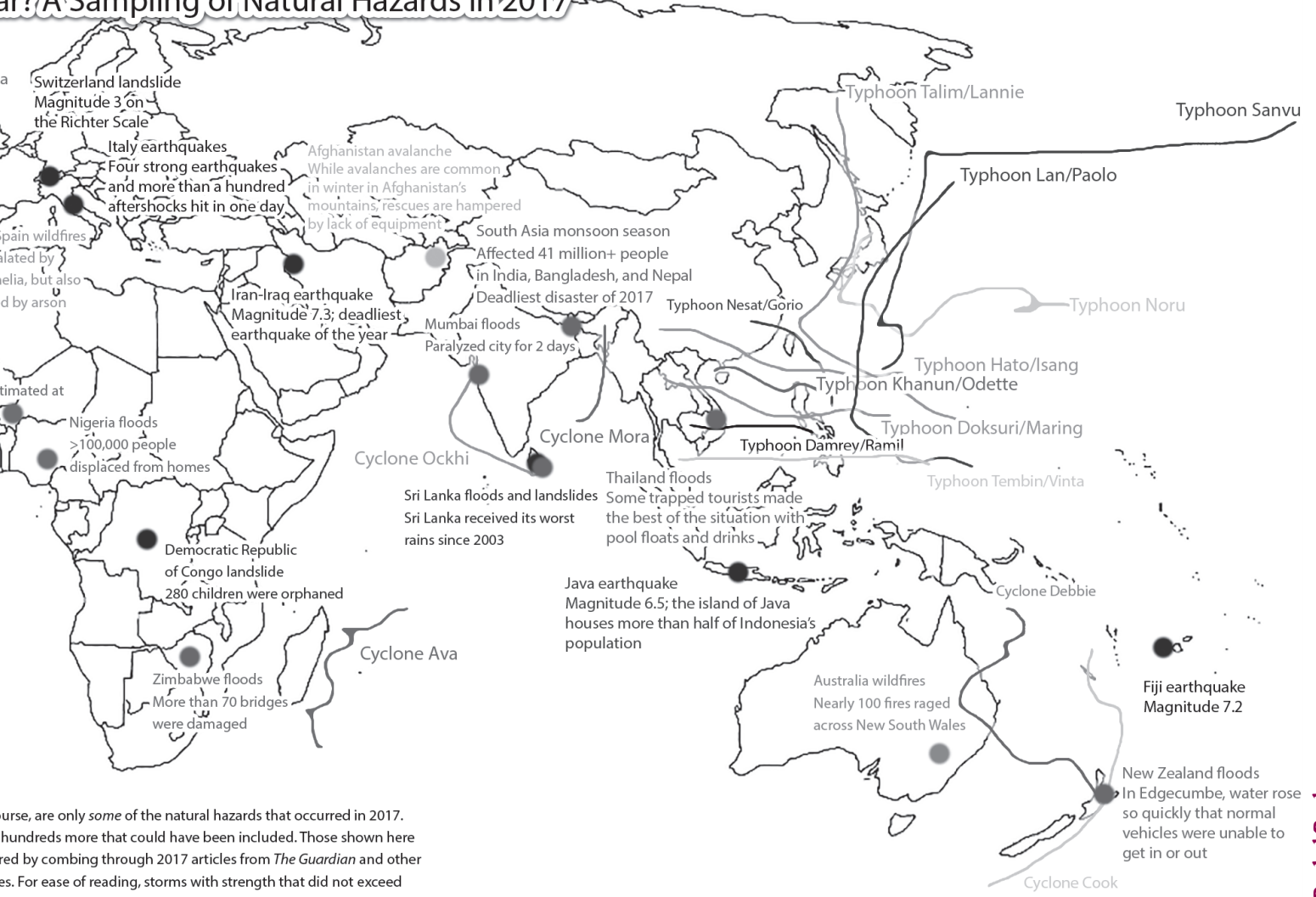
This scenario is, sadly, far from uncommon after a disaster caused by natural hazards. A Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) of the United Nations (UN) report

says, “indirect losses experienced by the agriculture sector in the seasons after a disaster are twice as high as the direct damage to agricultural assets.” These losses come in many forms: lost future product of livestock; collapse of buildings meant to shelter such livestock; lost cultivation tools; irrigation damage; and redirection of the labor pool towards more immediate needs. Farms themselves might be destroyed, as happened in Nepal in 2015. According to *ABC News*, between the earthquakes and rain, farming terraces and even entire villages were “swept away” by landslides.

Timing is another factor in damage caused by natural hazards. Case studies conducted by Dartmouth College found that the 2015 Nepal earthquakes were so terrible because they struck just before rice planting, meaning that both rice reserves and rice about to be planted were lost.

Please see “Natural Hazards” on page 7.

War? A Sampling of Natural Hazards in 2017



course, are only some of the natural hazards that occurred in 2017. Hundreds more that could have been included. Those shown here were selected by combing through 2017 articles from *The Guardian* and other news sources. For ease of reading, storms with strength that did not exceed Category 1 and some which occurred away from shore were excluded.

Map by Rachel Boyle

Resources & Opportunities

Natural Hazards,

continued from page 5

Roughly 40 percent of households had near total loss—and, while initial standing crop loss was lower, lack of means to harvest meant that those losses grew over time.

Transportation also becomes an issue. Months after the 2016 earthquake in Castelluccio, Italy, farmers nearly missed harvesting because their route to the fields was shut down. The World Food Programme reported that, in the mountainous areas of Nepal, already among the hardest hit by the earthquakes, many markets were gone or closed due to lack of supply. What markets were open were difficult to access because of damaged trails and risk of landslides. After Haiti's 2010 earthquake, damage to ports and airports prohibited ships and planes from bringing aid.

"Food doesn't grow on trees" may be a technically false statement, but when disaster knocks the figurative trees down, replacing them takes time.

—Rachel Boyle, a native of Grapevine, TX, recently graduated from Baylor University with a degree in Professional Writing. She worked as a Seeds of Hope intern during the Fall 2017 and Spring 2018 semesters.

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Resources & Opportunities

Responding to Victims of Disaster:

Here's What Anybody Can Do

by Sara Alexander

The following are suggestions for ways to respond to the critical needs of disaster victims—as well as victims of the disasters of gross economic injustice and food insecurity:

1. Research the region that has been affected as well as the specific ways in which the natural hazard has impacted the area. Why would you do this? To better understand the lifeways of the people and what has happened, as well as what might be most useful in terms of offering assistance. Relief efforts in the immediate aftermath of a natural-based shock normally focus on meeting basic needs—water, food, shelter and health care. Not all events affect all of these areas equally, so to have some understanding of the situation will help your group determine where and how you may want to support efforts.

2. Organize your study group or congregation to receive a special offering. Your denomination undoubtedly has ways of reaching these distressed areas. You can contact your denominational relief office for information and they can also respond to any questions you may have, based on the information you've learned undertaking the first step above. They will also be able to make recommendations as to where you may want to direct your offering and to keep you informed about the human conditions in the area you are targeting. Another avenue of response would be relief-and-development organizations such as the International Federation of the Red Cross, World Food Programme, Church World Service, World Vision and CARE, to name a few. Islamic Relief and Mazon, a major Jewish hunger-relief organization, will also be deeply involved in efforts like these.

3. A longer-term activity would be to research programs in your community or region that offer education about issues affecting developing countries in general. Encourage members of your group to take a short course, or volunteer at a local facility that offers information or experiences that would give your group's members a deeper understanding of what communities experience, and the challenges they face when a natural hazard hits an area that may already be vulnerable.

4. Also, as people of faith, we should never forget the power of public prayers for victims of natural hazards, armed conflict and economic injustice. Please remember

regularly people in crisis around the world—as well as in your country and community—in prayers during your congregation's worship services. You can play a vital role by assisting your clergy in holding the urgent needs of these people before your congregation.

—Sara Alexander, a member of the Seeds Council of Stewards, is Associate Professor of Anthropology at Baylor University in Waco, TX. Her research focuses on developing countries in such matters as livelihood security and vulnerability, food security, ecotourism, natural resource management, the human dimensions of climate change and the HIV/AIDS pandemic. She has served as an advisor for CARE, Save the Children, World Vision and the World Food Programme.

Looking for ways to introduce your congregation to hunger issues?



**Hunger
in
God's
World**

Email seedseditor1@gmail.com for a pdf of this four-session workshop from Seeds of Hope.

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Statement of Purpose

Seeds of Hope is a private, independent group of believers responding to a common burden for the poor and hungry people in God's world, and acting on the strong belief that biblical mandates to feed the poor were not intended to be optional. The group seeks out people of

Quotes, Poems & Pithy Sayings

When Houston went through the hurricane, we saw disaster. We saw devastation. But what I saw after that was hope. I saw something truly special. I saw neighbors, I saw kids, I saw policemen, firefighters, strangers step up to help each other out. I saw people from all over the world donate their money, donate their time, drive in, fly in to help out their fellow citizen. A citizen they may never have met before. A place they may never have been before. But they saw a human struggling, a human in need and they helped out. I didn't do anything special. I just gave everybody an opportunity to help. Everybody else did the work. As athletes, we have an incredible platform. People all over the world watch us. They follow our every move. We need to use that for good. We need to use that to help change the world for the better. We live in a very negative time. But there's so much positivity out there. The more light we can shine on that positivity, the better off this world is gonna be.

Thank you all.

—J.J. Watt, Defensive End for the Houston Texans, accepting the 2018 Laureus Award for Inspiration, *NBC News*; additional source: @JJWatt on the positive power of social media.



art by Lenora Mathis

faith who feel called to care for poor and vulnerable people; and to affirm, enable and empower a variety of responses to the problems of poverty.

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Seeds also produces *Sacred Seasons*, a series of worship materials for Advent, Lent and an annual Hunger Emphasis—with an attitude “toward justice, peace and food security for all of God’s children.” These include litanies, sermons, children’s and youth activities, bulletin art and drama.

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