



*Creative Resources for Your  
Congregation'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).*

#### Staff and Volunteers

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Business Manager.....Laura Schmeltekopf  
Proofreader.....Pat A. Strother  
Editorial Assistants.....Adam Henderson,  
Kate Moore, Jacque Scott  
Web Designer.....Bennett Lane  
Artists.....Robert Askins, Sally Askins,  
Curtis Cannon, Peter Yuichi Clark, Robert  
Darden, Van Darden, Erin Kennedy Mayer,  
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Seeds of Hope, Inc., is a private, independent group of believers responding to a common burden for the poor and hungry of God's world, and acting on the strong belief that biblical mandates to feed the poor were not intended to be optional. The group intends to seek out people of faith who feel called to care for the poor; and to affirm, enable, and empower a variety of responses to the problems of poverty.

#### Editorial Address

Seeds of Hope is housed by the community of faith at Seventh and James Baptist Church. The mailing address is 602 James; Waco, Texas 76706; Phone: 254/755-7745; Fax: 254/753-1909; E-mail: SeedsHope@aol.com.

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### *a word about this packet*

As always, 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.

Much of the material here comes from new contributors: Larry Bethune, a pastor in Austin, Texas; Carolyn & Larry Dipboye, pastors in Oakridge, Tennessee; and featured artist Curtis Cannon, whose art is on the cover. Other art comes from artists Erin Kennedy Mayer of Arlington, Texas; Sharon Rollins of Waco, Texas; and Peter Clark of Alameda, California. We once again have drama from Rae Hunter of Rindge, New Hampshire. We are indebted to Bread for the World for much of the statistical material. We have also enclosed a bulletin insert for the 2005 CROP WALK, Church World Service's fundraiser.

As always, we try 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. May it be so. —lkc

*Bulletin Art*





## *What! Does the Lord Require?*

*a sermon by Larry Bethune*

Scripture: Micah 6:1-8

Friday is my day off, and one Friday, between my daily readings of Niebuhr and Barth, I caught an episode of *The People's Court*. What a sad case it was! Even Judge Marilyn, who's seen it all, was shocked by the testimony of a mother suing her lazy son for stealing \$1,000 from her. Andrea said her son Ian had such a tendency to violence; she had to get an order of protection against him.

Ian told the judge he gets assistance from the government because his asthma is so bad he can't work. But he confessed he spends most of his money to buy cigarettes and weed, so he runs a little short by the end of the month. (I'm not making this stuff up!) Judge Marilyn called Ian a "mama's boy" and told him to grow up, go to school and get out of his mother's house. She ruled in favor of Andrea and granted her \$2,920.

How bad would it have to get for a mother to drag her own son into court? Can you imagine that? But imagine this: things getting so bad a god drags into court the people who worship that god. That's what the prophet Micah saw happening to his own people. They were sued by the God we worship!

Micah was a country boy. He had no use for the big city. "What is the transgression of Jacob?" he asks. "Is it not Samaria? And what is the high place of Judah? Is it not Jerusalem?" (Micah 1:5)

But it wasn't urban decadence *per se* that offended Micah. It was their widespread idolatry. It was their abuse of power. It was their unfair business practices and their war on the poor. It was their misplaced faith in their military might and their arrogant presumption that God was always on their side.

*Alas for those who devise wickedness and evil deeds on their beds! When the morning dawns, they perform it, because it is in their power. They covet fields, and seize them; houses, and take them away; they oppress householder and house, people and their inheritance.*

*Therefore thus says the Lord: Now, I am*

*devising against this family an evil from which you cannot remove your necks; and you shall not walk haughtily, for it will be an evil time. (Micah 2:1-3)*

Even the priests were greedy. The other prophets preached only what the people wanted to hear, and the kings protected the wealthy against the poor.

*Hear this, you rulers of the house of Jacob and chiefs of the house of Israel, who abhor justice and pervert all equity, who build Zion with blood and Jerusalem with wrong! Its rulers give judgment for a bribe, its priests teach for a price, its prophets give oracles for money; yet they lean upon the Lord and say, "Surely the Lord is with us! No harm shall come upon us." Therefore, because of you, Zion shall be plowed as a field; Jerusalem shall become a heap of ruins, and the mountain of the house a wooded height. (Micah 3:9-12)*

They were supposed to be the covenant people of God. They were supposed to take care of each other. They were supposed to be a model to all nations and bring the world to God. But they were lazy and violent and foolish instead. So God sued them.

Imagine the people's shock as they came to the temple to worship one Sabbath, and this rube from the sticks started preaching at them:

Hear what the Lord says: "Rise, plead your case before the mountains, and let the hills hear your voice. Hear, you mountains, the (lawsuit) of the Lord, and you enduring foundations of the earth; for the Lord has a (lawsuit) with his people, and he will contend with Israel." (Micah 6:1-2)

It is not the language of worship they are used to hearing, the litanies of the psalms, but the "hear ye, hear ye" language of the law court. God calls the mountains and the earth to bear witness in the cosmic tribunal and then accuses the people before them:

*The people are shocked, incredulous. There they stand in their best Sabbath-go-to-meetin' clothes, offerings in hand, sheep for the sacrifice. How can this be? Aren't they doing what God asked just by coming to worship? Isn't that enough to get God on their side?*

"O my people, what have I done to you? In what have I wearied you? Answer me! For I brought you up from the land of Egypt, and redeemed you from the house of slavery; and I sent before you Moses, Aaron, and Miriam. O my people, remember...." (Micah 6:3-5)

God has done everything for them, but they have responded like a violent lazy son high on weed. They have no memory of all God has done for them. And no gratitude.

The people are shocked, incredulous. There they stand in their best Sabbath-go-to-meetin' clothes, offerings in hand, sheep for the sacrifice. How can this be? Aren't they doing what God asked just by coming to worship? Isn't that enough to get God on their side? So they ask,

"With what shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before God on high? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?" (Micah 6:6-7)

No! No! No! Those are the outer forms of worship. If there is no coherence between your outer form of worship and your inner values, if there is no correspondence between your rituals of worship and your behavior in life, you're just going through the motions here and your worship is a superficial mockery of God.

He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God? (Micah 6:8)

This is the scripture which has called together nine churches here in the University of Texas area to minister as a group, and to advocate for, people in need. We are divided in our views and ways, Catholic and Baptist and Church of Christ and Methodist and Presbyterian and Lutheran and Episcopalian and Disciples of Christ and United Church of Christ, but we all believe in this message of Micah as the Word of God to us.

It has been called the best summary of the message of the prophets, the Old Testament "Bible in a nutshell." It sounds central themes from Isaiah, Jeremiah, Amos, and Hosea. They all said it well, but this good old country boy, Micah, said it best:

*And what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?*

It's as simple as that. So why don't we do it?

The first part is probably the hardest for us, as it was for God's people in Jerusalem. The question itself: What does the Lord require? What does God want from us? It's a question we ask rarely, I think. We can't even enumerate everything God had already done for us before we even drew our first breath. Truth. Beauty. Love. Family. Friendship. A good creation. The gift of life itself.

It was all waiting for us when we got here. You couldn't make any of it on your own. You couldn't afford to buy it if it were for sale. Everything necessary for you to be, everything that makes this life so precious, is a gift of God's grace to you.

But the great majority of humankind takes it all so much for granted, it doesn't even occur to most of us to ask what the Lord might want in return. And when some nosy preacher spits in our soup by asking in our behalf, it's a nuisance, it's a bother, it's an irritation. We're often surprised, even startled. "What! Does the Lord require???"

Yes. The Lord does require. Expects. Demands. The Lord has the right, you know? It shouldn't surprise you. If you dare to engage the question, follow it through instead of retreating back into the bliss of spiritual denial, you are in for an even greater surprise. The Lord really doesn't ask for much. Three things. That's all. Actually, three simple Hebrew words. Three words! How hard is that? So why don't we do it?

*Mishpat*

"Justice!" God requires you and me "to do justice." And the verb "to do" emphasizes this is not an ideal, but a practice. It is not a concept, but an ethic. It is not some

grand philosophy; it is something you do. It is not a passive state of non-aggression, an I-don't-bother-anybody-else-so-don't-bother-me isolation, but an active engagement in the world. Justice is about the equal treatment of all people. Justice is about equal opportunity for everyone.

Justice is about insuring that everyone has a fair share of God's Providence and no one is left out. Justice is about living simply, about being satisfied with having enough and sharing with those who don't have enough. Justice is about community. Justice is about being right in your personal relationships and it is about demanding the right social systems in the land. As William Sloan Coffin observes, "The Bible is less concerned with alleviating the effects of injustice than in eliminating the causes of it."

In the Christian Bible from Moses to Jesus, *mishpat* is paired with its inseparable Siamese twin, *tsedeqah*, "righteousness," which means being right with God, right with others, even right with creation itself. You cannot be close to God without caring for the people on God's heart. So justice is where religion becomes either real or just so much hot air.

As James puts it, "Religion that is pure and undefiled before God...is this: to care for orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world." (James 1:27) *Mishpat* recognizes the essential connectedness and interdependence of all things in God. Writes Wendell Berry,

*We cannot live harmlessly or at our own expense; we depend upon other creatures and survive by their deaths. To live, we must daily break the body and shed the blood of creation. The point is, when we do this knowingly, lovingly, skillfully, reverently, it is a sacrament; when we do it ignorantly, greedily, clumsily, destructively, it is a desecration...in such desecration we condemn ourselves to spiritual and moral loneliness and others to want.*

For years now there has been more than enough food for everyone on earth to survive. There has been more than enough space for everyone to have shelter. There has been more than enough wealth for everyone to be helped. But children starve, and the homeless wander, and the poor suffer, because 10 percent of the world's population controls what the other 90 per cent need.

We in the top 10 per cent praise the Lord that we are blessed, but the Lord cries, *mishpat!*

### *Chesed*

The second word is *chesed*, and it is not easily translated into English. "Kindness" doesn't quite cut it. "Kindness" is too easily reduced to the insipid notion that our whole faith tradition is all about being "nice," and in the final analysis, mainly a matter of learning good manners.

But surely we don't believe God freed the Hebrew slaves from bondage in Egypt to be "nice"? That Jesus died on the cross so we could be "nice?" That the church is going to shatter the gates of hell and turn the world upside down for the sake of "niceness?"

God demands that we do justice. But God also demands that we love *chesed*. *Chesed* is a word rooted in the covenant relationship Israel had with God. It means "faithfulness, loyalty, steadfastness, lasting commitment, continuity of relationship."

*But surely we don't believe God freed the Hebrew slaves from bondage in Egypt to be "nice"? That Jesus died on the cross so we could be "nice?" That the church is going to shatter the gates of hell and turn the world upside down for the sake of "niceness?"*

It is about staying true to God's purpose and God's people. It is about living in community with one another. It is about enduring, forbearing, forgiving—keeping faith with God and with each another.

Thus it includes kindness, but is more than kindness. God calls us to have a passion for caring that stands the test, that does not wither in the storms of real life. *Chesed* means keeping covenant with God and God's people, which includes acts of mercy and kindness and a whole lot more.

### *Halak*

The third demand of God is *halak*, "to walk." The Hebrew reads literally *v'hatzne' lecheth 'im eloheka*, "a humble-making walk with your God." The Jews get another word from *halak*, which is *halakah*, "commandment," which means "a walk in the right path, obeying the guidance of God."

Walking implies a continual accompaniment, a constant companionship. Walking with God means we live our lives before God, with a constant awareness of the Divine Presence. We are never alone or abandoned.

Neither do we think to hide from God. We do not try to compartmentalize God into an occasional thought or imprison God in the church walls where we come to visit once a week. We do not reduce God to the level of being our personal servant or domesticate God into being merely the guardian of our niceness.

Walking with God opens us to the sudden surprises

of the Spirit, alerts us to the surplus of grace that surrounds us, and amazes us with the mercies of the Almighty. In short, walking with God keeps us humble. I am reminded of one of Augustine's lovely confessions:

*O Beauty ever ancient, ever new  
You were with me,  
But I was not with you.*

God is always with us, always aware of us. It is we who are not always attentive or even aware of God. But Micah is right. God requires our attention, and to the degree that

*Mishpat. Hesed. Halak. Justice.  
Steadfast kindness. A humble walk.  
Like faith, hope, and love in the New  
Testament, just three words. Three  
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why don't we do it?*

we learn day by day, even minute by minute, to "practice the presence of God," as Brother Lawrence put it long ago, our lives are transformed, we begin to do justice, and we learn to love loyal kindness.

*Mishpat. Hesed. Halak. Justice. Steadfast kindness. A humble walk. Like faith, hope, and love in the New Testament, just three words. Three little words; is that so hard? Then why don't we do it?*

The Muslims tell the story of a Sufi holy man who made a pilgrimage to Mecca. When he had completed all

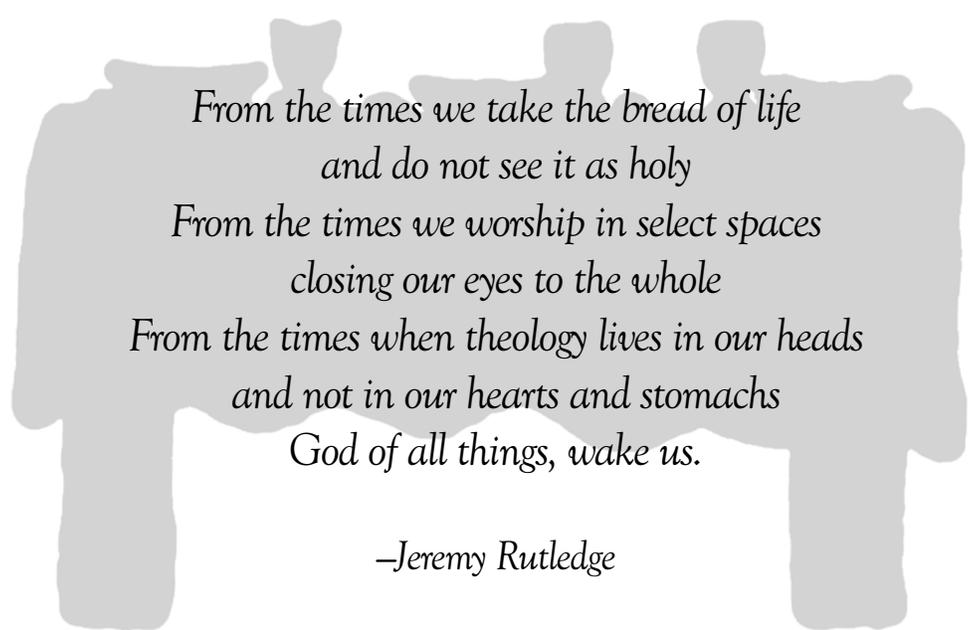
of the prescribed rituals, he knelt down and touched his forehead to the ground, and prayed: "Allah! I have only one desire in life. Give me the grace never to offend you again." Hearing this, the All-Merciful laughed out loud and said, "That's what they all ask for. But if I granted everyone this grace, whom would I forgive?"

After all this time, though all humanity knows that God, by any name we call God, wants peace and justice, compassion and community in the world, we have nevertheless failed to achieve it. And sadly, we Christians have nothing to brag about to the other religions of the world for our commitment to justice, loyal kindness, or a humble walk with God.

Who could blame God for getting fed up and dragging us into the cosmic court? But God forgives us. God forgives us. And God grants us the grace still to call us to life, to urge us to wholeness, like a loving parent to require us to do justice, and love kindness, and walk humbly with our God. For God's sake, for our own sake, for the sake of our children and all the generations to come, why don't we do it? May we pray?

"Dear Lord and Parent of us all, forgive our foolish ways. Re-clothe us in our rightful minds, in purer lives your service find, in deeper reverence praise." Don't give up on us, Lord, but show us the way. We are slow learners, but we want to please you. Help us in this beloved community, to be a model of your way for the others that one day all humanity might live in the freedom of your love and the peace of your Spirit with justice, kindness, and humility. Amen.

—Larry Bethune is the senior pastor of University Baptist Church in Austin, Texas.



*From the times we take the bread of life  
and do not see it as holy  
From the times we worship in select spaces  
closing our eyes to the whole  
From the times when theology lives in our heads  
and not in our hearts and stomachs  
God of all things, wake us.*

—Jeremy Rutledge

# *Lillian vs. The Galactic Space Mages of Doom*

*Or Hearing the Cries of the Poor and Oppressed*

(A Skit for 5-9 Youth)

by Rachel C. Hunter

**NARRATOR 1:** Lillian arrives home after a weary day's work at the Big-Mart. All day she shelves plastic toys and helps customers. Picking them up and putting them on shelves. Over and over and over again.

**NARRATOR 2:** Another day she has gone without breakfast or lunch so that she can save food and money for her daughter. She is worried about the electricity bill, it's higher than usual and she doesn't know how she's going to pay for it.

**NARRATOR 1:** Her eyes ache. When she closes her eyes she can see the reflective glare of the light on plastic packaging. Her arms and shoulders ache from performing the same repetitive motion over and over and over again.

**NARRATOR 2:** Her daughter greets her affectionately:

**DAUGHTER:** Hi mom; why are you so late?

**LILLIAN:** The store was really busy today and I didn't get a chance to stock the shelves. The boss said we don't get overtime pay if we haven't finished our work.

**DAUGHTER:** But you were helping customers; how could you stock shelves? How can he do that?

**LILLIAN:** We're supposed to be able to do both, so they don't budget for overtime. Besides, if I don't show that I'm loyal to the company I might be the first to be laid off.

**DAUGHTER:** *(Thinks a moment)* Oh. I'm sorry.

**LILLIAN:** Thanks sweetie. How was your day?

**DAUGHTER:** *(Suddenly excited)* I just saw a commercial for *Sci-Fi Mage*. Have you seen the new galactic wizards with Zap-o-ramma eyes?

**LILLIAN:** I see the package for them all day.

**DAUGHTER:** Really? Do you think you can get me one?

**LILLIAN:** I'm really sorry, but they're very expensive and, even with my employee discount, we just can't afford one right now.

**DAUGHTER:** That's okay. I guess I don't really want one anyway. *(They hug.)*

**NARRATOR 3:** Then you shall call and the Lord will answer; you shall cry for help and the Lord will say, "Here I am." [Isaiah 58:9 (NRSV)]

**NARRATOR 1:** Meanwhile, that same evening, Bradford, the regional manager of Big-Mart, is attending a charity function to benefit the needy. He has spent all day crunching numbers so that he can achieve the maximum profit for his company.

**NARRATOR 2:** ...And the maximum salary for himself, of course. He makes two hundred times the amount that Lillian makes.

**NARRATOR 1:** His wrist and shoulders ache from all the writing and typing, but his massage therapist is extremely good, and he sees her daily.

**NARRATOR 2:** Bradford rushes into the scarlet-carpeted ballroom with the glare of crystal chandeliers in his eyes. He greets his friend Buffy, who is also the hostess.

**BUFFY:** Bradford, fashionably late as always.

**BRADFORD:** Yes; you wouldn't believe the day I had. Our profits aren't rising by the predicted amount, and I had to convince my local managers that they aren't budgeted for all this overtime pay—convince workers to stay late to show their commitment to the company.

**BUFFY:** Oh, you sneaky thing you. You are a brilliant business person.

**BRADFORD:** Well it's all in a day's work. So let's talk about you. This is a fabulous event. The decorations are gorgeous, and but where is the food?

**BUFFY:** Darling, it's a banquet fast, to raise awareness for the hungry.

**BRADFORD:** Oh, how bohemian.

**BUFFY:** No it's a biblical thing, all the rave.

**BRADFORD:** Well, I could stand to lose some weight. Everyone wins! And I feel so good about doing it... *[Buffy and Bradford freeze]*

**NARRATOR 3:** Yet, day after day they seek me and delight to know my ways, as if they were a nation that practiced righteousness and did not forsake the ordinance of their God; they ask of me righteous judgments. They delight to draw near to God.

*[Actors who play Bradford and Buffy unfreeze and become the voices]*

**VOICES:** God, why do we fast, but you do not see? Why do we humble ourselves, but you do not notice?

**NARRATOR 3:** Look, you serve your own interest on your fast day, and oppress all your workers. *[Isaiah 58: 2: 3 (NRSV)]*

**NARRATOR 1:** Ray and his Dad are at the downtown shopping plaza. Ray is excited about the birthday money his Aunt Katie sent him.

**NARRATOR 2:** Ray and his dad come upon the newly remodeled Super-Duper Deluxe Big-Mart. Ray's eyes sparkle from the array of toys displayed tantalizingly in the window.

**RAY:** Look, Dad! It's the new Sci: Fi Galactic Mage Flesh-Eating Alien, complete with realistic slime. Dad, that's what I want for my birthday. Can I get it? Can I? Can I? Can I?

**Dad:** Well, I promised myself I wouldn't shop here anymore.

**RAY:** But Big-Mart is the only place in town that sells Sci: Fi Galactic Mages. Ever since Terri's Toys closed down.

**DAD:** That used to be in this same shopping center, didn't it? Terri's was a local business and probably couldn't compete with the low prices.

**RAY:** You say that like it's a bad thing!

**DAD:** Ray, listen to me. We all want to buy things more cheaply, but some stores make their prices cheaper, by not giving the people who work there enough money, or by working them longer hours, or laying them off before they receive job benefits. Big-Mart does a lot of these things and more. Do you understand?

**RAY:** I do, but I really want the Sci: Fi Mage. Lots of kids in school have them and—

**DAD:** Well, it's your money and your decision. You have to make a choice...

**NARRATOR 1:** Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of injustice, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free and to break every yoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless and poor into your house; when you see the naked to cover them, and not to hide yourself from your own kin?

**NARRATOR 2:** Then your light shall break forth like the dawn, and your healing shall spring up quickly; your vindicator shall go before you, and the glory of the Lord shall be your rear guard.

**NARRATOR 1:** Then you shall call and the Lord will answer. You shall cry for help and the Lord will say,

**NARRATOR 3:** Here I am. *[Isaiah 58: 6: 9 (NRSV)]*

*—Rae Hunter, who has contributed material for our worship resources several times, teaches theatre and writing at The Meeting School in Rindge, New Hampshire.*

*So, God, give us compassion that lasts.  
May we give whatever is  
within our power  
to overturn the tables of injustice  
and to pour out bags of rice  
for all those the world forgets  
to feed.*

*—Sharlande Sledge, from "Hunger"  
in Prayers and Litanies for the Christian Seasons*

*art by Peter Yuichi Clark*



# *I Just Want You to Know I'm Here*

## *A Monologue*

by Katie Cook

You don't know me, but I'm a child of God, so I guess that makes me your sister.

I live in Zimbabwe, where, because of several years of drought and political unrest, there are no roads, and there is nothing left of what you call the infrastructure, so we all go without food regularly. I live in the rubble of Baghdad, hiding from those who fight, hoping the humanitarian workers can make it through to me and my children with food and clean water.

I spend my days in an Afghan refugee camp, making shawls to sell to people like you, hoping that someday my family can have a home again. I work as a prostitute in the mountains of Bolivia, hoping to learn a craft so that I can feed my children some other way. I live in the wreck of the Haitian capitol city, where a person who eats every day is considered to be rich.

I also live much closer than that—in a Sunday school room of an Arkansas church that took me in when my home was destroyed by Hurricane Katrina. I live on a reservation in South Dakota, where I struggle, in the midst of rampant alcoholism and spiraling AIDS cases, to escape the cycle of poverty. I live in the mountains of Appalachia where I help my family scratch a living from the land, and I dream of a high school education.

I also live in your home town. I'm one of those people that you rarely notice, right here in [Central Texas]. I represent 80 percent of the people, in some areas, who come to food pantries and emergency assistance programs for help. I represent women of all ages and circumstances.

I work full-time at the Burger King on Interstate 35. I can almost make ends meet with my salary, but not quite. I'm okay unless one of the kids gets sick or the old car breaks down. Because I'm working, my family lost some of the medical benefits we received before, and now I have to leave my children at home without supervision. But I'm determined to make it somehow.

I'm in the prime of my life, one of the first women to make it into an administrative job at a large factory. I was making good money—even putting some away. But the economy has been bad, and the company started laying people off.

I'm one of the ones who got a pink slip. I've been looking for a job, but, meanwhile, my resources are dwindling fast.

I'm also an elderly woman, trying to survive on my Social Security benefits. I worked hard all my life, thinking that I would have enough from Social Security to make ends meet. I hate having to go to a social service agency and ask for help, but it's really difficult to get all the medications I need, pay rent, and then have money left over for food. You might not believe it to look at me, but there are some months when I have to choose between my medicine and groceries.

I don't want to make you feel bad; I just want you to know that I'm here. I'm here in spite of hard work, in spite of trying to be careful with resources. I want you to promise that you won't forget me, that you'll try to help make things better for people like me. That's all I ask—that you try. Until all of us—ALL of us—have enough to eat, every day.

—Katie Cook is the editor for *Seeds of Hope* publications *Sacred Seasons* and *Hunger News & Hope*, as well as *Baptist Peace Peacemaker*, the journal/newspaper of the *Baptist Peace Fellowship of North America*.



# The Feeding of the Multitude

## A Service of Communion

by Carolyn C. & Larry K. Dipboye

Scripture: Mark 6:30ff, Matthew 14:13-21, Luke 9:10-17, John 6:1ff

Note: This service is designed to be observed around a number of tables and first took place at the end of a banquet. This, of course, can be adapted to your congregation's needs. Before the service, place a filled chalice or goblet in the middle of each table, and cover it with a cloth napkin. Place enough bread for each table on a central Communion Table where the communicants will stand. The part of this service needed by the congregation is printed on the 2005 Hunger Emphasis place mat.

### *Litany of Hunger*

LEADER ONE: People of God, we have gathered this banquet at the invitation of our friends, reminded that all of God's children share our common hunger for food and drink.

PEOPLE: We have eaten our fill. Our thirst is quenched. But the gnawing need remains deep within our selves. We hunger and thirst for righteousness.

LEADER TWO: Hear the word of our Lord: "Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures for eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you."

PEOPLE: Jesus said, "I am the bread of life."

LEADER ONE: We remember the ancestors who ate manna in the wilderness, and died.

PEOPLE: "This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die."

LEADER TWO: We hear the invitation of our Lord: "I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats of this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh."

LEADER ONE: Let us pray with Christ:

*The Lord's Prayer*

in unison ("trespasses")

### *Invitation to the Table*

Please appoint a disciple from each table. The napkin covering the filled cup on each table is to be used to receive the bread. When called, each disciple will come to the Communion Table and receive the bread for his/her table. After the disciples return to their tables, the communicants will present the meditation. When the communicants give the "cue," the disciples will pass the bread around their tables. After each person has taken a piece of the bread, each table will pass their cup and take Communion by intinction (dip the bread in the cup, and eat).

### *The Meditation*

LEADER ONE: The Feeding of the Multitude is the only miracle reported in each of the four Gospels and twice in Mark and Matthew, indicating something of its significance in the early church. What was the source of that significance? Perhaps it resided in its being yet one more indication of the compassionate nature of one who cared and called his church to care for the whole person. This one who touched and healed people's infirmities was touched by their hunger. Send them on their way? Let them fend for themselves? Give in to a sense of helplessness and resignation before a mounting need? "No," Jesus said. "You

give them something to eat." It was as simple as that.

LEADER TWO: In terms of practicality, sending people home was the reasonable thing to do. It would have required better than a half year's wages to feed them, and everyone knew they didn't have that kind of money. "What do you have?" Jesus asked. "Look around and assess what you have at hand. You will be surprised at how far it can go."

Perhaps the story was a reminder to those who would gather in the years,



decades and centuries to come: “Those who are faithful in a very little are faithful also in much.” Feeding the hungry does not wait on our amassing resources and wealth. It waits on our faithfulness with what we have.

LEADER ONE: The story is yet one more remembrance of Jesus at table. It’s actually hard to imagine Jesus’ ministry apart from his sitting at table in the homes of Zacchaeus, Martha and Mary, Pharisees, and tax collectors—also in the Upper Room, at Emmaus, and beside the seashore with his disciples. The table was a place of communion—yes—but more than that, it became a classroom—a classroom where by word and example walls of separation were obliterated.

LEADER TWO: Remember the Parable of the Great Banquet? “Go into the highways and hedges and invite the lame and the poor and the despised to table.” There in the wilderness Jesus enacted the parable into real life. They were all there—men, women, children, the sick, the disabled, the possessed, those branded “Sinner” and perhaps even a few Samaritans and Gentiles.

There they were, holding, as always, to the shadows, slinking around the edges of the crowd, hoping no one would notice. “Come to the table,” Jesus said. “Take and eat. This is my body which is for *you*.” Gathered through God’s surprising grace, they came and ate, for *this* table is an inclusive table. *This* table, if it is Christ’s table, is open to all who will come.

LEADER ONE: In the unfolding of Christian history the feeding of the multitude became known as “the Galilean Eucharist.” In early Christian art, the Lord’s Supper was pictured not only as the bread and the cup but as loaves and fish. Similarity to the Lord’s Supper is obvious and apparently intentional, but who knows which way the influence flowed?

Perhaps from the beginning, the story was told as an event that anticipated the ritual in the Upper Room where Jesus celebrated the Passover with his disciples. However, the central significance of baptism and the Lord’s Supper for the first Christians was such that it literally bled into the Gospels out of the daily practice of the church.

Especially in John, words like *water*, *wine*, and *bread* ring bells signaling a deeper meaning as symbols of baptism and the Lord’s Supper. Every careful interpreter of the Fourth Gospel knows that you have to read between the lines and behind the scenes. So, the feeding of the multitude in John is followed by reference to the manna in the wilderness and the astounding statement, “I am the bread of life,” with obvious allusion to the Lord’s Supper.

LEADER TWO: Perhaps the most telling tie between the Galilean miracle and the Lord’s Supper is the ritual

language Jesus uses in distributing the food to the multitude. The multiplication of the loaves and fish follows a ritual familiar to the church and verbs that belong with the institution of the Lord’s Supper. Lifting the bread, Jesus “took,” “blessed,” “broke,” and “gave” to the disciples to distribute to the people. And the people “took” and “ate.”

LEADER ONE: So we are reminded today of the feeding of the multitude as we remember the events of the final Passover of Jesus and his disciples.

LEADER TWO: It is written that on the night he was betrayed, when Jesus gathered his disciples in the Upper Room, he took the bread of the Passover and gave new meaning to the ancient ritual of God’s People.

### *The Blessing*

LEADER ONE: (*Lifts up the loaf and breaks it in two pieces*) Jesus blessed the bread and broke it saying, “This is my body that is for you.”

*The bread is passed around the tables. Participants hold their pieces.*

LEADER TWO: (*Lifts the cup*) Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he gave it to them, saying, “Drink from it, all of you. This is my blood of the covenant, poured out for the forgiveness of sin.”

*The cups are passed around the tables. Participants dip and eat.*

### *The Commission*

LEADER: “As often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.”

PEOPLE: We have received the bread and the cup, the body and blood of Christ. We are filled with Christ.

LEADER: Jesus told his disciples, “Gather up the fragments left over, so that nothing may be lost.”

*The appointed disciples bring the remaining bread and wine to the Table.*

LEADER ONE: Behold, the fragments of our feast. The banquet of the Kingdom of God goes on.

PEOPLE: At the Table of the Lord, there is always more than enough.

LEADER TWO: We have come to this Table at the bidding of our Lord. Now let us “go out into the roads and lanes, and compel people to come in, so that God’s house and all God’s children may be filled.”

*—Larry & Carolyn Dipboye are copastors of a church in Oakridge, Tennessee. This service is from the April 2005 convocation of the Alliance of Baptists, held in Greenville, South Carolina.*

# A Meditation for Children

by Katie Cook

You're going to be skeptical when you hear this idea, but I assure you that I tried it at my church, and it worked out quite nicely. The children were first-, second-, and third-graders, and it was a small group. It should work for older children (and youth and adults) as well.

We met in a Sunday school room (not one of theirs) after the children's sermon in "Big Church." Ashley, our children's minister, started by talking about different kinds of prayer. Then she turned the program over to me. I asked the children to lie down (we had couches, but a carpeted floor would work) and get comfortable. Then I asked them to close their eyes and listen as I read a story about Jesus and a little boy. I told them that this was a way of meditating that adults sometimes used, and that I thought they could do it, too.

I told them that I would read the story through once, and that they would recognize it. Then I would read it again, and I wanted them to imagine that they were there, with Jesus and the others, on that day. They seemed to feel free to ask questions when they didn't understand something, which was good.

I had chosen the story of the Feeding of the Multitude from John 6:1-13, because it included the small boy who had given his lunch. I paraphrased in places, hopefully making it easier for them to follow. I stressed the importance of children in the story.

We read through the story the first time, and they listened, with their eyes closed. Then I asked them to close their eyes again and pretend that they were there in Galilee on that day. I talked about what the weather might be like, and the Palestinian terrain, and the crowds. One of them asked, "Who should we be in this story?" I told him he should decide who he wanted to be.

Then I read through the story again, prompting them in places to imagine what it was like. "Imagine that you can feel the sun on your face. What does that feel like? What kind of clothes are people wearing? What are you wearing? What sounds do you hear? Can you feel the breeze on your face? Is it hot?" I stressed that everyone in the crowd had all they wanted to eat. One of the children asked how large I thought the twelve baskets were. I said, "I don't know; what do you think?" He said he imagined they were pretty big.

After that, they sat up and I asked them a few questions about what had gone on in their minds. One of them had decided to be the small boy. One

of them said she was a little girl in the crowd. One them said that he was everybody at the same time. One said he was a fish—not one of the fish that got eaten, but one in the lake, listening to what was going on. All of them seemed to have understood the story and enjoyed imagining that they were there.

I didn't mention any morals to the story. My hope, and Ashley's hope, is that they will pick this up on their own. What they were supposed to be doing was learning about meditation. Hopefully they learned something about miracles of abundance as well.

—Katie Cook is the editor for *Seeds of Hope* publications *Sacred Seasons* and *Hunger News & Hope*, as well as *Baptist Peacemaker*, the journal/newspaper of the *Baptist Peace Fellowship of North America*.

## Communion Prayer

As we come to your table today, O Lord,  
As we accept the bread you offer,  
and the wine you pour for us,  
Help us to remember the life you lived for us,  
And the words you taught us.  
Help us to understand the meaning of love.

We miss the mark so often, Lord,  
Ignoring the needy who reach out to us,  
Judging those who are different from us,  
Asking more of others than we ourselves  
are willing to give.

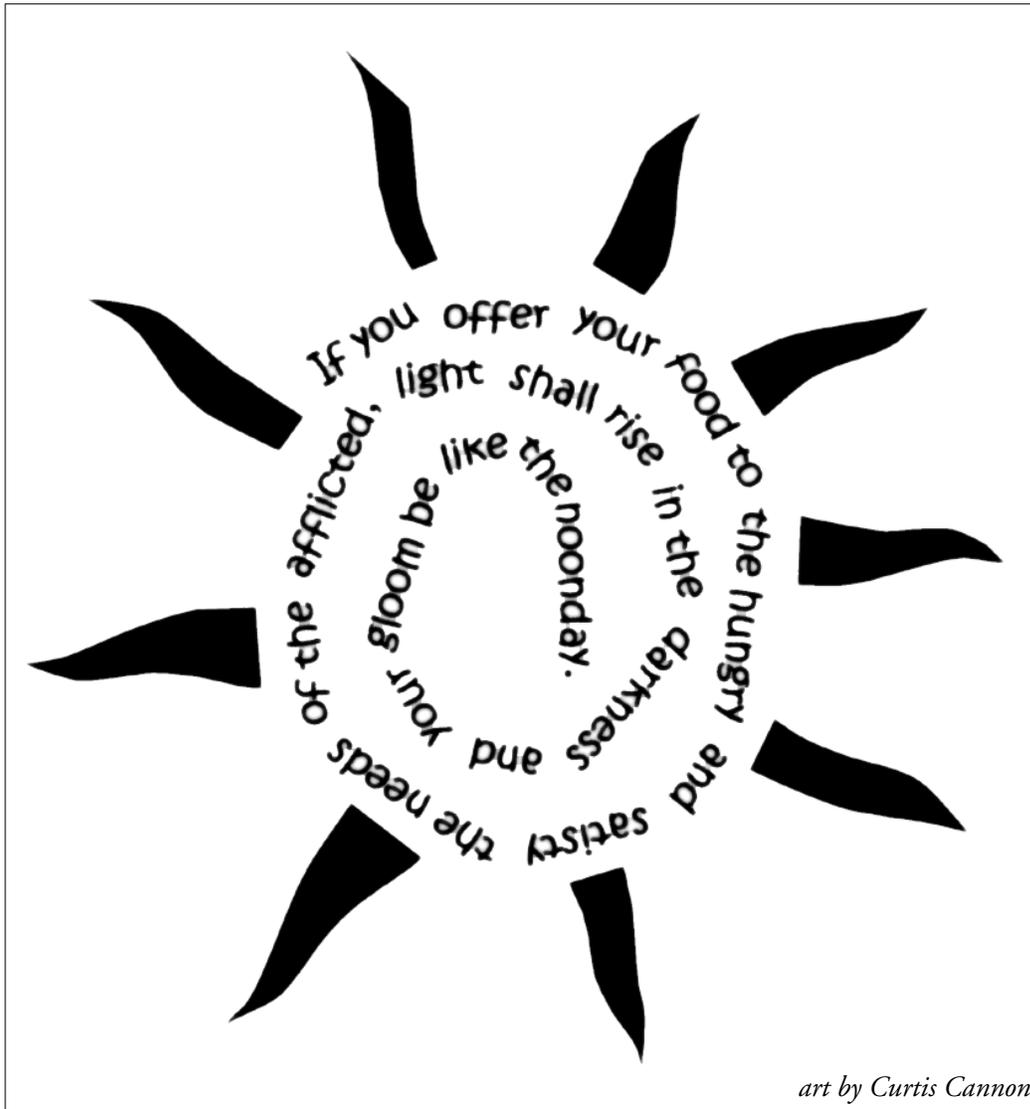
Open our eyes to the meaning of love.

Let our feet be quick to answer the cries  
of the wounded,

Let our hands lift up the fallen,  
Let our wealth bring healing to the sick.  
So we shall live the meaning of love,  
O Christ. Amen.

—Mary Ruth Crook,  
*Fresh from the Word: Prayers of Praise and Thanksgiving*

# Bulletin Art



# Quotes, Poems, & Pithy Sayings

No one is useless in this world who lightens the burden of another.  
—Charles Dickens

Three things in human life are important. The first is to be kind. The second is to be kind. The third is to be kind.  
—Henry James

We cannot live for ourselves alone. Our lives are connected by a thousand invisible threads, and along these sympathetic fibers, our actions run as causes and return to us as results.  
—Herman Melville

Anticipate charity by preventing poverty; assist the reduced fellow man, either by a considerable gift or a sum of money or by teaching him a trade or by putting him in the way of business so that he may earn an honest livelihood and not be forced to the dreadful alternative of holding out his hand for charity. This is the highest step and summit of charity's golden ladder.  
—Rabbi Maimonides

Service is the rent we pay to be living. It is the very purpose of life and not something you do in your spare time.  
—Marion Wright Edelman

Everybody can be great... because anybody can serve. You don't have to have a college degree to serve. You don't have to make your subject and verb agree to serve. You only need a heart full of grace. A

soul generated by love.  
—Martin Luther King, Jr.

If you want others to be happy, practice compassion. If you want to be happy, practice compassion.  
—His Holiness the Dalai Lama

Kindness has fallen on bad times with a bad rap. We're told to be tough, cold. Manipulation has emerged as a positive value. Oddly enough, it's kindness that seems far more memorable and remarkable...to be kind isn't to be soft, but rather humane. Cold is simple... Kindness takes far more courage.  
—Wendy Wasserstein

The principle of neighborly love encapsulates the balance between time and eternity which is vital to the practice of true hope. Since love is not, for an ideal human being, living in a state of abstract perfection but rather for someone in particular, someone encountered in your daily life, love places you inescapably in time...  
—Glenn Tinder, *The Fabric of Hope: An Essay*



Christ is not only a healer of individuals. He is also a prophet to the nations. While he walked the earth, Jesus delivered people from paralysis, insanity, leprosy, suppurating wounds, deformity, and muteness. But again and again in word and deed he returned to the plight of the poor, whose poverty, in true prophetic fashion, he considered no historical accident but the fruit of social injustice.

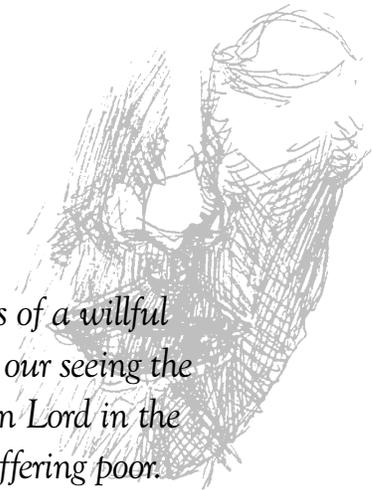
What would he say and do in our hard and uncertain times, in a world of thirteen million refugees, a world one-half of whose children never so much as open their mouths to say "aah" to a doctor, a world in which almost every country is robbing the poor to feed the military? And would he not pronounce our own nation a greedy disgrace? Whole cities could live on the garbage from our dumps, on the luxuries we consider necessities.

The world with its triumphs and despairs, its beauty and ugliness, has today moved next

door to everyone of us. Only spiritual deafness can prevent our hearing the voice of God in the clamor of the cities. Only blindness of a willful sort can prevent our seeing the face of the Risen Lord in the faces of the suffering poor. The glory of God is the human race fully alive, and that means at least minimally fed, clothed, and housed.

—William Sloane Coffin, *Credo*

*Only blindness of a willful sort can prevent our seeing the face of the Risen Lord in the faces of the suffering poor.*



art by David Shoemaker

## Today

*Somebody is suffering...*

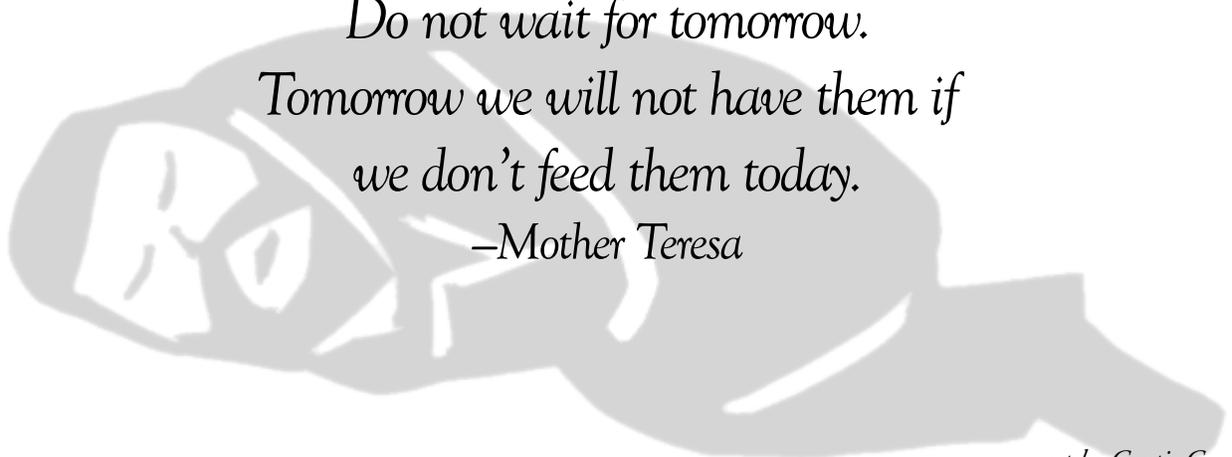
*Somebody is in the street...*

*Somebody is hungry...*

*Do not wait for tomorrow.*

*Tomorrow we will not have them if we don't feed them today.*

*—Mother Teresa*



art by Curtis Cannon

# Facts about Hunger and Poverty Around the World

852 million people across the world are hungry, up from 842 million a year ago.—*Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO): State of Food Insecurity in the World 2004 (www.fao.org)*

Every day, more than 16,000 children die from hunger-related causes—one child every five seconds.—*Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO): State of Food Insecurity in the World 2003 (www.fao.org)*

In essence, hunger is the most extreme form of poverty, where individuals or families cannot afford to meet their most basic need for food.—*Bread for the World Institute: Are We On Track To End Hunger? Hunger Report 2004 (www.bread.org/institute)*

Hunger manifests itself in many ways other than starvation and famine. Most poor people who battle hunger deal with chronic undernourishment and vitamin or mineral deficiencies, which result in stunted growth, weakness and heightened susceptibility to illness.—*Bread for the World Institute: Are We On Track To End Hunger? Hunger Report 2004 (www.bread.org/institute)*

Countries in which a large portion of the population battles hunger daily are usually poor and often lack the social safety nets we enjoy, such as soup kitchens, food stamps, and job training programs. When a family that lives in a poor country cannot grow enough food or earn enough money to buy food, there is nowhere to turn for help.—*Bread for the World Institute: Are We On Track To End Hunger? Hunger Report 2004 (www.bread.org/institute)*

## *Facts and Figures on Population*

Today our world houses 6.39 billion people.—*Population Reference Bureau: 2003 World Population Data Sheet. (www.prb.org)*

The United States is a part of the developed or industrialized world, which consists of about 50 countries with a combined population of only 0.9 billion, less than one sixth of the world's population.—*Bread for the World Institute: Are We On Track To End Hunger? Hunger Report 2004 (www.bread.org/institute)*

In contrast, approximately 5 billion people live in the developing world. This world is made up of about 125 low and middle-income countries in which people generally

have a lower standard of living with access to fewer goods and services than people in high-income countries.—*Bread for the World Institute: Are We On Track To End Hunger? Hunger Report 2004 (www.bread.org/institute)*

The remaining 0.4 billion live in countries in transition, which include the Baltic states, eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States.—*Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO): State of Food Insecurity in the World 2003 (www.fao.org)*

For more information about countries experiencing food shortages, go to the World Food Programme web site ([www.wfp.org](http://www.wfp.org)) and click on either “Counting the Hungry” or “Interactive Hunger Map.”

## *Facts and Figures on Hunger and Poverty*

In the developing world, more than 1.2 billion people currently live below the international poverty line, earning less than \$1 per day.—*United Nations Development Programme, Human Development Report 2003—Millennium Development Goals: A Compact Among Nations to End Human Poverty (www.undp.org)*

Among this group of poor people, many have problems obtaining adequate, nutritious food for themselves and their families. As a result, 815 million people in the developing world are undernourished. They consume less than the minimum amount of calories essential for sound health and growth.—*Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO): State of Food Insecurity in the World 2004 (www.fao.org)*

Undernourishment negatively affects people's health, productivity, sense of hope and overall well-being. A lack of food can stunt growth, slow thinking, sap energy, hinder fetal development and contribute to mental retardation.—*Bread for the World Institute: Are We On Track To End Hunger? Hunger Report 2004 (www.bread.org/institute)*

Economically, the constant securing of food consumes valuable time and energy of poor people, allowing less time

for work and earning income.—*Bread for the World Institute: Are We On Track To End Hunger? Hunger Report 2004* ([www.bread.org/institute](http://www.bread.org/institute))

Socially, the lack of food erodes relationships and feeds shame so that those most in need of support are often least able to call on it.—*Bread for the World Institute: Are We On Track To End Hunger? Hunger Report 2004* ([www.bread.org/institute](http://www.bread.org/institute))

### *Facts and Figures on Health*

Poor nutrition and calorie deficiencies cause nearly one in three people to die prematurely or have disabilities, according to the World Health Organization.—*World Health Organization (WHO)* [www.who.int](http://www.who.int)

Pregnant women, new mothers who breastfeed infants, and children are among the most at risk of undernourishment.—*World Health Organization (WHO)* [www.who.int](http://www.who.int)

153 million children under 5 in the developing world are underweight. Worse yet, 11 million children younger than 5 die every year, more than half from hunger-related causes.—*Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO): State of Food Insecurity in the World 2002* ([www.fao.org](http://www.fao.org))

Most of these deaths are attributed, not to outright starvation, but to diseases that move in on vulnerable children whose bodies have been weakened by hunger.—*Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO): State of Food Insecurity in the World 2002* ([www.fao.org](http://www.fao.org))

Every year, more than 20 million low-birth weight babies are born in developing countries. These babies risk dying in infancy, while those who survive often suffer lifelong physical and cognitive disabilities.—*Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO): State of Food Insecurity in the World 2004* ([www.fao.org](http://www.fao.org))

The four most common childhood illnesses are diarrhea, acute respiratory illness, malaria and measles. Each of these illnesses is both preventable and treatable. Yet, again, poverty interferes in parents' ability to access immunizations and medicines. Chronic undernourishment on top of insufficient treatment greatly increases a child's risk of death.—*Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO): State of Food Insecurity in the World 2002* ([www.fao.org](http://www.fao.org))

In the developing world, 27 percent of children under 5 are moderately to severely underweight. 10 percent are severely underweight. 8 percent of children under 5 are moderately to severely wasted, or seriously below weight

for one's height, and an overwhelming 32 percent are moderately to severely stunted, or seriously below normal height for one's age.

—*UNICEF: State of the World's Children Report 2004—Girls, Education and Development* ([www.unicef.org](http://www.unicef.org))

### *Facts and Figures on HIV/AIDS*

The spreading HIV/AIDS epidemic has quickly become a major obstacle in the fight against hunger and poverty in developing countries.—*Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO): State of Food Insecurity in the World 2003* ([www.fao.org](http://www.fao.org))

Because the majority of those falling sick with AIDS are young adults who normally harvest crops, food production has dropped dramatically in countries with high HIV/AIDS prevalence rates.—*Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO): State of Food Insecurity in the World 2003* ([www.fao.org](http://www.fao.org))

In southern Africa, close to 500,000 people died of AIDS in 2001 alone, fueling a serious food crisis in 2002-2003 in which more than 14 million people faced hunger and starvation.—*Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO): State of Food Insecurity in the World 2003* ([www.fao.org](http://www.fao.org))

Infected adults also leave behind children and elderly relatives, who have little means to provide for themselves. In 2001, 2.5 million children were newly orphaned in Southern Africa.—*Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO): State of Food Insecurity in the World 2003* ([www.fao.org](http://www.fao.org))

Since the epidemic began, 25 million people have died from AIDS, which has caused more than 13 million children to lose either their mother or both parents. For its analysis, UNICEF uses a term that illustrates the gravity of the situation; child-headed households, or minors orphaned by HIV/AIDS who are raising their siblings.

—*Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO): State of Food Insecurity in the World 2003* ([www.fao.org](http://www.fao.org)); *UNICEF* ([www.unicef.org/aids](http://www.unicef.org/aids)); *United Nations Development Programme, Human Development Report 2002—Deepening Democracy in a Fragmented World* ([www.undp.org](http://www.undp.org))

42 million people are living with HIV/AIDS in the world – 92.8 percent of them in developing countries. 3 million are children under the age of 15. 2.9 million of those children live in the developing world, mostly in Sub-Saharan Africa.—*United Nations Development Programme, Human Development Report 2003—Millennium Development Goals: A Compact Among Nations to End Human Poverty* ([www.undp.org](http://www.undp.org))

# Hunger and Poverty in the United States

The minimum wage in 1968 was \$1.60 per hour. It would be \$8.70 today if it had kept pace with inflation.—*Brennan Center, New York University Law School, November 2004*

In 1965, CEOs in major companies made 24 times more than the average worker. In 2003, CEOs earned 185 times more than the average worker.—*Economic Policy Institute, State of Working America 2004-2005 (www.epinet.org)*

Out of 3,066 counties in the US, someone who works full-time and earns the federal minimum wage afford can to pay rent and utilities on a one-bedroom apartment IN FOUR OF THOSE COUNTIES.—*New York Times, "Study Finds Gap in Wages and Housing Costs," December 2004*

The typical US worker must earn \$15.37 an hour if he/she is to dedicate 30 percent of his/her income to housing costs.—*New York Times, "Study Finds Gap in Wages and Housing Costs," December 2004*

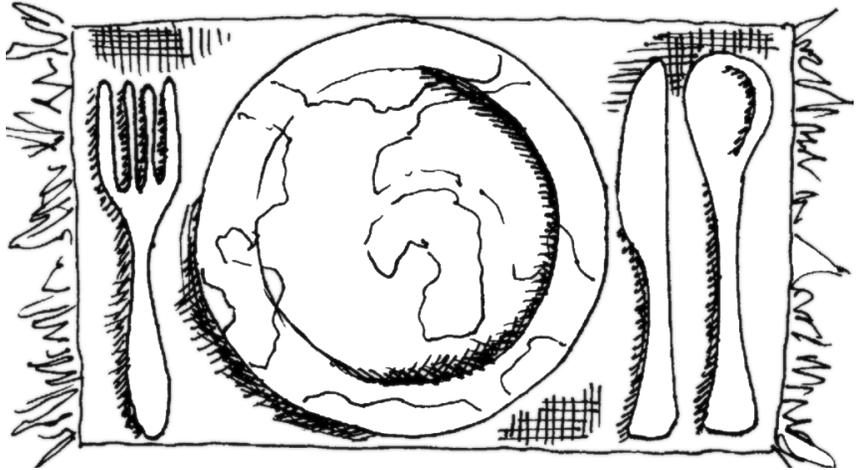
More than 30 million workers in the US earn poverty-level wages of less than \$8.20 per hour.—*William Quigley, Ending Poverty as We Know It: Guaranteeing A Right to A Job at a Living Wage, 2003*

The total population of Alabama, Arkansas, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Maine, Minnesota, Mississippi, Nebraska, North Dakota, Oregon, South Dakota, and Tennessee represents the number of people in the US living below the official poverty line.—*William Quigley, Ending Poverty as We Know It: Guaranteeing A Right to A Job at a Living Wage, 2003*

The difference in income per head between the richest nation and the poorest nation in 1750 was about 5 to 1. Today the difference between the richest nation, Switzerland, and the poorest nation, Mozambique, is about 400 to one.—*David S. Landes, The Wealth and Poverty of Nations, 1998*

Of the 6.2 billion people in the world today, 1.2 billion live on less than \$1 per day, 2.8 billion live on less than \$2 per day. The richest one percent in the world receive as much income as the poorest 57 percent.—*UN Human Development Report, 2002*

The US Congress under President Bush has been more generous in helping poor countries than under President Clinton. In 2003, the US increased official development assistance to poor countries by one-fifth. However, the US



art by Erin Kennedy Mayer

ranks last in contributions among the top 22 countries in proportion to economy.—*Nicholas D. Kristof, "Land of Penny Pinchers," New York Times, January 2005*

US Americans on average give 15 cents per day in government assistance to poor countries. US Americans spend 60 cents a day on soft drinks.—*Nicholas D. Kristof, "Land of Penny Pinchers," New York Times, January 2005*

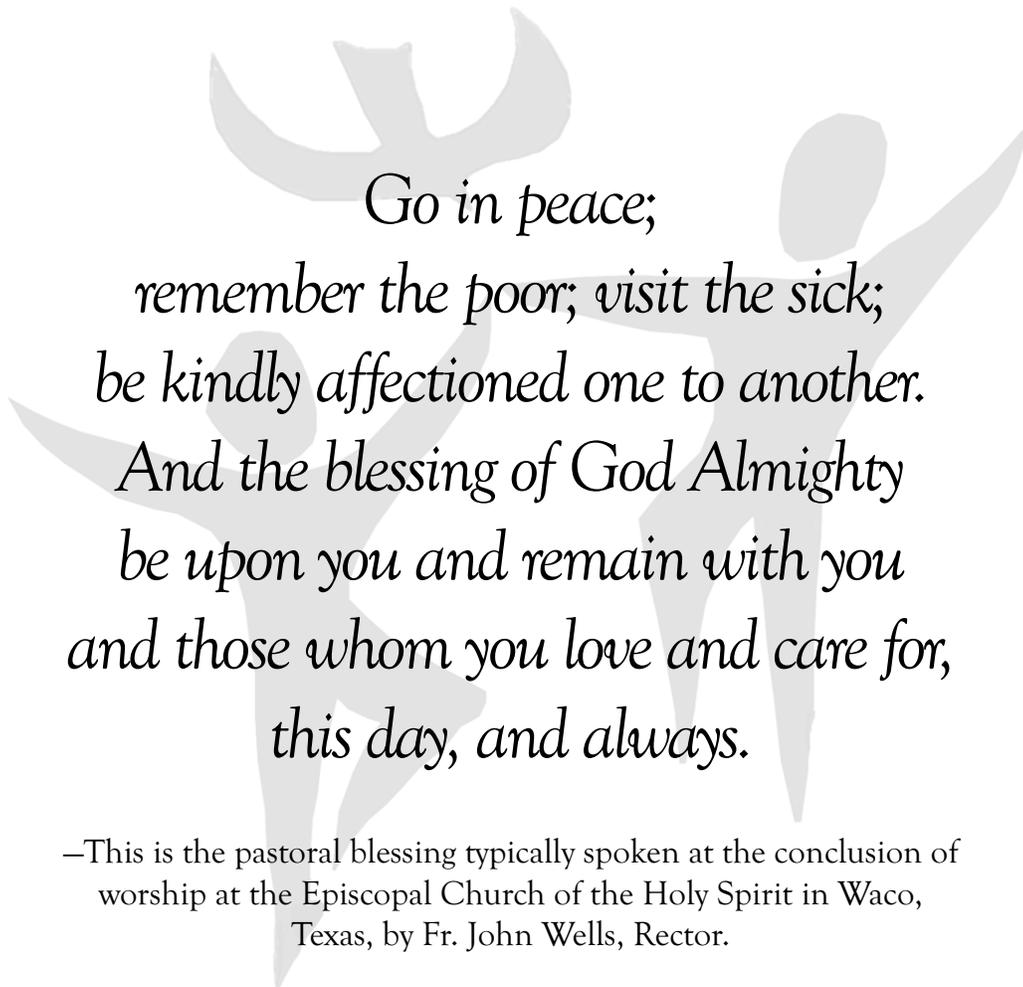
In 2001, the average financial wealth for African-American householders was about 12 percent of the average for white householders. The median financial wealth for blacks was \$1,100, less than 3 percent of the corresponding figure for whites.—*Economic Policy Institute, State of Working America 2004-2005 (www.epinet.org)*

## Related Issues

Where does the US rank worldwide in the imprisonment of its citizens? First. The US imprisons over 700 persons per 100,000. Russia is second with 584.—*Sentencing Project, Facts About Prisons and Prisoners (www.sentencingproject.org)*

In 2003, the US military budget was more than 8 times larger than the Chinese budget, the second largest spender. In 2004, the direct reported US military budget was over \$399 billion, \$12,000 spent every second. The US military budget was more than 29 times as large as the combined spending of the seven "rogue" states (Cuba, Iran, Iraq, Libya, North Korea, Sudan, and Syria). Even if you add China and Russia's military spending to that of the seven potential enemies, all nine nations together spent \$116.2 billion, 27 percent of the US military budget. The US military budget is more than the combined spending of the next twenty-three nations.—*www.globalissues.org*

—*Thanks go to Bread for the World for much of this information.*



*Go in peace;  
remember the poor; visit the sick;  
be kindly affectioned one to another.  
And the blessing of God Almighty  
be upon you and remain with you  
and those whom you love and care for,  
this day, and always.*

—This is the pastoral blessing typically spoken at the conclusion of worship at the Episcopal Church of the Holy Spirit in Waco, Texas, by Fr. John Wells, Rector.

*art by Chris Dupere*