



Creative Resources for Your Church's Hunger Emphasis

Sacred Seasons, a quarterly series of worship packets with a peace and justice emphasis, from Seeds of Hope Publishers:
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Sacred Seasons: Creative Worship Tools for Your Church

These unique worship resource packets are available for the liturgical year, four packets a year for \$120 (\$135 for non-US subscriptions), one packet for \$50 (\$60 outside of the US).

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

Editorial Address

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Let All Who Are Hungry

in this worship packet:

- a brainstorming session-page 3
 - bulletin art-pages 4-5
- a sermon about abundance-pages 6-10
- a monologue for a child-pages 11-12
- quotes, poems, & pithy sayings-page 13
- thoughts about welcoming-page 14
 - a children's sermon-pages 15-16
 - theme art-page 16
- a sermon for Children's Sabbath-pages 18-20
 - a bookmark-page 20
- global hunger statistics-page 21
- U.S. hunger statistics-pages 22-23

plus

- a brand new 40-day hunger awareness calendar
 - an update of the popular Seeds "breakfast poster"
 - a hunger emphasis placemat

Come In and Eat.
a word about this packet

The quarterly Seeds worship resource materials have a name now; they are called Sacred Seasons. As always, with or without a name, these materials are offered to you on clean, unattached pages so that you can more easily photocopy anything you wish to duplicate. We are constantly looking for ways to make the pages more attractive and easier for you to photocopy. Feel free to copy any of this, including art, and adapt these tools to your needs.

The material in this packet is your congregation's to use freely. We have tried to pull together creative and inspiring resources that you can use to raise awareness of issues surrounding economic justice and food security (especially from a biblical perspective) in your congregation. We endeavored to choose a variety of age groups, worship areas, events, and angles, so that you would have a potpourri of art and ideas from which to choose.

We make a conscious effort to maintain a balance between the apostolic and the contemplative—on the one hand, the dynamic challenge to stay true to God's mandate to feed the poor and struggle for justice, and on the other hand, our own compelling need for nurture and healing while we work toward those dreams.

Much of the art in this packet, including the cover art, is by Sharon Rollins, a counselor in Waco, Texas. Other art is by Rebecca Ward, an art student at the University of Texas, and Peter Clark, a chaplain in the San Francisco area. The writer featured most in this packet is Mark McClintock, who has served as a children's minister and now uses those same skills in directing a children's camping program for churches. Joy Jordan-Lake, whose sermon is included, is a writer and teacher in Waco, Texas. We have also included poetry from Deborah Lynn, whose work you have seen before.

A Brainstorming Session

from editors and friends

Jesus seems to have spent a great deal of time having table fellowship—and the people with whom he ate often shocked one group or another. When he hung out with prostitutes, toll collectors, and other social outcasts, he scandalized the religious purists. When he had dinner with the Pharisees, he puzzled the riffraff. Many of his stories and illustrations center around banquets. Some of his miracles and resurrection appearances involve eating with his followers. They did not recognize him until he broke the bread in the traditional gestures of a host. In one of the last appearances he cooked breakfast for seven disciples on the beach.

He was known for his miracles of abundance, which also centered around meals and fellowship. The feeding of the multitudes, one of our central texts for this packet, is the only miracle that is included in all four gospels (Matthew and Mark relate two such events): Matthew 14:13-21, Matthew 15:32-39, Mark 6:30-44, Mark 8:1-9, Luke 9:12-17, John 6:1-14. The story of the breakfast on the beach also includes a miracle of abundance (John 21).

He seems to have played the role of host in many of these stories, stressing the importance of hospitality. Even the memorial for which he asked involved eating and drinking. He wanted his followers to remember him around a table with bread and wine.

There is something mystical about sitting across a table from someone. We place a great deal of meaning on the sharing of meals together. Those of us who are passionate about social justice issues find an almost cosmic meaning in the sharing of a cup of soup with a hungry person. Sure, we want to help people to clothe themselves, to find shelter, to find meaningful occupation and livelihood. We are concerned with their emotional well-being, their physical health—all of those components for a full and vibrant life. But many of us can recall that moment in a soup kitchen line when the bells of our hearts rang out and the doors of our minds flew open—that somehow magical moment of handing a cup of steaming soup to a guest, walking with her to a table, sitting with her, even allowing her to share with us from her portion. It is the holiest of encounters, that moment when our hands touch as we steady the steaming bowl, or as we share a piece of cornbread.

This is the theme of our hunger emphasis packet, this sharing of food. “Let all who are hungry come in and eat,” says the Talmud. We are set as if for a momentous meal, and we set a place at the table for the stranger who may come to the door, the stranger who just might be Elijah. We extend the table and the circle of our family to include all of the human family—the Liberian family who have fled from their home in Monrovia to live in a refugee camp, the mother in Ethiopia whose heart sinks at the thought of another catastrophic drought, the coffee farmer



art by Sharon Rollins

in Guatemala who is forced to sell his beans at a loss, the children of the Palestinian West Bank who long for a meal eaten in peace. They are all our brothers and sisters, and we want to open the door to them. We want to set a place at the table for them.

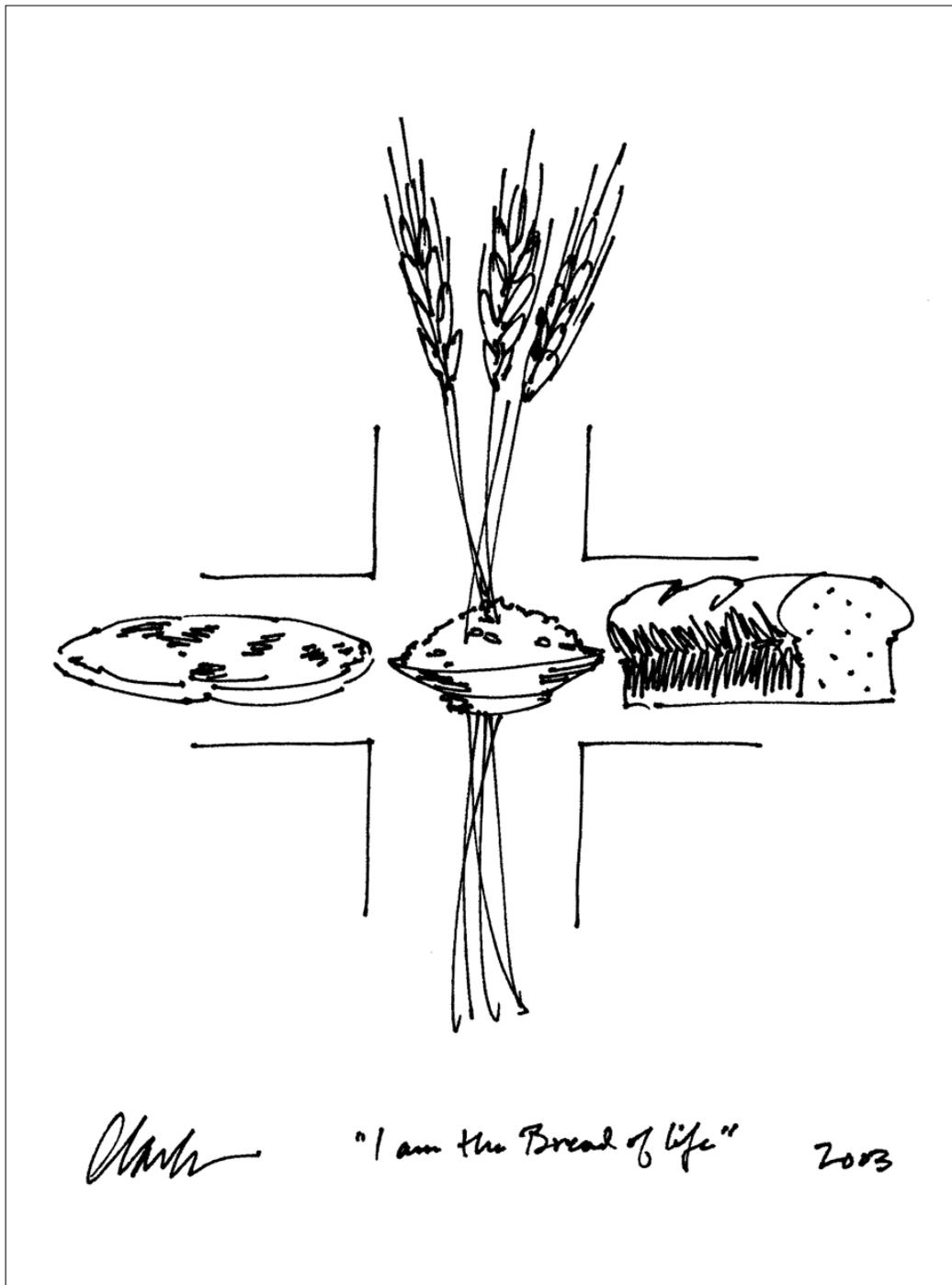
This packet will hopefully re-infuse us with the energy and hope that is vital if we are to continue to study and listen and help in the most appropriate ways. It tells stories of a Messiah who spoke out plainly about his concern for the most vulnerable among us. It tells us of a God who seems eager to heap abundance upon us. It includes practical things to be used to learn and teach. It includes some of the grim realities that we face each time we embrace this task of feeding the poor.

We have included some art, some dramatic readings and a couple of poignant sermons that we think will be helpful in your hunger emphasis. Perhaps simple displays would go best with these activities—a row of twelve baskets, overflowing with bread, circling around the pulpit or around and on the altar table. A basket with two fish and five loaves (probably not real fish) could stand alone in the center of the altar area. Perhaps you could begin the emphasis with the boy’s monologue, and he could place the basket on a table in a prominent place for the remainder of your emphasis.

We have used a great deal of Sharon Rollin’s art, showing a map of the world covering a plate, with loaves and fishes on the top. You could extend this theme; if Jesus could feed five thousand men and their families with this boy’s lunch, then... You could do something creative with a real map—use it as an altarcloth, placing your food baskets on it. You could take a globe apart and have food coming out of it as though it were a cornucopia. You could put a map on the wall and mark the places that are experiencing food crises—all of Sub-Saharan Africa, Southern Mexico, Honduras, Guatemala, Afghanistan, Chechnya, Iraq, southern Mississippi, South Dakota. You could cut out paper dolls and put a paper person on that country as a prayer reminder.

I suppose if there is one message that we would want you to hear through these resources, it is that we are facing a problem that many others have thought was insurmountable, just as the twelve wanted to send away that multitude, and that we have witnessed miracles of abundance. Therefore, our passion, which has kept us to this work “no matter what,” should be reminded of this message of hope. —lkc

bulletin art



Note: This art was created by Peter Yuichi Clark especially for a Seeds art show, "The Art of Compassion: Original Images of Hunger and Hope," held in Waco, Texas August 23, 2003.

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.”

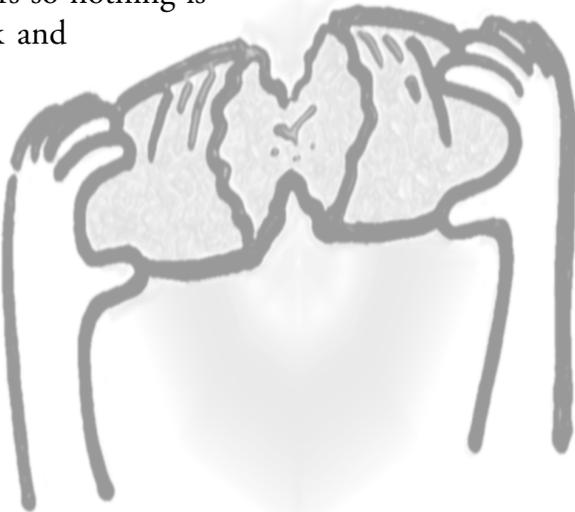
One of the disciples—it was Andrew, brother to Simon Peter—said, “There’s a little boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish. But that’s a drop in the bucket for a crowd like this.”

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 by Sharon Rollins

More Than All You Can Ask or Imagine

a sermon about abundance

by Joy Jordan-Lake

texts:

John 6:1-21

2 Kings 4:38-44

Ephesians 3:14-21

Our texts today cover John's story of the feeding of the five thousand, Elisha's feeding of one hundred people, and a prayer for the church's maturity. I wonder: what does the love of God in Christ Jesus have to do with dry barley loaves—the bread of poor, common people? And what does Jesus have to do with a pithy, rather peculiar story about an Old Testament prophet?

Now, I know YOU were paying attention to the gorgeously executed readings of Scripture this morning, but in case the mind of the person next to you took a little trip to South Padre for a moment, let me just highlight what YOU, already, quite cleverly, no doubt have noticed.

The gospel account of Jesus' feeding the multitudes seems strangely related somehow to the Old Testament account of Elisha's performing some sort of similar barley bread-related feat, only on a very small scale. Elisha simply has lots more people present than he can feed with twenty loaves of bread, but somehow, in the end, there's plenty, with lots leftover.

I'm even enough of an irreverent renegade, I read this passage and think, "Come on—Elisha just sliced the loaves a little thinner." As miracles go, the Elisha passage doesn't even show up on the same chart with the sea-parting/ dead-raising/pillar of fire kind of thing. Still, the point of the story seems to be something to do with God's supplying more than the demand. Much more.

This is not unlike the story of Jesus and the very-hungry crowd on the hill. Listen with me between the lines of the story, how the apostles bring the boy with the little blanket or the basket of food to Jesus. Jesus examines the crowd, peers down at the couple of tiny, dried fish and five poor-people rolls and says, "Sure, that'll do just fine."

The apostles say, "But, um, rabbi, sir, there are maybe five thousand men, HUNGRY ones, hanging out here to hear you!"



art courtesy of Página cristiana

Jesus looks back at the crowd and says, "No, I'd say twenty thousand people or so, if you count the women and children—and I do. Guess we'll have to make the meal stretch a bit, huh, boys?"

I wonder what types of people were standing there listening, watching this Jesus guy announce that he'd be feeding a whole stadium crowd with what amounts to a Weight Watcher's frozen dinner. I'm guessing there were a few folks like you there, a few like me, a few like the ones you and I admire and despise.

There was an Eye Roller for sure—every crowd has one. She takes one look at the boy and barley and bazillion people and says, "Right. WhatEVER" and rolls her eyes so big her whole head rocks back.

And there's an Analyst, stepping forward to suggest that someone first commission a survey, to see if there is, in fact, a FELT need on the part of the crowd, and how that felt need, if present, might manifest itself according to age, gender and socio-economic breakdown, and perhaps current zip code. Only then, would it be prudent to proceed.

And there's surely an Eeyore present too—there always is—watching it all and groaning, "We shouldn't have come. Too many people. Too little food. There'll be a riot. We'll all be killed. And when we're killed, then you'll agree that we shouldn't have come."

Those of us who listen too closely to all those kinds of voices in our own world—the Eye Rollers and the Analysts and the Eeyores—can let them divert us from our dreams of what God might, just maybe, do through us.

Our passage in Ephesians tells us of a power at work within us to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask

or imagine. But those voices around us can make us pinch our prayers into dishonest, safe little words we don't even mean, intimidate us from being willing to just unfurl our fingers and give what we have and who we are to God—no matter how much or how little that is.

No surprise that the one who offers such a pathetic, measly meal of fish and rolls to feed a mob is a child. Those of us older than seven would be too embarrassed, wouldn't we? Too self-conscious that people were watching. And what would they say?

Or we'd be too selfish. Didn't we, in fact, earn what we've got—and got it the hard way, thank you? Deserve to keep it, too.

Maybe you've heard the statistic that our world easily



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produces 2,805 calories per day for every man, woman and child on earth. Yet, every day, 27,000 die of starvation and other preventable causes—three quarters of them children. Why?

Maybe because some of us are hoarding our talent, our skills, and our financial resources. Some of us are hoarding, holding on too tightly to what we have, who we are, because we're too blasted self-focused. But maybe, too, some of us are scared: we don't feel we have much in our baskets to offer—what measly talent I have, so few skills, so little savings... what good is this little to anyone, least of all God?

Self-focused or just embarrassed and scared, we end up cowering in the cockpit like the disciples at sea. But this little boy, in that wonderful way children have of not knowing the impossible from the possible, sees that Jesus intends to feed all this ravenous crowd with just two little fish and five barley rolls and the boys goes, “COOL. Here ya go.”

Here's the thing, though: he has to let go of those loaves. He has to free up those fish in order to do anybody any good outside himself. But then, when he does, doggone if the strangest thing doesn't happen.

Jesus blesses it, and passes it to the disciples, who act as the waiters and bus boys, and when it's time to pick up the pieces, there are not one, not two, but TWELVE baskets of bread left over. And to let us know that there's nothing wrong with the Divine Spreadsheet at work, you'll notice there's no mention of leftover fish that would rot in a molten Middle Eastern sun.

So apparently the twelve baskets are there for some purpose, overflowing their rims as the disciples stumble back to the front. And you have to laugh at these guys, staring cross-eyed from the boy who'd had the five barley loaves to these stockpiles of bread climbing clear up to their schnozzes, and they're going, “I have GOT to cut back on the tequila shots before noon.”

I'm guessing Jesus is over here with the boy who'd delivered over his dinner, and they're exchanging a wink. Which is what this story is about, isn't it? An answer to a need, along with a laugh, and a wink. An abundance no one saw coming, excess nobody earned, some kind of surplus from God you couldn't spend up if you tried.

Any of us who've attempted the practice of prayer for any length of time have discovered that, as Ann Lamott likes to imagine it, no prayer stays in God's in-box forever. Eventually, it may come back a big “NOPE.” Or it might be, “You'll have to go step-by-step on this one.”

But sometimes, have you ever had those answers, maybe to one single prayer or maybe a whole season, that come back, as in this story, like billows and billows of bread rolling in, more than you ever asked for, more than you ever imagined?

Abundance. Excess. Surplus.

Twelve baskets of barley bread so full they're tumping sideways seem to say something about a God who is All About the Impossible. Isn't that the OUTRAGE of the old, old story, after all? The geriatric pregnancies. The lone shepherd boy with the sling shot who with one stone takes out Goliath, the Philistines' major weapon of mass destruction. Prostitutes who get featured in the royal pedigree. Seas that part on cue.

It's impossible, it's over the top, it's what this God is about.

One of the lessons on loaves in my own life happened in

Cambridge, Massachusetts, over the course of several years. It began when I arrived, fresh from seminary and the sunny South, looked around my New England home and realized for all greater Boston's sophisticated networking of social services, most of the soup kitchens were rough and rowdy places: one stood an excellent chance of being threatened, struck or propositioned—or all of the above—sometime during the course of the meal.

There weren't many calm, safe places that a woman alone or families with children could go to get warm, feel cared for, and come away, all in one piece, with free groceries. Enter Recent Seminary Graduate to save the day. I called a meeting in my church for anyone interested in helping to start a clothes closet and food pantry for women and families. This was gonna be great!

Two people showed up.

We had no food, no clothes to offer—and no funding. And no space—our Spanish-speaking sister congregation opposed using the church building to hand out food—might attract the wrong element. But we collected cash and canned food and khakis and down coats from our congregation, and tunneled out a portion of the church basement that had been used since the 19th century for trash and coal dust—surely no one could object to our using that.

We papered the city with flyers announcing our opening day—Da Da Da Da—and we waited for the grateful masses to arrive.

November 17, 1989, 10 o'clock. We opened our doors. Hello, hungry and hurting world: help is on its way.

No one was there. Thirty minutes went by, then an hour. Then, at last, our first client. And she had, yes, a baby stroller. Just the target group we were seeking to serve! She approached, stumbling through the driving snow. We reached to help lift the stroller up the steps and lean in to coo in the sweet little one's face. It was a stuffed Garfield doll—who was, it seemed, very much alive to our client, who tickled him under the chin.

It was winter in Boston, we had only two warm baby outfits on our shelves, and this woman wanted them both for Baby Garfield—and way more of our food, if you ask me, than one person needed for a week. The transaction did not go well. By the time she left, Garfield's mother had promised to have her partner come after me with a knife.

This was our only client of the day.

I'd been out to feed the world—or at least greater Boston—and instead I was going to be stalked in dark alleys by Garfield's mother's lover.

It was a terrible flop. I was a terrible flop.

I went home, and I'd like to say that I prayed, but I think the "prayer" consisted more of my telling God, "I'm done. You can have New England's finest clothes closet/food pantry. I'm outa here."

I proceeded to home-perm my hair. Men in ministry don't have this option for drowning their sorrows in perm solution, and it's a shame, really. You should know it was a \$6.99 drugstore perm, and I could already smell it beginning to burn after ten minutes. When the phone rang, I'd have ignored the caller, but the voice on the answering machine was our church treasurer, Laura, who said we had to talk right away. I picked up, fully intending to keep an eye on the clock in order to wash out my hair in 2 minutes, no more.

Laura had just received through the mail a cashier's check from a local bank with a note from an anonymous someone in the community saying that this was to be used for Cambridgeport's new clothes closet/food pantry. It was for \$1,000.

Those of us who listen too closely to all those kinds of voices in our own world—the Eye Rollers and the Analysts and the Eeyores—can let them divert us from our dreams of what God might, just maybe, do through us.



And, Laura said, we'd received a letter from Project Bread saying they'd not only accepted our grant application for several thousand dollars, but they were giving us emergency funding in the meantime: another check for \$1,000.

In all the excitement, a good 30 to 45 minutes went by. [Sniff, Sniff.] Uh-Oh. My hair.

It took about four years for fifteen inches of fuzz to grow out, but it served as a VIVID reminder: "oh, me of little faith."

In the following weeks at the clothes and food pantry, clients began to pour in, sometimes 80 low-income and homeless families per two-hour period. But just when I'd despair of enough volunteers a whole Bible study group would show up, unannounced from MIT or Boston U. Or

some neighbors from down the street who would never set foot in a church sanctuary, found they liked helping out in a church basement.

Clothing donations poured in—nice clothes, great stuff—so much we didn't have enough room on the shelves. So we asked a local store to donate some hanging racks. One or two, they grudgingly said. But when I arrived to pick them up with two deacons, local boys who'd been big into drugs and petty crime back in high school, the store manager,

But this little boy, in that wonderful way children have of not knowing the impossible from the possible, sees that Jesus intends to feed all this ravenous crowd with just two little fish and five barley rolls and the boys goes, "COOL. Here ya go."



who'd gone to school with these guys was so flabbergasted that Pete and Jay, the old hoodlums, were there to help the poor and not rip off her store, she insisted we take more racks—and racks and racks...until the vehicle we'd brought overflowed.

The clothes, the beautiful clothes, kept coming in: business suits and silk blouses, so many we didn't have time to get them all on the shelves or the racks. And the clients, the beautiful clients, from Haiti and Dominican Republic, Brazil and El Salvador, kept coming. Most spoke not one word of English.

And just when I'd begun to despair of that, a group from Wellesley announced that they could use a school van to drive to Sunday worship IF they would perform some social service, so could they please work in the clothes closet early Sunday mornings before worship? One of the Wellesley

women was a linguistics major, and would like to come, she said on Saturday mornings too—if that was okay. She was fluent in French and Spanish and Portuguese; someone else knew Haitian Creole. "Yeah," I said; "that would be okay."

Now Laura, the church treasurer, had an MBA from Harvard, and knew me in particular and humanities types in general well enough to know that most of us still aren't real clear on long division. She had to explain to me that in end-of-the-year non-profit accounting one wants to spend all the money one has to show one needs all that, in order to procure more. A zero balance is a good thing, she assured me. Grant givers don't like a surplus.

So each year I suppressed my fiscal uptightness, and set my sights on zero. And each year, just as I was about to triumph, the very weekend before our budget meeting, there'd be trouble. One year I was approaching a nice, clean zero balance for the meeting in a few days, when Polaroid executives showed up and asked for a tour of the pantry. We have a favor to ask, they said. We need to show community service, could you accept this small check? It was for \$1,000.

The next year, having had a surplus, I knew not to expect much. But Boston's annual Walk for Hunger fell on a sunny day, 40,000 people walked, and in our annual grant there appeared an additional, unsolicited check—for \$1,000. One year, despite our giving away literally a ton of food each week, we faced yet another small budget surplus.

The weekend before the annual budget summit, an elderly parishioner came to the pantry and handed me a hat and some mittens. "The Bible says if you have two coats," she said, "give one away. I've got only one coat but two pairs of these."

Ah-Hah! That was IT. I could buy boatloads of hats and mittens! People newly arrived from Haiti could use that, and it would spend that surplus. A volunteer loading bags behind me turned. My ladies Wednesday morning social club has been knitting for months, and wanted to find someone to give children's mittens and hats to. Would you be willing to take them?

Mittens. Bags and bags and bags of mittens.

A local bakery asked if they could donate day-old pastries and bread. Every week...boxes and boxes and boxes of bread.

Another year, the weekend before the big budget meeting, we'd spent more money on resources for more cold, hungry people than ever before. We were gonna hit zero this time—I just knew it.

As I was leaving the church building, a cluster of Harvard students slammed through the door, beaming and breathless. "We had our Dunster House dance last night," they said, "and for admission we charged \$5 a piece—we had a HUGE crowd—all of it to be donated to the pantry. Surprise!"

Year after year after year, and always just before the annual meeting. Surpluses. Always, despite all my efforts—apparently, for God to make a point.

During those years the pantry was the most profitable arm of our church. And the laugh, the wink, was always on me. Me, the minister with the curly-fried hair, who doesn't trust well, who excels in worry, even when I can see that Christ is walking on water, right there on the crest of the waves—I'm back here clutching the mast.

Eight years. And the loaves and fruit and mittens and meat kept coming. Bags and racks and boxes and baskets and checks.

God's love, like the deep end of the ocean, where no one's touched the bottom yet. Higher and deeper and longer and wider than we know how to measure. God's power working within us, to accomplish far more than we could ask or imagine.

It's all about an abundance you didn't see coming, excess you didn't earn, some kind of surplus from God you couldn't spend up if you tried. And it's something different that this God is about.

I wonder what would happen in your life and mine, what strength we might find, if we could loosen our grip on the mast. What talent or skills or financial resources might multiply in God's hands—if we would just let go of the loaves and free up the fish.

I don't know what the answer is—in your life or mine, or in our lives in this church together—but I do know, there's something to be learned from children and fingers unfurled and fishes and loaves.

May God give us compassion and courage.
—Joy Jordan-Lake is a writer who teaches English literature at Baylor University in Waco, Texas.

*They shall no more be plunder for the nations,
nor shall the animals of the land devour them;
they shall live in safety, and no one shall make
them afraid. I will provide for them a splendid
vegetation so that they shall no more be
consumed with
hunger in the
land, and no
longer suffer the
insults of the
nations...*

—Ezekiel 34:28-29



art by Sharon Rollins

Feast from a Snack

a monologue for a child

by Mark McClintock

based on John 6:1-15

Editor's Note: The following is a monologue meant to be delivered by a young boy. If you'd like to make this authentic, he should be costumed as a peasant child from the first century. He could be carrying a basket.

You should've seen it! It was a miracle! And it was me who helped Jesus do it. I mean, it was I who helped Jesus do it. I mean...it was Jesus who helped me.

We'd heard of him and the things he done...I mean, did...on the other side of the sea. But we never thought he'd pass through our little fishing village! When he did, it was like a holiday. A crowd of people was following him. Some of the men stopped working to see him. My father wanted to go, but he and my older brothers had to repair our boat.

Mama said, "Send Joel," —that's me— "he's no help to you anyway." To tell the truth, I am a little clumsy, and Papa easily loses his patience with me.

"But Mama," I said, "I have to go to shul."

"What for?" she said. "You think the rabbi will care?"

I don't think he would. He scolds me for asking too much...I mean, too many questions and tells me I should work harder on my Hebrew.

Still, I didn't want to go. I knew this new teacher would think I was stupid, too. And besides, I hadn't eaten breakfast yet. Papa and my brothers took up all the space at our small table. Every morning, I waited until they were finished, and now I wouldn't get anything. Mama rolled her eyes and said one of her little blessings over me...the kind where she pulls me by my ear. She took some fish out of the salt and some loaves of bread and rolled them all up in a cloth and stuffed them in my arms and blessed me out the door.

So that's why I followed Jesus. It was a long walk up the mountain where I once got in trouble for playing when I should have been in shul. I was starving, and I ate half the food Mama had given me along the way. Some of the other boys had skipped shul, too, but their parents were with them, so they didn't get in trouble.

When we finally reached the mountaintop, it was amazing! All these sick people had come, or people had brought them for Jesus to heal. He made Obed, the lame beggar, stand up and walk. I saw it with my own eyes! He made blind people

see, and deaf people hear, and crooked people stand up straight.

After awhile, I got tired of watching. Some of the other boys started a game of tag, but they didn't ask me to play. They hardly ever did. Later, they started complaining to their parents that they were hungry. I stuffed my bundle of food in my tunic. If they weren't going to invite me to play, I sure wasn't going to share my lunch with them.

Finally, Jesus stopped healing and started teaching. The things he said were different from the rabbi in my village.



He talked about the meek and loving your enemy. And the stories he told! A shepherd who went after a lost sheep. And a son who was a bigger fool than me, but his father loved him anyway. I could have listened to him tell stories all day.

But then he stopped and told these men to find food for everybody. They looked at him like he was crazy. To tell the truth, I thought so, too. There was millions of people standing around Jesus. Or at least thousands. Nobody seemed to think of bringing any food except me. To tell the truth, I would've shared my food, but I knew my Mama wouldn't like it. Well, I knew she would've blessed me for being foolish. There was only a little left, and everybody would've laughed at me if I'd offered to share it. To tell the truth, I wanted to keep the rest for myself.

But then one of the little children near me started crying. I knew she was hungry. And I thought, maybe she needed the food more than me. So when the men came back to Jesus, I showed one what I had. I meant for him to take it

I know I looked stupid standing there, staring at them. But Jesus put his arm around me and said, "Don't ever think what you have to give is unimportant. God can make a feast out of a snack."



to Jesus, but instead he took me with him. Now I knew everyone would laugh at me.

But Jesus just said, "Sit everyone down and bring some baskets." Then he took my food and said a prayer—a short

one, not like the ones our rabbi says that make your back ache. And he started breaking the bread and the fish into little pieces. Somehow, he filled up a whole basket and handed it to me. Me! He asked me to help!

"You wanted to share it?" he said.

I went straight to that little girl and gave her some. Then I passed the basket around until it was empty. When I took it back to Jesus, I couldn't believe it! There were five more baskets full of fish and bread! It took forever to give it all out. And when we were done, there were twelve basketfuls of leftovers! I know I looked stupid standing there, staring at them. But Jesus put his arm around me and said, "Don't ever think what you have to give is unimportant. God can make a feast out of a snack."

Some things haven't changed much. The rabbi still says I ask too many questions. A few of the other boys still make fun of me, but most of the children invite me to play with them now. My Mama says my head has grown bigger, but my cap still fits, so I think she's just blessing me again. And I still have to wait for my father and big brothers to go fishing before I can have breakfast at the table.

But to tell the truth, after that day with Jesus, nothing is the same. No matter what anybody else thinks, I know I'm important to Jesus and I can serve God. And you know what? At Jesus' table, there will always be a place for me.

—Mark McClintock is the director of PassportKids, a new summer children's camping program. He lives in Birmingham, Alabama, with his wife Michelle, his daughter Maggie, and several ventriloquist's puppets.

*We thank you, Lord,
for your steadfast love,
for your wonderful
works to humankind.*

*For you satisfy
the thirsty, and
the hungry you fill
with good things.*

—from Psalm 107:8-9

art by Rebecca Ward

quotes, poems, & pithy sayings

Love is the one business in which it pays to be an absolute spendthrift: give it away; throw it away; splash it over; empty your pockets; shake the basket; and tomorrow you'll have more than ever.

—*Author Unknown*

Sometimes God moves loudly, as if spinning to another place like ball lightning. God is, oddly, personal; this God knows. Sometimes en route, dazzlingly or dimly, he shows an edge of himself to souls who seek him, and the people who bear those souls, marveling, know it, and see the skies carousing around them, and watch cells stream and multiply in green leaves. He does not give as the world gives; he leads invisibly over many years, or he wallops for thirty seconds at a time. He may touch a mind, too, making a loud sound, or a mind may feel the rim of his mind as he nears. Such experiences are gifts to beginners. 'Later on,' a Hasid master said, 'you don't see these things anymore.' (Having seen, people of varying cultures turn—for reasons unknown, and by a mechanism unimaginable—to aiding and serving the afflicted and poor.)

—*Annie Dillard, For the Time Being*

Where there is love and wisdom,
there is neither fear nor ignorance;
where there is patience and humility,
there is neither anger nor annoyance;
where there is poverty and joy,
there is neither greed nor avarice;
where there is peace and contemplation,
there is neither care nor restlessness;
where there is the fear of God to guard the dwelling,
there no enemy can enter;
where there is mercy and prudence,
there is neither excess nor harshness.

—*Francis of Assisi*

My ideas of what extreme poverty means have changed during the course of my internship. I began with a simplistic economic idea of poverty, but have gradually realized the role of dignity and self-respect in poverty...Visiting the home and shelters where some of the families lived made me recall that when you live in poverty, you cannot

ignore it because everything you are surrounded by reminds you of it... What really struck me is how poverty can totally consume you, invade every aspect of your personal identity and lifestyle, if you don't have someone to remind you of your value.

—*Joseph Kubik, an intern with the Fourth World Volunteer Corps*

I have a dream that one day, in the red hills of Georgia, the sons of former slaves and the sons of former slave owners will be able to sit down together at the table of brotherhood... This is our hope. This is our faith that I go back to the South with. With this faith, we will be able to hew out of the mountain of despair a stone of hope.

—*Martin Luther King, Jr.*

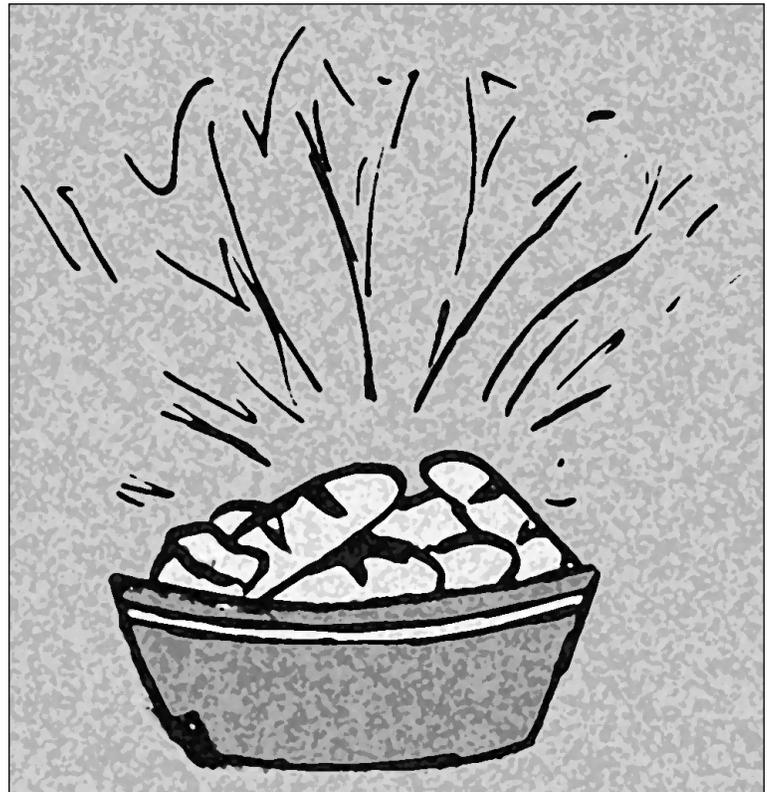
You must be the change you wish to see in the world.

—*Mohandas K. Gandhi*

It is in serving each other that we become free.

—*from the Arthurian legends*

art by Rebecca Ward



You Welcome Not Me

by Deborah Lynn

you welcome not Me.
you welcome your illusions of Me
crying out of your need for me

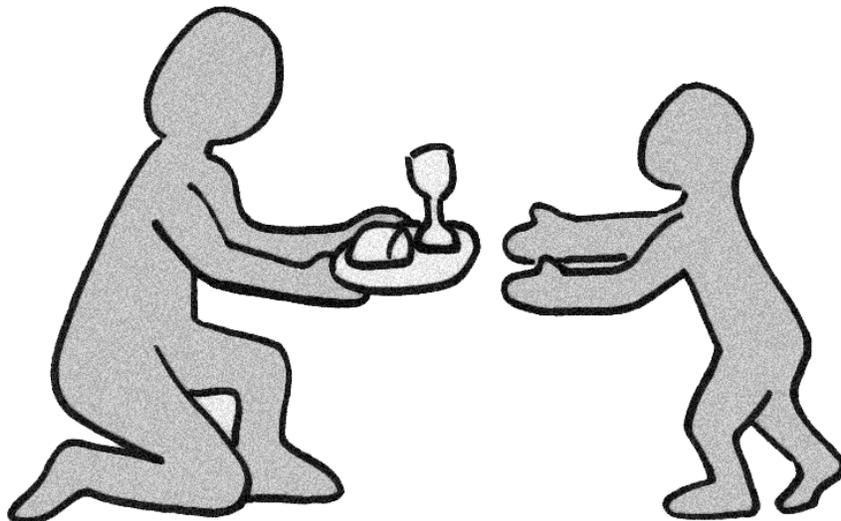
to feed your hunger,
though your pantry is full;

to quench your thirst,
though your tap flows freely;

to clothe you,
though your closets bulge with fabric;

to visit you in prison,
though you only need turn
from your own bars
and face your freedom field.

better then that I come
a stranger,
unknown and mysterious,
lighthearted and free.
no expectations
yet mantled upon my shoulders.
welcomed purely



—Deborah Lynn is a poet and massage therapist living in Nashville, Tennessee. Art by Sharon Rollins.

Here Comes the Judge!

a children's sermon

by Mark McClintock

text: Matthew 25:31-46

Author's Note: This is one of my two-character sermons that I used with my ventriloquism puppet, Sidney. It can easily be done as a dialogue between two people or with any sort of puppet. Remember—adaptation is one of God's creative gifts to us!

MARK: Hi, Sidney. Are you joining the choir today?

SIDNEY: Nope. I was watching Judge Judy this week and decided that's what I'd like to be when I grow up. A judge.

So I gotta get started practicing.

MARK: I see. And why do you want to be a judge?

SIDNEY: I really like the way judges decide who's innocent and who's guilty. And I like the way they make people look really foolish. I think I'm kinda good at that already.

MARK: At making people look foolish?

SIDNEY: Sure, I've been practicing on you for years. 'Course, most people aren't as easy to make look foolish as you are. So I gotta work on it some more.

MARK: Well, it's very interesting that you want to be a judge, Sidney, because our Gospel lesson this morning describes the way Jesus will judge everyone who has ever lived. He calls it separating the sheep from the goats.

SIDNEY: Who ever heard of a judge for sheep and goats?

MARK: It's just a sort of picture, Sidney. People who do what God has created us to do are like the sheep. People who don't are like the goats. You know the difference between sheep and goats, don't you?

SIDNEY: 'Course, I do. Sheep don't have horns to hit you with.

MARK: Yes, but—

SIDNEY: There's no butts about it!

MARK: I was going to say that some sheep in some parts of the world do have horns. But horns are not what God looks for in us humans.

SIDNEY: So what does God look for?

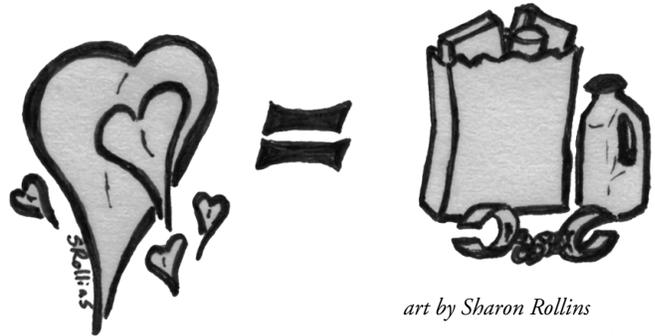
MARK: Sheep know that they depend on their shepherd, and they follow the shepherd wherever he leads them.

SIDNEY: I don't have to eat grass, do I?

MARK: No, but you do need to follow Jesus' example and do the things Jesus did.

SIDNEY: Like turn water into wine?

MARK: No, like taking care of people's needs. In Matthew



25, Jesus says, "I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing—"

SIDNEY: Thank goodness you did that!

MARK: "—I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me."

SIDNEY: When did I do that for, Jesus?

MARK: That's what the people in the story asked. Jesus replied, "Whenever you did it for one of the least of these, you did it for me, too."

SIDNEY: Oh, I get it. You're supposed to give food to someone who's hungry and something to drink to someone who's thirsty?

MARK: Exactly.

SIDNEY: Aha! I told you I wanted an extra doughnut this morning, and you didn't give me one, did you?

MARK: No, I didn't, but—

SIDNEY: Guilty! And when I asked for a Coca Cola with breakfast, did you get me one?

MARK: Of course not, I—

SIDNEY: Guilty again! And don't forget that Bart Simpson T-shirt I asked you for at the store the other day. You didn't buy it for me, right?

MARK: No—

SIDNEY: Guilty, guilty, and double guilty! You goat, you.

MARK: Sidney, Jesus wasn't talking about giving things to a person who already has good things to eat and drink and wear. Jesus was talking about helping people that hardly anyone pays attention to. Like families who have lost their homes. And people who live in countries where there is not enough food to go around. And people who are sick and

are treated unfairly.

SIDNEY: Oh. Like that kid in my class at school, George, whose dad lost his job. Everyone makes fun of him 'cause he has holes in his shirts and his shoes, and he's really skinny and he gets all the answers wrong. He has six brothers and sisters just like him.

MARK: That's exactly the kind of person Jesus was talking about. Have you done anything to be his friend?

SIDNEY: Uh...no...I laughed at him just like the others. I'm guilty! Guess I'm one of the goats, too. *(Bleating)* Baaaaaaa...

MARK: The good news, Sidney, is that Jesus will help you become a sheep. Ask Jesus for the courage and the wisdom to know how to help George and others in the world who are in need, and he promises to help you.

SIDNEY: Well, it won't be easy, but if Jesus will help me do it, I can do it! Even if it's only one person at a time.

MARK: If each of us sheep will make that commitment, think of all the people we can help!

SIDNEY: Cool! Can you help me out of this robe?

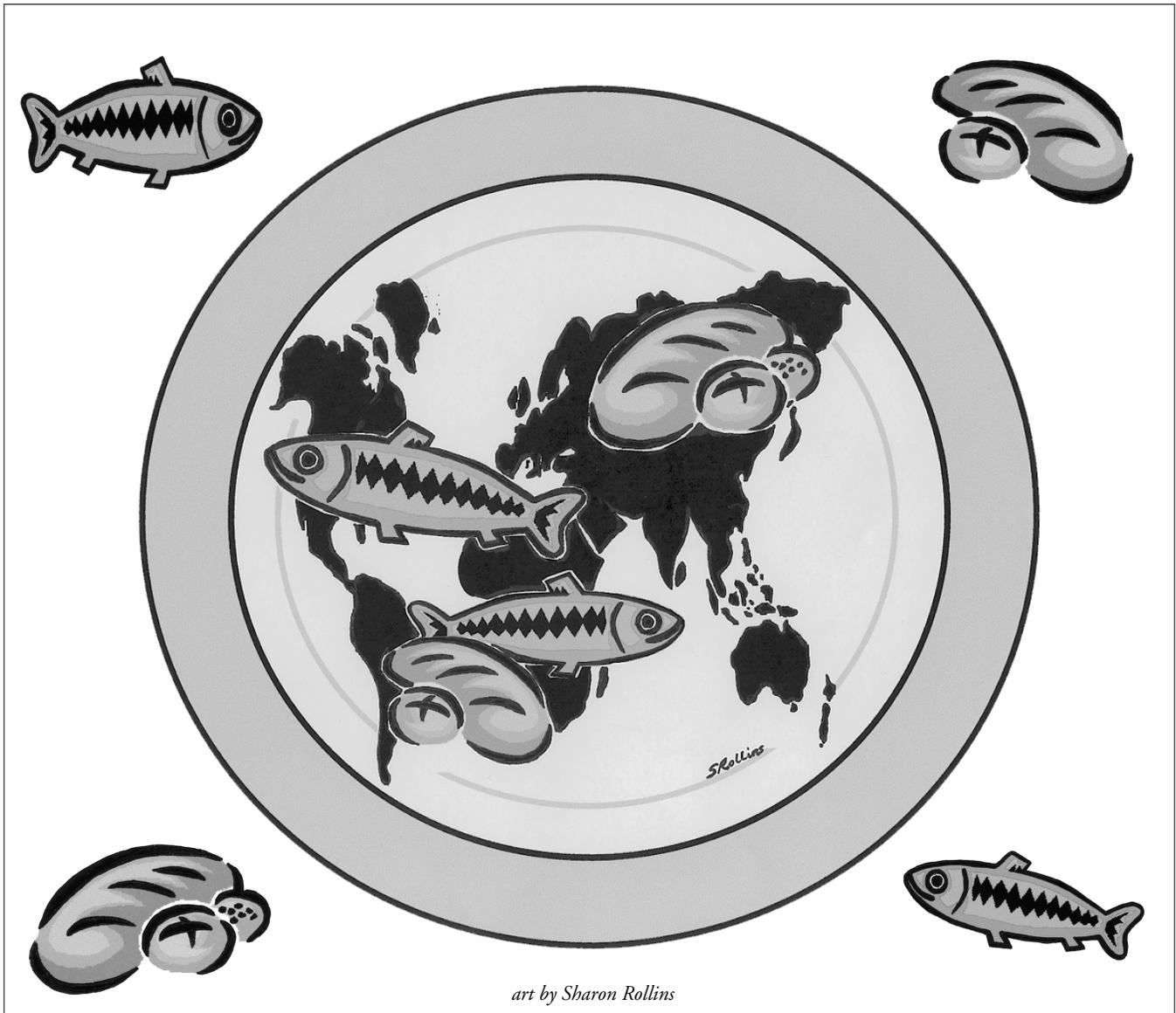
MARK: You don't want to be a judge anymore?

SIDNEY: No way! I want the best job of all—a sheep who follows Jesus!

MARK: We can all do that job. Let's pray. *Merciful God, we thank you for being a judge who has given us an endless number of chances to change our ways and do what is right and just for people in need. Help us have the courage and wisdom and strength to share and help others, in Jesus' name. Amen.*

SIDNEY: Amen! Say, Mark, do you think I'd look good in wool?

—Mark McClintock is the director of PassportKids, a new summer children's camping program. He lives in Birmingham, Alabama, with his wife Michelle, his daughter Maggie, and several ventriloquist's puppets.



art by Sharon Rollins

Jesus and Children

a sermon for Children's Sabbath

by Mark McClintock

text: Matthew 18:1-10

...For an answer Jesus called over a child, whom he stood in the middle of the room, and said, "I'm telling you, once and for all, that unless you return to square one and start over like children, you're not even going to get a look at the kingdom, let alone get in. Whoever becomes simple and elemental again, like this child, will rank high in God's kingdom. What's more, when you receive the childlike on my account, it's the same as receiving me.

—Matthew 18: 3-5, *The Message*

Imagine... isn't that a wonderful word?... Imagine that Jesus were to walk into this room at this moment. I imagine we would ask him to teach us as he taught Peter, John, Mary Magdalene, and the others who followed him two thousand years ago. Perhaps he would preach a provocative and unsettling sermon, for which purpose I would gladly step down and give him this pulpit. Perhaps he would tell us a modern-day parable about a cloned sheep or the CEO of a Fortune 500 company who distributed corporate stock selflessly and equally among his employees regardless of rank or tenure.

At the very least, I imagine, we'd beg for a question-and-answer session. Jesus was always so good at those. Many of you, I'm sure, could think of questions of a deep theological nature or with profound ethical or political implications, but the question that comes first to my mind and sticks is, "Am I getting it right, Lord? Show me an example of someone today who lives the way you want me to live."

If the choice were mine, I would nominate any number of you present today, but I imagine that Jesus would probably walk down the aisles, take a beautiful preschooler in his arms, bring her back, and say, "If you want to enter the kingdom of heaven, change and become like this child. And if you want to welcome me, reach out and welcome little ones like this." Jesus insisted that we who are his followers receive these youngsters without hesitation. Now, times have changed since the First Century of the Common Era, and children in North America today lead very different lives than did those in Jesus' day.

Is the image of the Christian as a child as meaningful and appropriate today as it was two thousand years ago?

As a minister called by God to work with adults *and*



*What, then, must we do,
as the people of Christ?
First, we must change
the way we view our
own children.*

children, I have to confess that my answer is not without bias. With the help of some of your children, I'm going to try to explain why I think Jesus' choice of a little child is relevant to us, here and now. I think there are at least four qualities of childhood that can be discerned in scripture as characteristics Christians should develop: humility, a hunger to learn, powerlessness, and dependence.

The first quality, humility, Jesus himself names in verse four of today's text, and his teachings are filled with references to a humble spirit: "Blessed are the meek," "All who exalt themselves will be humbled, and all who humble themselves will be exalted," "The king is coming, humbled, riding on a donkey."

The second quality, hunger to learn, I draw from the Gospel of John. Compare Jesus' statement here in Matthew

that we must change and become like children to his instruction to Nicodemus, a teacher of the law: “You must be born from above, anew.” Jesus makes it pointedly clear to Nicodemus that, in spite of all his knowledge of the Torah and the subtleties of Jewish religious law, developed over centuries, true spiritual wisdom requires a new beginning point and is a never-ending pursuit.

Even a very mature Christian—and we do mature in our understanding of God—must confess that the magnitude of God is so far beyond our full comprehension that none of us—not even the most gifted theologians—can profess

We must see that this means that children are a vitally important part of the church. Should we hide away somewhere the role models God has graciously given us, or leave them for a few dedicated individuals to tend?

to be experts. Throughout life, we continue to seek, to wonder, to question, and to learn. The third and fourth qualities, powerlessness and dependence, fit hand-in-glove. The Greek makes it clear that the child Jesus chooses is a young child, probably an infant. But the root word, *pais*, can also refer to a slave. Jesus instructs his followers not to “lord it” over others, but to abandon power, to be servants, “just as the Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve, and give his life a ransom for many.” Earlier in Matthew, Jesus teaches the people not to worry but to trust God to provide even as those who are parents provide for their dependent children.

If we take Jesus’ teachings seriously, children are more than little, immature people who need to be attended to in another building somewhere until they grow up and can contribute something to the church. Children are one of God’s gifts to us to help us learn who we are to be. I am often astonished at the difference children—even very young children—can make in an adult’s life. At age twelve, Jesus so amazed the rabbis in the Temple with his understanding of God that they failed to shoo him away even after three days! And he was a mere babe when he altered the path of shepherds and wise men, and elicited prophetic praise from old Simeon and Anna in the Temple.

Three years ago I stood in a hospital room, watching the

life ebb away from my infant niece, Morgan. As I stood with her tiny body in my arms, the thought crossed my mind, “Why such a waste, Lord?” Morgan had been born with only ten percent of a diaphragm, miraculously survived a number of intensive surgeries, and spent nearly six of the seven-and-a-half months of her life in hospitals. Fastened to breathing machines and monitors, she was about as humble, powerless, and dependent as anyone could possibly be. And yet—during her short life, her parents, sister, and grandparents were motivated after many years to return to church, joining a community of faith that has continued to be a vital part of their lives; mother, grandmother and grandfather all made professions of faith in Jesus Christ and were baptized; and countless individuals who came into contact with Morgan have testified to the way this sweet-spirited, uncomplaining, beaming, bright-eyed little girl helped them draw near to God. A wasted life? Hardly.

Then there was the eight-year old girl who taught me about grace. She was one of hundreds of children who found their way to Carlisle Avenue Baptist Church in Louisville, Kentucky, during my seven years there. Two years before my arrival, the church had built a beautiful recreation building for its members. I promptly established a Saturday morning recreation program and opened the doors to the children of the community. At first, very few youngsters came. The neighborhood was extremely transient, steeped in poverty; ramshackle houses filled with people who considered Christians as “those people who reject folks like us, maybe giving us a meager handout when we come begging for help and preaching to us to come to Jesus, join their church, and pay our dues when the plate is passed.”

When I visited in the homes of our neighbors, I saw unspeakable cases of neglect and abuse, as well as dozens of struggling families doing their best against the odds to keep afloat. Quickly, I discovered that the way to build a bridge was to cut out all pretension, and approach people humbly, eager to learn their stories, with no display of holiness or prestige because of my faith or my position in the church, and to be open about my own shortcomings and needs and my dependence on God’s grace—in short, to approach them like a child. The barrier of suspicion was soon lowered, and even those parents who could not overcome their own insecurities about visiting a church began to permit their children to come.

The young girl I mentioned was enjoying a soft drink during our Kids’ Time at the gym. All at once, she awkwardly dropped her soda onto the floor, splashing its contents on herself, the carpet, and my khaki pants. As an adult, my natural instinct was to chew her out, or at least to cuss. But I looked at her face and saw the terror in her eyes that reflected countless punishments—perhaps verbal, perhaps physical, but clearly painful—for mistakes as trivial as

spilling a can of soda. In that glance, I saw myself and all the thousands of mistakes I have made—large and small—against God, and never once have I had to fear the punishment I deserve. I grabbed a stack of paper towels, handed her half of them, and got down on the floor with her to sop up the mess. And in her eyes, I now saw relief, gratitude, and joy beyond measure.

Both of these children—my niece, Morgan, and the eight-year old in the gym—had lessons to teach me about my relationship to God. But I would have learned nothing had I not been willing to open my arms and receive them. The connection between becoming like a child and welcoming a child is no accident. Jesus knew that we can never truly be children of God until we are welcomers, if you will, of those who are humble, powerless, dependent. Quite literally, we must open our arms and embrace or take in hand the “little ones” of our world. Jesus’ word choice here alters the definition of those we must welcome. “Little ones” refers to persons who are low in status, overlooked, or oppressed, regardless of age. Did this include children in Jesus’ day? Most definitely. What about our very different culture today?

Allow me to call upon your imaginations once more. Listen to this modern parable from the Children’s Defense Fund:

- *Imagine a very wealthy family with five children. Four of the children have plenty to eat and comfortable warm rooms in which to sleep. One does not. She is often hungry, lives in a cold room, and sometimes has to sleep on the streets, in a shelter—or she may even be taken away from her neglectful family, which has plenty of room and be placed in foster care with strangers. Imagine this family giving four of their young children three nourishing meals a day, but sending the fifth child away from the table hungry.*
- *Imagine this very wealthy family making sure four of their babies and toddlers get all their shots and health care before they get sick, but ignoring the fifth child plagued by chronic infections and respiratory diseases like asthma.*
- *Imagine this rich family making sure four of their children get stimulating preschool experiences and sending the fifth child often to unsafe or poor quality child care with underpaid and untrained caregivers responsible for too many children.*
- *Imagine having the fifth child depend on informal arrangements with relatives or neighbors when parents have to work, or being left all alone when they fall through.*
- *Imagine the family reading to four of their children, and leaving the fifth child unread to, untalked and unsung to, or propped before a television screen which sends out violence and sex-charged messages, ads for*

material things, and intellectual “pabulum.”

• This is the United States today, where one in five of our children ages two and under lives in poverty. It is not a stable or healthy family or a sufficiently compassionate one.

Here are a few statistics to lend stark truth to the parable. Each day in the United States:

- *9 children or teens are homicide victims.*
- *9 other children or teens are killed by firearms.*
- *180 children are arrested for violent crimes.*
- *401 babies are born to mothers who received late or no prenatal care.*
- *1,310 babies are born without health insurance.*
- *2,016 babies are born into poverty.*
- *4,248 children are arrested.*
- *7,883 children are reported abused or neglected.*

*We must look
beyond our own
children and open
our arms especially
to those little ones
who are suffering
in our world.*

Do you have any doubt that Jesus’ selection of a child as an example of a little one in need of welcomers is still relevant today? Five of the ten verses in our gospel passage are warnings against being the cause of stumbling blocks—or scandals—for our little ones. The stumbling blocks in Jesus’ day may have been somewhat different from those today, but they are similar in nature. They are stumbling blocks like unaffordable medical insurance; underpaid child care providers and teachers; and an economic system that rewards greed and preserves the wealth of the powerful while progressively crippling those who are already struggling.

When we make choices that support these kinds of institutions, we are those of whom Jesus says “Woe to you!” Perhaps the worst offense of all is to simply look the other way while such unjust practices are happening. “Take care that you do not despise one of these little ones,” Jesus says. The Greek is probably better translated, “do not look down upon” or “do not disregard” those whom society overlooks. Jesus calls upon us to be welcomers, to receive, to embrace—not to ignore.

What, then, must we do, as the people of Christ? First, we must change the way we view our own children. They are not merely lumps of clay that we must mold; God has formed them from the mixture of genes and chromosomes that have come down through generations of ancestors. We are, according to the Proverb, to “train a child in the way they should go,” but the way they should go should be to follow God wherever God leads them.

If Abraham had simply done everything his father had wanted, he would never have left Mesopotamia and gone to the Holy Land. If Jesus had done everything his parents had wanted, he would not have stayed in the Temple for three days causing them great distress, and you can probably guess that it was not his mother, Mary, who wanted him to say and do the things that got him killed. Yes, we are responsible for helping our children learn to make good, safe, healthy, and thoughtful choices. Yes, we need to create safe and age-appropriate boundaries for them. But we must see our children as individual, unique creations of God, whom God has sent not only to learn from us but to teach us—to remind us of the way we are to live as God’s children.

Second, we must see that this means that children are a vitally important part of the church. Should we hide away somewhere the role models God has graciously given us, or leave them for a few dedicated individuals to tend? Or should we find ways to include them in the whole life of our church? I’ve seen churches develop intergenerational Bible study groups, mission projects, retreats, and worship services—in which children, youth, and adults of all ages learn together, work together, and worship God together.

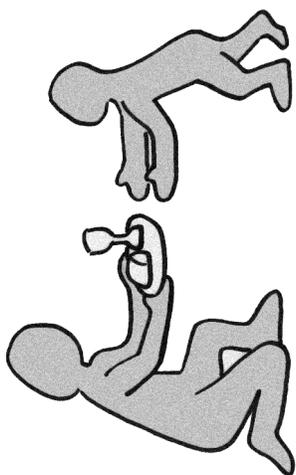
In some churches, every parent is asked to take a turn once a year, twice a year, or perhaps four times each year, to spend the worship hour working with children; and they think of it not as a chore or an obligation but as an opportunity. Perhaps the most beautiful thing of all is to see adults whose children are grown, or who have never

borne children, act as spiritual parents and guides for the little ones in their congregations. Truly, these folks are welcomers and are blessed by Jesus Christ for the love they share.

Third, we must look beyond our own children and open our arms especially to those little ones who are suffering in our world. We can be political advocates for legislation that provides for the needs of all children, writing to our leaders about the importance of these children to our society now and in the future. We can provide financial support for good quality childcare and children’s programs, especially in impoverished areas. We can volunteer time in the children’s wing of a hospital, read to a class in a local day care center or school, or tutor a child in an abuse shelter. We can even open our church’s doors—and our arms—to children in the local community by providing a weekly recreation event or club meeting. Yes, we will get messy, we may be inconvenienced—but, after all, isn’t that what Jesus did? And if we follow his example and keep our eyes and ears and our minds open, we will probably learn some important things about ourselves and our relationships to God.

I’ve asked five of the children of the church to stand with me here. Perhaps their faces are familiar to you. You’ve watched some of them grow from infancy. *[Five children of the church come from the congregation and stand next to Mark.]* Now, I ask you: Which of these five should we abandon to a life of malnourishment, inadequate care, poor health, and utter despair? There are thousands of little ones, every bit as precious to God as these are to us, right outside our doors—humble, powerless, dependent, and just plain hungry. We can either be welcomers or stumbling blocks. Which will you be?

—Mark McClintock is the director of PassportKids, a new summer children’s camping program. He lives in Birmingham, Alabama, with his wife Michelle, his daughter Maggie, and several ventriloquist’s puppets.



Do not be
daunted by
the enormity
of the world’s grief.
Do justly, now.
Love mercy, now.
Walk humbly, now.
You are not
obligated
to complete
the work,
but neither are you
free to abandon it.

—from the Talmud

Hunger Around the World



- More than 840 million people in the world are malnourished—799 million of them are from the developing world. More than 153 million of them are under the age of five.

- 6 million children under the age of five die every year as a result of hunger.

- Virtually every country in the world has the potential of growing sufficient food on a sustainable basis. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations has set the minimum requirement for caloric intake per person per day at 2,350. Worldwide, there are 2,805 calories available per person per day.

- Fifty-four countries fall below the minimum requirement for calories; they do not produce enough food to feed their populations, nor can they afford to import the necessary commodities to make up the gap. Most of these countries are in sub-Saharan Africa.

- More than 2 million children each year have severe visual problems due to lack of vitamin A.

—*from the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)*

- Of the 6.2 billion people in today's world, 1.2 billion live on less than \$1 per day.

- The amount of money that the richest one percent of the world's people make each year equals what the poorest 57 percent make. The richest five percent of the world's people have incomes 114 times that of the poorest five percent.

- Each day in the developing world, more than 30,000 children die from mostly preventable and treatable causes such as diarrhea, acute respiratory infections, measles or malaria. These diseases are far more deadly to children who are stunted or underweight.

- By the end of 2000, some 22 million people had died from AIDS, which has caused 13 million children to lose either their mother or both parents.

- 40 million people are living with AIDS—90 percent of them in developing countries and 75 percent of them in sub-Saharan Africa: 2.9 million are under the age of 14.

—*from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)*

- The proportion of people living on less than \$1 a day has fallen from 29 percent to 23 percent in the past 10 years, although that masks significant regional differences.

- East Asia has seen a drop from 28 percent to 14 percent.

- South Asia has seen a drop from 44 percent to 37 percent.

- Africa has seen a drop from 48 percent to only 47 percent.

—*a press release from UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan*

- Sub-Saharan Africa is the only region in the world where child malnutrition will likely rise in the next 20 years. Recent studies predict a 20-percent increase in the number of malnourished children in that region between 1997 and 2020.

—*The International Food Policy Research Institute*

- Malnutrition can severely affect a child's intellectual development. Children who have stunted growth due to malnutrition score significantly lower on math and language achievement tests than do well-nourished children.

- In developing countries, 91 children out of 1,000 die before their fifth birthday. By comparison, in the United States eight children in 1,000 will die before turning five years old.

—*UNICEF*

- 12 million people die each year from lack of water, including 3 million children from waterborne disease: 1.1 billion lack access to clean water; 2.4 billion live without decent sanitation; and 4 billion without wastewater disposal.

—*The World Bank*

- One of the leading causes of food security crises is displacement. Three out of every four refugees and internally displaced persons worldwide are women and children.

—*Church World Service*

Hunger in the United States



Hunger persists in the United States.

- 33.6 million people—including almost 13 million children—live in households that experience hunger or the risk of hunger. This represents approximately one in ten households in the United States (10.7 percent).
- 3.3 percent of U.S. households experience hunger. Some people in these households frequently skip meals or eat too little, sometimes going without food for a whole day. This affects 9 million people, including 3 million children.
- 7.4 percent of U.S. households are at risk of hunger. Members of these households have lower quality diets or must resort to seeking emergency food because they cannot always afford the food they need. 24.6 million people, including 9.7 million children, live in these homes.

—United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)

- Preschool and school-aged children who experience severe hunger have higher levels of chronic illness, anxiety and depression, and behavior problems than children with no hunger, according to a recent study.

—Pediatrics, Vol. 110 No. 4, October 2002

Poverty is increasing in the U.S.

- Between 2000 and 2001, poverty rose to 11.7 percent of the population, or 32.9 million people, up from 11.3 percent and 31.6 million.
- The 2001 median household income in the U.S. was \$42,228, representing a 2.2 percent decline in real income from its 2000 level of \$43,162.

—U.S. Census Bureau

Food insecurity is rising in the U.S.

- In 2001, the number of Americans who were food insecure, or hungry or at risk of hunger, was 33.6 million, a rise over 2000, when 33.2 million Americans were food insecure. The number of individuals who are suffering from hunger

rose from 8.5 million in 2000 to 9 million in 2001.

- The number of food insecure households with children has also risen since 2000 by 10,000 to 6.18 million.

—United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), *Household Food Security in the United States*

Unemployment is increasing in the U.S.

- Average unemployment rates in the past year have risen: in 2001, the rate was 4.8 percent, but jumped to 5.7 percent in 2002.

—U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

More hungry people are turning to the Food Stamp program for assistance.

- Following years of decline, participation in the Food Stamp program has been on the rise over the past two years. In August 2002 (the last month for which data are available) 19.7 million people participated in the food stamp program. March 2002 was the first month since July 1998 in which the number of food stamp participants exceeded 19 million.

- While it is not possible to determine what caused the increase in participation from the data available, the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities argues it is likely that the majority of the increase can be attributed to the economic downturn. Due to loss of employment and income, more families probably became eligible for the food stamp program.

—Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, November, 19, 2002

The number of people seeking emergency food assistance is rising.

- The U.S. Conference of Mayors reports that in 2002 requests for emergency food assistance increased an average of 19 percent. The study also found that 48 percent of those requesting emergency food assistance were members of families with children and that 38 percent of adults requesting such assistance were employed. High housing costs, low-paying jobs, unemployment, and the economic downturn led the list of reasons contributing to the rise.

- Just over half the cities surveyed in the Mayors' report said they are not able to provide an adequate quantity of food to those in need. And nearly two-thirds of the cities reported they had to decrease the quantity of food provided and/or the number of times people can come to get food assistance. An average of 16 percent of the demand for

emergency food assistance is estimated to have gone unmet in the survey cities.

—*U.S. Conference of Mayors, Status Report on Hunger and Homelessness in America's Cities, December 2002; www.usmayors.org*

- 23.3 million people sought and received emergency hunger relief from our network of charities in 2001. The study also found that between 1997 and 2001, demand for emergency food assistance through the America's Second Harvest network has risen 9 percent since 1997.

- 23 million people receiving emergency food assistance is equivalent to the combined populations of the 10 largest U.S. cities: New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, Houston, Philadelphia, San Diego, Phoenix, San Antonio, Dallas, and Detroit.

- 40 percent of the people seeking emergency food assistance in 2001 were from working families.

—*America's Second Harvest, Hunger in America*

- A survey of 55 Catholic Charities agencies found that in anticipation of the busy winter holidays, 85 percent are expecting an increase in people seeking emergency financial assistance, 66 percent are expecting greater need for food, and 71 percent are anticipating a shortage this holiday season in financial donations.

—*Catholic Charities USA*

- A survey of America's Second Harvest affiliates in late 2001 and early 2002 found that 86 percent had seen an increase in requests for food assistance during the past year.

—*America's Second Harvest, Local Impact Survey*

- New York City's soup kitchens and food pantries fed 45 percent more people in 2002 than in 2000. In the one year following September 11, 73 percent of the agencies fed more children—with 39 percent saying the number of children they fed increased "greatly."

—*New York City Coalition against Hunger*

- In Chicago, the Greater Chicago Food Depository, which serves 600 agencies, distributed 36 million pounds of food. It is estimated that the food bank will distribute 42 million pounds this year, which translates to about 91,000 families a week.

—*Chicago Tribune, "Weak Economy Increases Need, Slows Donations"*

- The Greater Boston Food Bank is experiencing unprecedented demand: while the food bank normally distributes up to 350,000 pounds of food a week, since October the number has risen to 500,000 to 600,000 pounds of food a week.

—*The Boston Herald, "State Pushes Food Stamps in Face of Increasing Need"*

The Effect of Hunger on Children

- Widespread hunger has been documented in all 50 states in the U.S. 33 million Americans, including nearly 13 million children, are hungry or living on the very edge of hunger.

—*Mazon, a Jewish response to hunger*

- The percentage of American children living in poverty is now more than double that of other major industrialized nations.

—*UNICEF*

- The average age of homeless persons in the U.S. is seven years. One in four of the people in soup kitchen lines are children.

—*America's Second Harvest*

- Hungry children can't learn. Mounting evidence shows that children who come to school hungry cannot concentrate and have higher rates of academic failure, setting the stage for a downward spiral later in life.

—*Mazon, a Jewish response to hunger*

- Recent scientific studies link inadequate food and poor developmental outcomes in U.S. children. Food-insecure children are one-third more likely to be hospitalized than food-secure children.