



Hunger News & Hope

...a Seeds of Hope publication

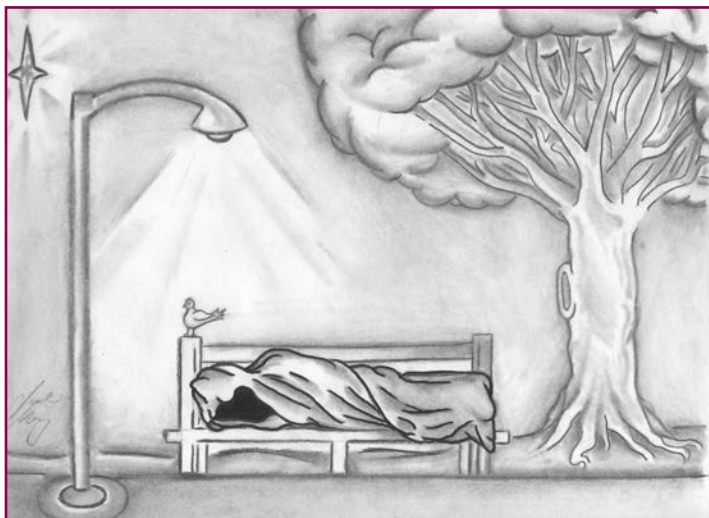
A Potpourri of Stories

In this issue of *Hunger News & Hope*, you will find stories about a variety of topics. The first two are about something many of us have pondered: How should we respond to panhandlers? In my own city, some leaders, who are deeply involved in work with homeless people, support panhandling bans—while others, who are also deeply involved in similar work, are adamantly against the bans. What are we supposed to think? Rachel Boyle has done extensive research and then shared what she found into a short piece about things we should keep in mind when we encounter panhandlers. Chelle Samaniego wrote a reflection about her experiences during a panhandling survey some years ago.

The next story is an addition to the Summer 2018 Water Justice issue. One of the outstanding organizations that we left out in that issue is MedWater, a nonprofit that uses simple technology and partnerships with Indigenous groups to bring safe, clean water to the communities in Napo Province of Ecuador. We think you'll enjoy reading about its work.

We've also included a reflection by Robert Darden about his experience at a Church Under the Bridge worship service in Waco, TX. The back cover includes a litany for three readers and a congregation, based on John 21.

We hope you will find information and inspiration in this potpourri of stories that will help you as we all continually reassess our responses to the realities of hunger and poverty in this world. —lkc



Left: This drawing by Jesse Manning is inspired by a sculpture called "Homeless Jesus" by Timothy Schmalz. Replicas of this sculpture can be found all over the world—including the University of Toronto's Regis College and St. Peter's Square in the Vatican.

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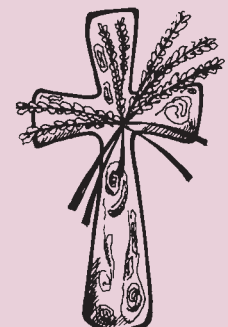
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Cross & Wheat logo by Erin Kennedy Mayer.

How Should We Respond to Panhandlers?

by Rachel Boyle

How many times have you heard “Don’t give to panhandlers; they just want to buy drugs or alcohol”? It is, unfortunately, true that some panhandlers seek money in order to feed vices. However, some panhandlers truly are just down on their luck.

Others are physically or mentally disabled and unable to find or hold down a job. Some panhandlers have homes to go back to, and some are homeless. Many are honest, some lie, and their stories are legion. Beware of any generalizations.

A significant faction of anti-panhandlers act out of love: they ask whether giving money to panhandlers might not actually harm them in the long run, due to issues with dependency.

Legal responses to panhandling vary. The outright banning of panhandling violates the First Amendment, many hold. After the Supreme Court decision in *Reed vs. Town of Gilbert*,¹ many federal courts have deemed panhandling bans as “unconstitutional content-based regulation.”

On the other hand, laws that ban only “aggressive” panhandling—such as loitering near ATMs and accosting passers-by—have been upheld. The argument is that banning “aggressive” panhandling doesn’t restrict people from asking for money, but regulating the manner in which they may do so, which means that the regulation is not content-based.

Those who support banning panhandling do so for a variety of reasons: high concentrations of panhandlers are detrimental to local businesses and tourism; the public has a right to not be harassed; there are places and organizations that those in need can go to without resorting to panhandling.

A significant faction of anti-panhandlers act out of love: they ask whether giving money to panhandlers might not actually harm them in the long run, due to issues with dependency. Many advocate giving food instead, or bus tickets, gas, or things of that nature. Others say that giving to shelters and other organizations puts money to more effective use than giving to panhandlers themselves.

They may be right. In the Bible, Jesus didn’t give money, but instead healed the beggars he encountered of whatever it was—blindness, lameness, leprosy—that kept them from finding work.

In researching a Biblical response to panhandling, I noticed a trend: those who advocate for laws against panhandling tend to cite 2 Thessalonians 3, the warning against idleness. More specifically, they quote “The one who is unwilling to work shall not eat.” Some went further and emphasized the difference between *unwilling* and *unable*, such as the crippled individuals Jesus healed.

This sounds clear-cut, but it is not. What one must remember is that this verse is part of a letter to a specific church, and thus a specific audience in a specific historical context. Paul was writing to the Thessalonians in response to a misunderstanding; some of the Thessalonians had stopped working because they assumed that the Second Coming was imminent, and were becoming disruptive to their neighbors. This is, obviously, quite a different motivation from most modern panhandlers.

Here’s what the Bible says about giving: God will supply, so that you may give. Give to whoever asks you. Give generously. Give freely. The second letter to the church at Corinth tells us “Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion.” It also says that God loves a cheerful giver.

Take all these thoughts with you the next time you encounter a person panhandling. It’s a complicated issue, and not all situations need to have the same answer. Consider your options and make a decision you, personally, are happy with.

—Rachel Boyle, a native of Grapevine, TX, was a Baylor University Professional Writing intern at Seeds of Hope in the fall of 2017 and the spring of 2018. Back in Grapevine now, she maintains a freelance writing and editing business at <https://reboyle.wixsite.com/editor>.

Endnote

1. *Reed v. Town of Gilbert* is a case that began in 2005, when the town of Gilbert, AZ, adopted a municipal sign ordinance that regulated public signs. When a local church was cited, the church filed a lawsuit, which was upheld by the US Supreme Court in 2015. (*Washington Post*, National Public Radio, *Jurist*)

What I Learned from Panhandlers

by Chelle Samaniego

About 10 years ago, I took part in a panhandling survey in Waco, TX, where I live. With clipboards in hand, the teams scoured the downtown area, searching for willing panhandlers to answer a few simple questions.

“Where are you from?”

“Where do you stay now?”

“Do you have a place to sleep tonight?”

I don't remember any more of the questions, but I do remember the people. There were two men who were walking along the alleyway with backpacks in tow. Although I'd

But what stuck with me after all of these years are those two guys. Walking through a town they didn't know without a care in the world.

like to consider them “my age” (and I was in my early 30s at the time), they were most likely considerably younger than me—with worn jeans, vintage shirts and a scruffy we-don't-care appearance.

We asked if they'd like to answer our questions; they of course did. We went through our list, learning so much about these two boys who simply wanted to be free. Free from work. Free from obligations. They traveled around staying in homeless shelters just to see the world. And panhandling for extra cash.

It made me think.

Could someone be homeless simply because he or she wanted to be? Did every one have to be a drug-addicted, dirty mess asking for coins on the street corner?

We met others that night: women and men, people truly down on their luck and those who, when they found out we knew the ropes in town, turned on their heels to distance themselves from us, scouting for new unsuspecting folks to scam.

We met many who had that “one thing” happen. Job loss, a fire, divorce, drug addiction, mental illness—all the things people consider *normal* for those who panhandle.

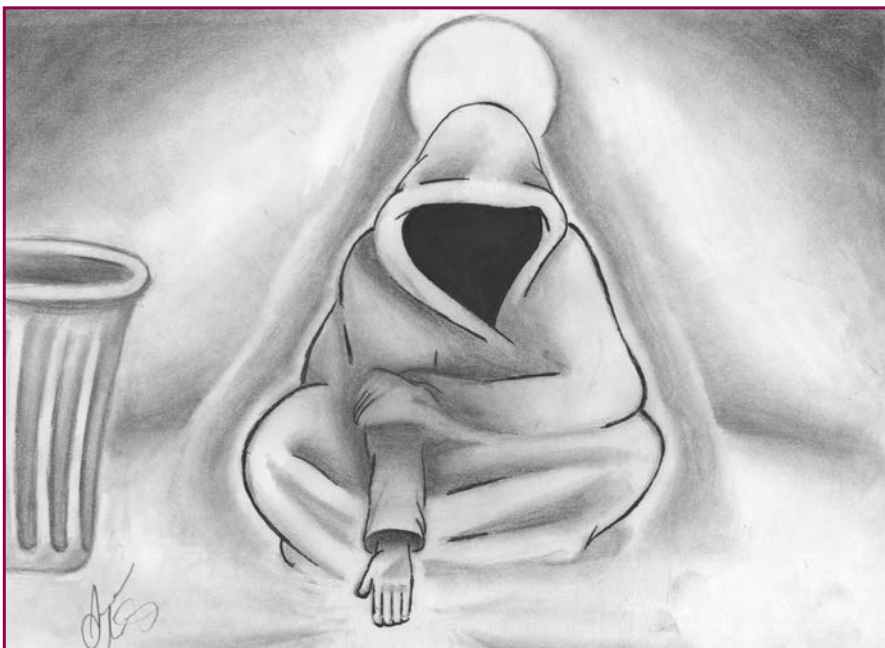
But what stuck with me after all of these years are those two guys. Walking through a

town they didn't know without a care in the world. They were truly homeless just because they simply wanted to be. Were they speaking the truth? I don't know. But, I know it stayed with me after all this time: Their story. Their quest for freedom. Their stick-it-to-the-world-you-can't-control-us attitude. They never asked us for money.

Wherever these men are now, I hope they found what they were looking for. I hope they are still on their adventure, whether it's backpacking across America or sitting in the den of their suburban homes playing with their kids. They taught me not to judge, not to assume and not to wonder, but to care, ask questions and to have a conversation.

The next time you see panhandlers, remember that they are human beings with hopes, dreams and their own current reality. And, whether they really need your two dollars doesn't matter. They are still in need of some kind. —Chelle Samaniego is a freelance writer and social media specialist living in Waco, TX. She worked with the Heart of Texas Homeless Coalition as a VISTA volunteer and is an active member of the McLennan County Hunger Coalition. She is also the Seeds Social Media editor. This year, she received an Associated Church Press award for one of her stories in Hunger News & Hope.

Below: This drawing by Jesse Manning is inspired by a sculpture called “Whatsoever You Do” by Timothy Schmalz, outside of St. Stephen-in-the-Fields in Toronto, ON, and outside of St. Francis of Assisi Church in New York City.



MedWater: Providing Clean, Safe Water in the Amazon Rainforest

by Katie Cook

The lush rainforest jungle of Ecuador has no shortage of water, but the water in its rivers and streams is contaminated with bacteria, parasites and byproducts of increasing Amazon oil development. This contamination means constant illness for the Indigenous Kichwa, a once-nomadic tribe now spread throughout the jungle in small and remote settlements where most residents drink from open streams.

“We talked about the disconnect between the medical personnel, who were traveling in the rainforest to help people, and the fact that the water is still not safe to drink.”

—Darrell Adams

The suffering this causes is evident and widespread. Children have distended stomachs, parasites and skin rashes. Illnesses cripple family farming incomes, children’s time in school and communities’ futures.

The Ecuadoran government has been slow to help these remote villages. Moreover, periodic visits by non-

profit medical missions have been unable to address the underlying problem of contaminated water.

More than 10 years ago in Louisville, KY, Darrell Adams first began working with Edge Outreach, which then became a manufacturer of a very effective chlorination device. Adams, a longtime friend of Seeds of Hope, says he became frustrated with the ongoing problem of water-borne illnesses that were stifling the human potential of Indigenous peoples, and undermining the work of medical mission trips. Four years ago, Chana Fisher, who shared this frustration, talked Adams into thinking about what could be done. He said,

We talked about the disconnect between the medical personnel, who were traveling in the rainforest to help people, and the fact that the water is still not safe to drink. We talked about the disconnect between medical practice and public health.

Adams and Fisher both knew of simple technology that could improve the water, using local distribution. They believed that a safe water source and an effective way of distributing the water was doable.

We had found this fairly new organization that started making something called a “Pack H2O.” It’s a water backpack that holds 20L (about five gallons) of water. It has a liner. You close it like a dry pack and tie it. It has a hanger on it so you hang it up at home, and it has a spout. So, from the safe water distribution point, people can bring their packs, fill them, tie them, take them home, hang them up, and use them without the risk of contaminating the water. So safe water stays safe!

So Adams and Fisher co-founded MedWater, a non-profit also based in Louisville, KY, dedicated to finding ways to work with five Kichwa communities to devise methods for improving water, sanitation and hygiene (which the World Health Organisation calls WASH) in communities that have been marginalized by economics, racial injustice, lack of education, and language and cultural issues.

Next, in February 2013, they initiated a collaboration with Timmy Global Health (TGH) executive director Matt McGregor. Based in Indianapolis, IN, TGH had been sending medi-



cal teams into the Ecuadorian Amazon for more than 10 years and had created partnerships with the people and the provincial government.

The plan was that MedWater would build on the strong relationships established by TGH to reproduce WASH education and training in five TGH communities. MedWater would begin by providing chlorine gas generators like the ones made by Edge Outreach. The technology, Adams says, is complex for Indigenous people who have no experience with this kind of technology. It takes time and consistent follow-up to build the confidence needed.

Potentially, the people can have a safe water solution that's going to be good for at least 10 years. All it's going to cost them is salt, which is cheap and readily available. All they have to do is run it properly and they've got safe water. They don't have to wait on a government agency or MedWater to maintain it. Deborah Payne, MPH, and MedWater's Director of Health Education, creates additional materials for training and on-going engagement, empowering the people to improve the health of their communities. This is a power they've never had.

The collaboration with the five TGH communities was so successful that township and provincial officials asked MedWater about collaborating to expand work to other communities in Napo Province. So, for four years, the MedWater team has been traveling deeper into the jungle on rutted roads and on swollen rivers to help the Kichwa build sustainable chlorination systems that turn dangerous, sometimes life-threatening water into clean, safe drinking water.

MedWater stands out among nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). It is the only NGO in Napo Province teaching communities to manage safe water. MedWater also initiated the establishment of Fundación MedWater, an NGO registered with Ecuador's Ministry of Economics and Social Inclusion.

Above, right: Kichwa people of Napo Province in Ecuador make use of the "pack H2O" introduced by MedWater to transport safe, clean water to their homes. Right: Children in the region enjoy clean water in their villages. Photos courtesy of MedWater.

Fundación MedWater hires local community members to serve as health promoters to sustain systems, reinforce

Please see "MedWater" on page 7.



The Real Sermon

by Robert F. Darden

For 30 years, Mission Waco has worked relentlessly to transform Waco, TX, caring for its most vulnerable citizens—feeding, clothing, housing, ministering to the homeless, the alien and the dispossessed. In those 30 years, it has become a national icon, its programs widely admired and copied across the US.

And at the heart of Mission Waco is the Church Under the Bridge.

The Church Under the Bridge (CUB, to its friends and family) meets every Sunday morning under Interstate 35, near the Baylor University campus. CUB volunteers feed and tend to hundreds of homeless and hungry people. Founders Jimmy and Janet Dorrell work the crowd, dispensing hugs, unconditional love and bad jokes, and embody the authentic gospel of Jesus Christ.

CUB ends with a short sermon, usually delivered by Jimmy, but sometimes by guest speakers. On a particularly cold morning last winter, I was that speaker.

I almost didn't make it.

As I waited my turn to speak, I sat near an impossibly thin old man who wore a thin and tattered jacket. He was white-bearded, weather-beaten and utterly, preternaturally silent. With almost surgical precision, he opened the lunch bag provided by volunteers. He carefully inspected every item, an apple, a sandwich, a packaged sweet cake, rolling it over and over in his hands. Then he unwrapped the sweet cake as if he were handling dynamite and took the tiniest of bites, savoring it, closing his eyes...then repeating the process.

Then something happened that shook me further.

Jimmy and Janet asked for anyone who had a birthday that week to stand with them at the front of the large stage. A startling array of people stood—young, old, black, white, male, female. Some were clearly struggling—emotionally, mentally, physically. Others were simply unfortunate.

Jimmy held the microphone to each person, asked them to say their name, their birthdate, and tell the audience of several hundred how old they were. Most were able

to comply, speaking clearly and proudly. And after they spoke, he gave each of them a small gift, perhaps a large candy bar, I couldn't tell from where I was sitting. But the opportunity to speak and the gift clearly delighted each recipient. Then we sang "Happy Birthday."

Jimmy turned to the audience and smiled. "We do this because we believe that everyone should have someone remember them on their birthday and call their name."

Lord have mercy. That stabbed me. *Everyone deserves to have someone remember them, remember their birthday. Everyone.*

Then it was my turn to speak. I stumbled up and talked about the stone the builder rejected that became the cornerstone of a great building.

But it didn't really matter. Because the sermon had already taken place.

—Robert F. Darden is Professor of Journalism, Public Relations & New Media at Baylor University. He is the founder of the Black Gospel Music Restoration Project, the world's largest initiative to identify, acquire, digitize, scan, and catalogue America's fast-vanishing legacy of black gospel music. He is the author of more than two dozen books, including several on gospel music, and has been a generous contributor and supporter of the Seeds ministry for many years.

Below: Young Seeds artist Jesse Manning created this drawing of a Church Under the Bridge worship service, conducted for homeless people under the Interstate 35 bridge in Waco, TX, after attending the service with his youth group.



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*.*

MedWater, continued from page 5

sanitation and hygiene and become a regular presence to nurture larger community well-being over time.

This approach is transforming otherwise forgotten communities in the earth's most ecologically important region, where subsistence farmers grow cacao for chocolate, women tend plants that form the basis for medicines and families live sustainably in a rainforest that acts as the lungs of the world. It is restoring happy childhoods and allowing communities to focus on improving economic livelihoods.

In April of 2016, Adams and Lynn Smith, a retired engineer and MedWater's technical advisor, were in Napo Province when they received word of an earthquake that had just hit Ecuador's coast.

Fundación MedWater Director Tammy Truong organized local physicians and adventure guides, and assembled a 10-member team that drove for 24 hours to the coast in two vehicles filled with donations gathered along the way. The team, led by Smith, found three large concrete cisterns and, with the help of government relief officials,

The people are doing it for themselves. We get to take credit for that because we helped make it happen, but this is what we want. We want to empower people to do something for themselves.

—Darrell Adams

transported thousands of liters of water to the many camps of displaced people in the area.

Recently, in Selva Amazonica, Ecuador, a Kichwa community of about 300 people told the MedWater team, "We have been asking the government to help us for 32 years. Now, with your help, we have safe water, and now the government knows we are here. They know the name of our community."

Word is spreading fast in Napo Province and beyond. There are now 22 MedWater communities, and more and more communities in the area are asking MedWater to help them create a source for clean, safe drinking water.

Ken Sehested, a founding editor of Seeds and a present member of the Seeds Board of Advisors, is a longtime friend of Adams and an enthusiastic MedWater supporter. He recently wrote:

Water is a primal image for creation and redemption stories—not only for Christians but also for people of other faiths as well. MedWater's vision, its simple, sustainable technology, along with its protocol of active partnership with local communities, is a recipe for health in every dimension.

If you are interested in supporting or being a part of this effort, contact Darrell E. Adams, MedWater Executive Director, at 1201 Story Avenue #211, Louisville, KY 40206; 502/541-7683; www.medwater.org.

—Katie Cook is the Seeds of Hope editor. This article is taken from an interview with Darrell Adams and documentation from MedWater staff.

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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 faith who feel called to care for poor and vulnerable people; and to affirm, enable

Quotes, Poems & Pithy Sayings

What Jesus Didn't Say

A Reading for Three Leaders & a Congregation

by Katie Cook

FIRST READER: Jesus didn't say to Peter, "Do you love me? Then go out and build magnificent structures with arches and columns and gold-leaf frescoes."

ALL: He said, "Feed my sheep."

SECOND READER: He didn't say, "Go and organize institutions in which the leaders will have more power and wealth than anyone else on earth."

ALL: He said, "Feed my sheep."

THIRD READER: He didn't say, "Take the things I've said and done and put them in a book that you will raise up as an object of worship."

ALL: He said, "Feed my sheep."

FIRST READER: He didn't say, "Put my words in red ink and then do everything you can to forget them or discount them."

ALL: He said, "Feed my sheep."

SECOND READER: He didn't say, "Work out a system of belief whereby to exclude and punish anyone who disagrees with you."

ALL: He said, "Feed my sheep."

THIRD READER: He didn't say, "Become as prosperous as you can, dress as sumptuously as you can, and show how you are blessed by your possessions."

ALL: He said, "Feed my sheep."

FIRST READER: And then he said, "Follow me."

—Based on John 21. This reading was written for the 2007 Sacred Seasons Hunger Emphasis packet, "Just Harvest."



Art by Rebecca S. Ward

and empower a variety of responses to the problems of poverty.

Editorial Address

Seeds is housed by the community of faith at Seventh & James Baptist Church. Mailing address: 602 James Ave., Waco, TX 76706; Phone: 254/755-7745; Fax: 254/753-1909; E-mail: seedseditor1@gmail.com. Web: www.seedspublishers.org. Copyright © 2018; ISSN 0194-4495. Seeds of Hope, Inc., holds the 501(c)3 nonprofit tax status.

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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