

The Bread of Deliverance



*...a worship packet for your
church's hunger emphasis*

*Worship tools with a peace and justice emphasis from Seeds of Hope Publishers, people you've come to trust:
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Sacred Seasons Worship Resources

from
**Seeds of Hope
Publishers**

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Statement of Purpose

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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Material in this packet is for the use of the purchasing faith community to enhance worship and increase awareness in economic justice issues.

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The Bread of Deliverance

contents

- 3-Brainstorming about Hunger Services
- 4-5-Bulletin Art
- 6-A Sermon Outline
- 7-A Children's Sermon
- 8-Quotes, Poems and Pithy Sayings
- 9-Using Sacred Dance in Your Hunger Service
- 10-Hungering for Justice: A Litany
- 11-A Mini-Drama for Children and Youth
- 12-A Bookmark
- 13-The Bread of Deliverance: A Service of Worship with Drama
- 18-19-Facts about Hunger
- 20-How to Start Caring and Keep Caring
- 3 Bonuses:
 - 1999 World Food Day Calendar
 - 40 Days to Better Understanding: A Calendar
 - A Hunger Meal Placemat



a word about this packet

The theme for this year's hunger emphasis packet was inspired by Cindy Weber, pastor of the Jefferson Street Community at Liberty in Louisville, Kentucky. In a particular service dedicated to justice (as are most of the services she leads), Cindy moved after the sermon to the communion table, lifted the bread high, and proclaimed, "This is the bread of deliverance." It is to Cindy and the community of faith at "Jeff Street" that we dedicate this worship packet.

These materials are offered to you on clean, unattached pages so that you can more easily photocopy anything you wish to duplicate. Feel free to copy any of this, including art, and adapt these tools to your needs.

The art on the cover was done especially for you by Sharon Rollins and Van Darden. Other new art in this packet was done by Erin Kennedy.

We have tried to provide these tools to you in a user-friendly, yet attractive presentation. 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. The material in this packet is your congregation's to use freely.

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 see to the struggle for justice, and on the other hand, our own compelling need for nurture and healing while we work toward those dreams.

We prayerfully hope that these aids will help in implementing a hunger emphasis that will energize your congregation to respond joyfully, in creative ways, to the needs of God's hungry people.

Brainstorming about Hunger Services

The Homeless One in Our Midst

Editor's note: Here's an idea that was inspired by a story that recently circulated on the internet. Unfortunately, the story that was forwarded to us had no author's name attached, so we don't know who to thank for this inspiration.

Invite someone on your staff to appear in church as a homeless person. Ask someone in your congregation or community who works with homeless people to help you make it authentic. This "consultant" could also coach your actor in body language and behaviors. (The staff person who did this in the original story was the pastor.) Station the actor outside the front door or on the back pew as people are coming in to church.

As the service begins, the "homeless person" could process down the aisle with the choir and ministers (if your church practices this) or come to the lectern or pulpit when it is time to read—say, the Gospel lesson. A portion of Matthew 25:31-46 would be particularly appropriate for the "homeless person" to read aloud. (The pastor in the story came into the church, where the people were whispering and even snickering about the derelict just outside the door, came down the aisle and straight to the pulpit, where he began, "I guess I don't need to tell you what I'm preaching about today.")

A few years ago the leader of a girls' mission group asked a young man to come to their meeting dressed as a homeless man. He went to the local emergency assistance agency and "researched" his part, and afterwards rehearsed with the girls' leader. Then, on cue, he "interrupted" the girls' meeting, asking for a couple of dollars. The leader, showing no fear, began questioning him gently, asking where he slept, how he found his food, and how he became homeless. The girls were mesmerized and profoundly impressed by the experience. (A key to the success of this would be in the manner of conversation between the actor and the leader. In this case, she treated him with dignity, and he answered candidly and intelligently.)

Another twist to these ideas would be to invite someone who is actually homeless to participate in one of the activities above, if you know someone who would be willing to make himself or herself so vulnerable.

Grocery/Communion Table

An effective (but fairly easy) visual aid for communion or mass can be created by putting groceries on the table with the communion dishes. If you normally cover your communion dishes with a cloth before the time comes in the service for the sacrament or ordinance, leave it off this time. Intersperse cans of beans and corn and boxes of rice with the communion elements.

Several churches have held a "food offering," in which people bring bags and cans of staple foods to the altar/communion table. (This could be done while someone sings something like "In Remembrance of Me" from *Celebrate Life!* by Buryl Red and Regan Courtney. Some ministers enjoy using this song because the third verse includes the words "in remembrance of me feed the poor; in remembrance of me open the door and let your brother in; let him in.") Then you could have communion after that, with the food all around the altar table. (You could perhaps distribute the elements as the same song continues.)
—eds.



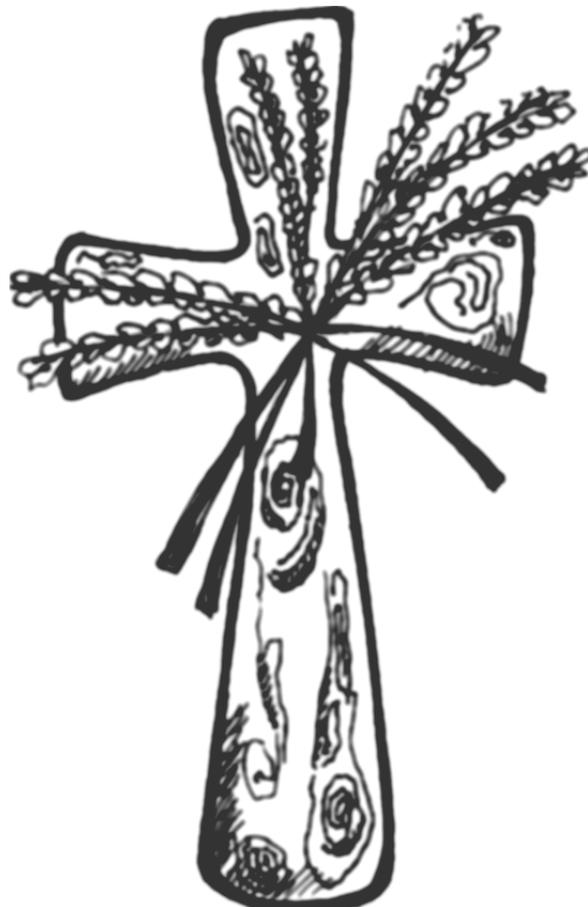
art by Sharon Rollins



Jesus, you said, "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth." Bless us, even us, who sometimes wonder if this will ever happen. When your way seems too lonely, and the journey too long, send your helper, the Holy Spirit, to comfort us. Thank you for times and places to rest, for friends who restore our souls with their enduring love, and for all the saints who give us confidence in your future.

—Thomas B. Turner, from *Morning Prayer: Blessed Are the Peacemakers*

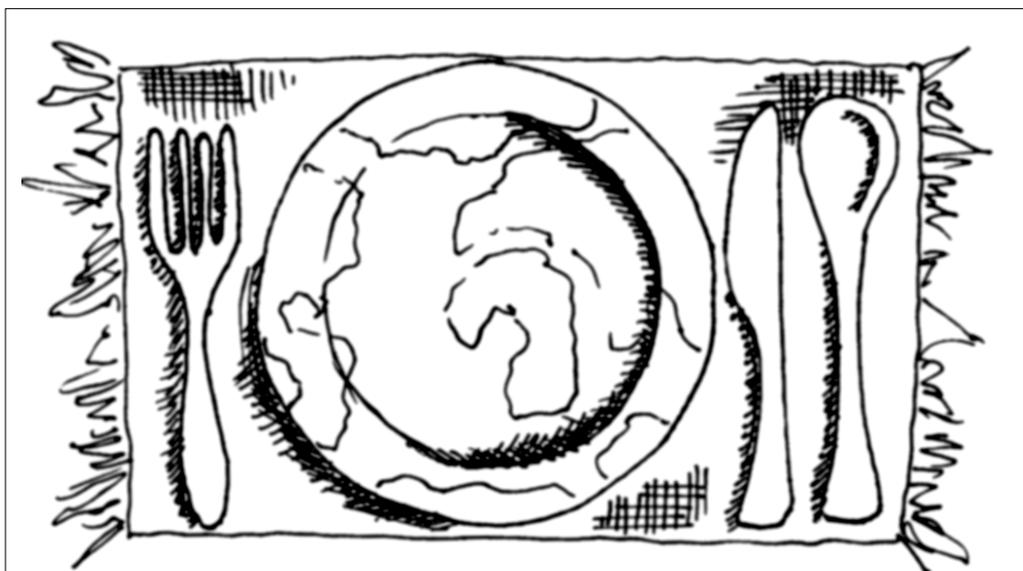
Bulletin Art



*God, food of the poor;
Christ, our bread,
give us a taste of the tender bread
from your creation's table;
bread newly taken from your heart's oven,
food that comforts and nourishes us.
A loaf of community that makes us human,
joined hand in hand, working and sharing.
A warm loaf that makes us a family;
sacrament of your body,
your wounded people.
– Workers in community soup kitchens
in Lima, Peru*

art by Erin Kennedy

Bulletin Art



***We cannot love God unless
we love each other.
We know God in
the breaking of bread,
and we know each other
in the breaking of bread,
and we are not alone anymore.
Heaven is a banquet,
and life is, too
– even with a crust –
as long as there is companionship.
We have all known loneliness.
We have learned that
the only solution
is love.
And love comes with community.***

– Dorothy Day

art by Erin Kennedy

God Wants You for a Hunger Activist

or

An Acid Test for the Christian Faith

a sermon outline

by W. Clyde Tilley

Our response to the hungry is an acid test for our

- (1) Repentance (Luke 3:10-11)
- (2) Faith (James 2:14-17)
- (3) Love (1 John 3:16-18)
- (4) Regeneration (Ephesians 4:28)
- (5) Salvation (Matthew 25:34-40)

—Clyde Tilley is a pastor in Seymour, Tennessee.

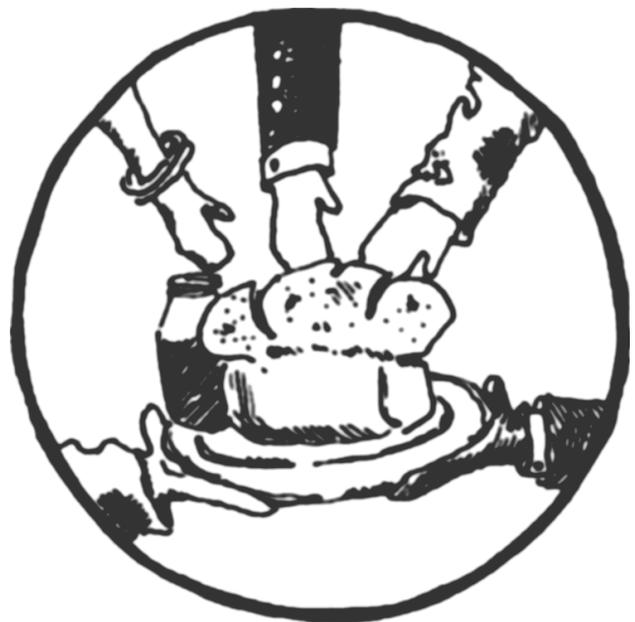
art by Erin Kennedy

A Prayer for Daily Bread

by W. Clyde Tilley

I said a prayer for daily bread.
God blessed me with a feast.
Now there is food for many days.
Why worry in the least?

But then I thought about my prayer;
I'd said: "Our daily bread."
Was this food meant for other days
Or other mouths instead?



The Workers are Few

A Children's Sermon

by Andrea H. Moore



art by Erin Kennedy

Text: Matthew 9 and 10

“The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few.” “Freely you have received, freely give.” [Repeat this while dressing in work clothes; gloves, hat, shirt, and boots.] Okay, I think I understand now what the Bible is telling us. “The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few.” I am ready to work in the garden. Got my work boots on, and this shirt will help shade my arms because I burn easily; this hat is perfect to protect my fair complexion, and these gloves—well, we don’t want to get our hands dirty, do we?

Now, for the next part: “Freely you have received, freely give.” Hmm, this one’s a bit harder. I have received a lot of free things in my life. And, really, I have so much stuff in my closets and in my garage. Maybe instead of having a garage sale, I will just give this old stuff away. It’s not my style, and it was probably given to me anyway. I am ready to serve God. I’ll grow some tasty vegetables in my garden, and I’ll finally do some spring cleaning.

Do you think that is what the Bible is telling us—to work in our gardens and give our yucky stuff away to someone to make us feel better? No. It saddens me, but sometimes I think we forget to really read the Bible thinking about what God wants us to know. Too often we read the stories and make up our own selfish meaning—maybe because we don’t want to do what the Bible asks us to do.

Let’s look again at what these two scripture verses mean. “The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few.” Jesus told this to his disciples when they were walking through a small town. As Jesus saw the crowds of people, he became sad. He

saw many people who were helpless, sick, hungry, and in need of love and care. He compared all those people to a harvest.

Do any of you know what a harvest is? Harvest is the time when plants, fruits, vegetables, and grains are ready to be picked and brought in. Jesus said that there are many people out there who need to be helped, who need to be cared for, who need to be taught about God. We don’t need these things (*gardening props*) to care for the harvest Jesus talks about, and sometimes we do need to get our hands dirty to really serve and care for others.

Now for the second verse, “Freely you have received, freely give.” Jesus wasn’t telling his disciples to take stuff to Goodwill or to give just their junk to others. He was telling them to give the love of God to others, just as they have been freely given God’s love. The harvest is full. There are many people who need us. Freely give to others what you have been given, share God’s love, and serve others.

What would happen if we all did what the Bible tells us to do? I’ll bet we would be living in another kind of world and that we would be another kind of church. Think of ways you can help those who are hungry and in need of God’s great love. Can we together follow Jesus’ instructions this week?

The harvest is plentiful and yet the workers are few. God always needs another good worker. Maybe someone will see you serving others and join in! After church, share some ideas with your family about how you can be God’s special helper this week.

—Andrea Moore, a former children’s minister, is the mother of three (soon to be four) in Waco, Texas.



art by Erin Kennedy

Jesus, you said, “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled.” Bless us, even us, who hunger and thirst for compassion, for a healing touch, for inward and social transformation, for an end to suffering and distress. Send your helper, the Holy Spirit, to fill us with your passion for justice, your hope, your dreams.

Thomas B. Turner, from Morning Prayer: Blessed Are the Peacemakers

Quotes, Poems, and Pithy Sayings

People seem to be surprised and appalled by violence among children in the US. Children in Mexico are not doing things like what happened in Colorado. But children are starving to death. That is very violent. Children can't study because they have had no food. That is also very violent. If you are going to abhor violence, you must also abhor this.

Ramona Shawver, missionary to Mexico



To sympathize with someone is not to be a neighbor. To be a neighbor is to put on the oil, put the person on the donkey, and to carry them to the motel.

Jane Medema, Bible teacher and activist in San Francisco

Turn again to these pages and you will find the law of supply—Give and it shall be given unto you. Give your love, your time, your sympathy, yourself; give all that you have under [God's] direct guidance to all who are needy; give both to the deserving and the undeserving.

A. J. Russell, ed, God Calling

So keep fightin' for freedom and justice, beloveds, (but don't you forget to have fun doin' it.) 'Cause you don't always win.

Molly Ivins, columnist

The world is waiting for new saints, ecstatic men and women who are so deeply rooted in the love of God that they are free to imagine a new international order.... Most people despair that [it] is possible. They cling to old ways and prefer the security of their misery to the insecurity of their joy. But the few who dare to sing a new song of peace are the new St. Francis of our time, offering a glimpse of a new order that is being born out of the ruin of the old.

Henri J. M. Nouwen, writer

The prophetic voice does more than call people fat cows, more than expose injustice. It also present the visions and the dreams.

—Tom Peterson, former Seeds editor

In North America, we live for things—moving up the ladder of income success, bigger homes, better cars, second homes... We are obsessed with things—profit, prosperity, success. The “good life” ignores Jesus' demands for discipleship. Ours is a risk-taking faith... We need to live for the gospel, not things.

—Nathan Porter, hunger consultant

Did not the Lord's flock actually follow him in tribulation and persecution and hunger, sickness and trial and all the rest, and thereby receive eternal life from the Lord? What a great shame, then, that while the saints actually followed in the footsteps of the Lord, we, today's servants of God, expect glory and honor simply because we can recite what they did.

—Francis of Assisi, from The Admonitions

Blessed are the poor ones, for the Commonwealth of God is yours; Blessed are the ones who are hungry now, for you will be satisfied; Blessed are the ones who weep now, for you will laugh.

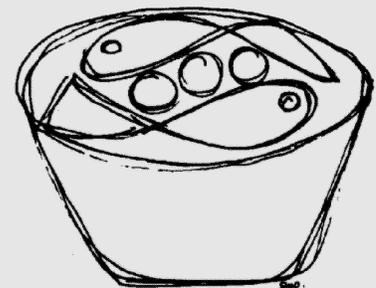
—Luke 6:20-21, translation by Vaughn CroweTipton

I get the feeling that people think I'm something special—that I've done all these wonderful things. It's nice to have your horn blown, but you don't do those things to get recognition. You do them because *they have to be done*.

—World Religions professor John Jonnson, who struggled against Apartheid in South Africa

Giver of every good and perfect gift,
we the people
who consume more than we need—
who own more than we can use—
come before you today
to confront the truth:
that our deepest need is not met
by possessing something,
but by being a part of something—
something bigger than ourselves,
something beyond the borders of our world
and beyond the reach of our control.
Take these gifts from our hands
and do with them what we cannot do alone.
Elevate our material offerings
to the realm of spiritual things,
from unworthiness to worthiness.
allow us to be a part of making
the crooked straight,
the blind to see
the lost found
the dead alive again.
Amen.

—Kyle Matthews, singer/songwriter





Sacred Dance: Connecting the Body, Mind, and Spirit in Worship

by Jessica Hastings Sehested

Movement, our first means of communication, has become lost in most of our worship services. We seem to have forgotten our innate, kinesthetic sense—for good reason, I suppose. Philosophers from Plato to Descartes taught that there was a distinct separation between the mind and body. They believed the only way to the truth was through pure reason (through the mind), and this could be accomplished by transcending the body. Since dance uses the body, it was considered sinful and therefore detrimental to the search for truth.

During the Protestant Reformation, reformers banished dance from the church because they thought it was a distraction from God. Poetry and music remained because they could be easily regulated, but dance was too unpredictable and uncontrollable. Yet, have you known God to be predictable or controllable?

The Bible, however, refutes these ideas. The Hebrew word for “soul” appears frequently in the Old Testament, but there is no word for “body.” This suggests that the two entities were considered one. In the New Testament, the Greeks had one word for song, dance, and music. Again, one was not done without the other.

In our continual journey toward the Truth, most of us have neglected our moving bodies and consequently, have not discovered the wisdom they can teach us. Through dance, we connect with the totality of our being—mind, body, and spirit. Being aware of this totality reminds us how intricately connected we are to the Earth as the Body which gives us Life. This connection awakens us to our dependency on each other to sustain this Body-Life.

A Framework for Discovering Your Body’s Creativity

I believe each of us possesses an innate gift of movement. Through reconnecting to this gift, we are able to move with intention in worship. Sacred movement or liturgical dance is any movement that praises God. More specifically, it is interpreting words through movement. I have provided a few suggestions that will outline a structure in which your moving, creative self can begin to experiment, and the connection between mind, body, and spirit can be rejoined.

If the words “dance” and “movement” are intimidating, you might want to begin by learning how to have more body awareness. By yourself or with a group, start by simply taking a walk around the space you are in. It can be an open room, a backyard, or a sanctuary—anywhere.

First, take a few minutes to invigorate your senses by simply bringing focus and attention to each sense. You don’t have to alter anything about them in order to be aware of them. After you are walking, you might want to take a few breaths to clear your mind and prepare it to focus. If you find your mind wandering during this exercise, bring it back into awareness of the present by focusing on your breath.

Spend a few moments centering the awareness of your mind and body on each sense. How do your feet feel against the contact of the floor? What sounds do you hear in the environment around you? What do you see around you? Notice any different smells in the air? What taste is lingering in your mouth? What does the air feel like against your skin as you move through the space? Are you remembering to breathe?

I believe each of us possesses an innate gift of movement. Through reconnecting to this gift, we are able to move with intention in worship. Sacred movement or liturgical dance is any movement that praises God. More specifically, it is interpreting words through movement.

Next, begin to notice how particular body parts feel individually and in relationship to other parts of the body as you walk through the space. Where do you feel tension or ease? Does your head feel connected to the rest of your body? Which joints are moving?

Continue asking yourself these types of questions as long as possible. Remember to consider even the smallest of parts such as eyelashes and fingernails. Also try to distinguish the different feelings between bones and muscles. The more you do this exercise, the easier it will become.

Finally, as your body begins to feel more awake and energized, experiment with new ways of moving. What happens if you move by leading with your right hip? Forward? And backward? What other ways of traveling can you invent? What about changing levels, directions, or speed? Be creative, and allow your body to move on its own.

Choreographing Your Sacred Dance

Now, hopefully, you are more connected to your body as a whole. Before you begin the search for a text to choreograph

despair, love/hate, peace/war, joy/sadness, life/death.

After interpreting these words individually, try dividing into a group(s) of three to five people and interpreting a word together in a still position. Experiment with other words, or challenge yourself to interpret the same word three or four different ways. Be creative and develop new ways to continue this exercise in order to help encourage the choreographer within you.

When you begin to feel comfortable with this exercise, the next step is to find a text in which you can start transitioning individual movements together to make a complete dance. In looking for an appropriate text to which you can choreograph (whether it be a song, poem, scripture, or other text), it is important to remember how the dance fits into the context of the service you are preparing. Does the dance flow well with the other elements in the liturgy? Who is your audience? What is an adequate length? It is always beneficial to choose a text that has strong images and is not narrative because this provides sufficient room for interpretation.

If you are struggling with where to begin your search process, I would suggest looking through the Psalms. Psalm 23 fits well in a service on hunger by remembering our connections to each other, God, and the Earth. Likewise, Psalm 107:1-9 gives thanksgiving for God's grace and bounty. Or Isaiah 58:6-12 expresses that our relationship with God is strengthened through our relationships with those who suffer. As you strengthen the connections between mind, body, and spirit, may you find yourself dancing to the glory of God.

—*Jessica Sehested recently graduated from the University of North Carolina in Greensboro and moved to New York to pursue her dancing career. She has been leading people in profound worship experiences through liturgical dance since childhood.*

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a dance to, start by interpreting one word or phrase through your body in a still position or brief movement. If you are working with a group, each person should have a different interpretation of the same word. The following are some examples of good interpretive movement words to begin with: light/dark, hope/

Hungering for Justice: A Litany

LEADER: God of Compassion, we stand before you with heads that are full of confusion and hearts that are heavy, for there is pain all around us and throughout the world. We know that you never intended this pain, and we grieve.

PEOPLE: As you once healed the sick and the blind, the lame and infirm, in Palestine—we ask you to heal again. We ask for healing of inner hurts and outer infirmities.

LEADER: Our sisters and brothers, God, in faraway lands and in nearby cities, are suffering from poverty and dying from hunger. We watch in mounting desperation, for we do not know what to do; we do not know how to stop the pain.

PEOPLE: As you once increased the loaves and fishes, the lunch offering of a small boy, we ask you to increase our humble gifts, and use them to feed the hungry multitudes.

LEADER: We want to be good stewards of your gifts. We search for ways to pour ourselves out for the needs of the world, but we do not always know the right way. Sometimes we stumble, and sometimes we grope.

People: Maker of Light, illumine our ways. Guide our faltering steps. Show us the way to walk, and the way to give. Show us the need on our very doorstep. Help us to see your face in the faces of our brothers and sisters in need.

ALL: Grant that you might never say to any of us, "I was hungry, and you turned me away."

by Katie Cook



art by Peter Yuichi Clark

art by Sharon Rollins



Three Responses to Hunger

a mini-drama for children and youth

by Katie Cook

This trio of monologues was first used with youth and children in a small church in Shamrock, Texas. The three readers were teenagers. While they read, a pantomime was performed in the center of the worship platform by older children (ages 8-12). These children, part of a small mime group called the Parable Players, wore black t-shirts and jeans. Older teenage girls had skillfully applied mime makeup on the actors' faces. One of them, whose attire was inspired by the character of Jesus in Godspell, also wore clown-like pants and a Superman shirt. Below is an adaptation of the Parable Players' mini-drama.

Before the readers begin, the Jesus-like player (PP1) comes onto the stage with an empty bowl and sits dejectedly on the floor. The readers are in the congregation, near the front but not sitting together.

First Monologue

This reader evokes cynicism and perhaps some angry defensiveness. As he/she begins to read, the second player (PP2) begins walking down the aisle to the stage. He/she is wearing

a stereo with headphones, moving a little to the music. When PP2 sees PP1, he/she makes a wide arc around him/her, visibly agitated—perhaps fearful—but pretending not to see anything. As the first reader finishes, PP2 leaves the sanctuary.

I see it on television all the time—pictures of kids in Ethiopia and other countries, and they're supposed to be starving, and I'm supposed to do something about it. And all of these bleeding-heart people come to me and say, "If you are a Christian, you have to do something." And they say, "If you are really a Christian, you will care about all of these hungry people."

Well, this is my answer to all of them—the ones who try to lay a guilt trip on me, just because I happen to be more fortunate than other people.

It is my right and privilege to have good things, because I am an American and because I am a Christian. Didn't God say in the Old Testament, "If you obey me, you will become rich"? I hear preachers on television say it all the time. God wants me to have good things. So why should I feel guilty because there are starving people somewhere? It isn't my fault that they are poor. They ought to get out and find a job. They ought to stop having so many babies.

And besides, I have heard that the money we send to Africa and other countries doesn't get to the starving people at all. It just goes into the pockets of the government over there. And most of those governments are Marxist, anyway. So why should we help them? They are our enemies. No, I am not responsible for those people. It is not my problem. If they're going to die, let them do it. The world is getting too crowded with people anyway.

Second Monologue

As this reader begins, a third player (PP3) comes down the aisle, notices PP1, and stops a short distance from PP1, looking toward him/her. As the reader continues, PP3 continues looking at PP1, who holds out his/her arms to PP3. As the reader says, "and so I do nothing" PP3 goes back up the aisle and out of the sanctuary.

"God wants me to have good things. So why should I feel guilty because there are starving people somewhere? It isn't my fault that they are poor."

I came to talk to you about the problem of hunger in this world. I don't agree with the person who just spoke to you. I can't watch reports from the Balkans or North Korea on the news or see a picture of a hungry child in a magazine without breaking down and crying. It is such a dreadful problem. It is such a terrible thing to have people in our world, even people in our own country, who are starving to death.

But I feel paralyzed. I feel helpless. What can I do? What can one person do? It would take millions and millions of dollars to collect the grain and then ship it all the way across the world, and then to get it from the ships to the people. It would take millions of dollars and thousands of people to get the starving people back on their feet, to help them start growing crops again, and find clean water to drink. It would take hundreds and

“But Jesus was pretty clear when he said, “When you did it for one of my brothers and sisters, you did it for me.” If we are going to listen to Jesus at all, then we should realize that each face of each starving child is also the face of Jesus Christ.”

hundreds of doctors to take care of the diseases that chronic hunger causes. And it would take who knows how many experts to make sure that the food and supplies get to the people who need them.

I don't know what to do. My heart breaks every time I think about it. But what can I do? I'm only 14 years old, and I have to go to high school. I have no money of my own. My parents have no money to spare. What can one person do? I don't know what to do. And so I do nothing.

Third Monologue

As the third reader begins, the fourth player (PP4) begins to come down the aisle. He/she sees PPI, makes eye contact, turns around and goes back. He/she re-enters at the words “we can find a way” with a loaf of bread and a cup of water. He/she takes it to PPI, sits companionably next to him/her while PPI eats and drinks.

I have been listening to the first two speakers, and hoping that I can respond to both of them in the right way. My second friend is right; the problem of hunger in the world is so huge that it's hard to even think about it. And it's hard to imagine what one person can do.

But Jesus was pretty clear when he said, “When you did it for one of my brothers and sisters, you did it for me.” If we are going to listen to Jesus at all, then we should realize that each face of each starving child is also the face of Jesus Christ.

And if that doesn't make us want to do something, then we could look at the Old Testament. The prophets kept saying, “You're going to be in trouble because your laws make the needy people suffer.” The people of Israel didn't listen, and look what happened to them! The Assyrians wiped them off the face of the earth. And the people of Judah didn't listen, and the Babylonians came in, destroyed the city of Jerusalem, destroyed the temple, and sold the people into slavery.

I think the same thing could happen to us. But still we don't listen. Maybe it's because those starving people are all the way around the world—at least, most of them are. Maybe it's because we've heard so much about people stealing hunger offerings and governments not letting the donated food get to the people. Maybe it's because somebody told us they aren't worthy of our help—and we are so anxious for excuses, we choose to believe it.

But those excuses are not good enough. Would you like to look Jesus Christ in the face and say, “Well, it wasn't worth the effort because...”?

We can find ways to get the food to the people. There are missionaries and relief workers in those countries, or near them, who can help get the donations where they need to go. We just have to make the effort to find out who they are. There are ways of knowing which organizations can be trusted, and which ones can't. There is no excuse. Even if we aren't rich by US standards, we have more than those children ever dreamed of. We can give our “coke” money for a month. We can wash cars and raise money. We can pray every day for hungry people. We can do it.

I may just be one young person, pretty unimpressive by myself, but I can do something. It doesn't matter how small it is. The boy with a few fishes and loaves didn't have much to give. But he gave it. And I will give what little I can. I can make a difference, and with God's help, I intend to do it.

The first and second readers join the third reader at the microphone or lectern. The three read from Isaiah 58:6-9. Each reads a verse and then all three read verse 9.

art by Erin Kennedy



**Preach
the
gospel
at all
times.
If
necessary,
use
words.**

**—attributed to
St. Francis of Assisi**

The Bread of Deliverance: Variations on a Scene

a service of worship

by John S. Ballenger



Prelude

Meditation of Preparation

I tend to think it mine.
I like to think that it's deserved —
to do with as I please.
and then God asks me in Scripture:
“what have you, indeed,
that you have not received?”

God, give me all the strength and wisdom I will need
to embrace stewardship —
to cultivate the discipline of being a care taker —
a care giver.

Invocation

Giver of all good gifts —
We take this opportunity to give to You
our profound thanks for Your liberal
and consistent generosity.
We give You heartfelt praise for modeling
a way of living that prioritizes giving.
May we, amidst all our myriad blessings,
cultivate the discipline of cheerfully giving.
Of those to whom much is given,

much will be required.
May we not shirk our responsibility and our privilege —
that of feeding the hungry —
clothing the naked —
caring for the sick and the imprisoned —
of redistributing what we've been given
to those less fortunate.
And may we find in our service the joy and the peace
Jesus proclaimed in living for others.
Amen.

Call to Worship

Leader: I will give thanks to the Lord with my whole heart.
People: I will give to the Lord the thanks that are due —
Leader: Due to even the least of these, in whose being we find the Lord Jesus Christ made manifest.
People: And so I give of my money . . .
I give of my time . . .
I give of my resources . . .
I give of my energy . . .
I give of myself.
Leader: As God has given from the beginning of time to this very hour,
People: so I, too, will seek to give. *(continued)*

Gloria Patri

Glory be to the Father,
and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost.
As it was in the beginning,
is now and ever shall be,
world without end, amen. Amen.

Gospel Reading

Hear now the Word of God,
taken from the tenth chapter of Luke,
verses thirty b through thirty-five:

“A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell into the hands of robbers, who stripped him, beat him, and went away, leaving him half dead. Now by chance a priest was going down that road; and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan while traveling came near him; and when he saw him, he was moved with pity. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, having poured oil and wine on them. Then he put him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. The next day he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said, “Take care of him; and when I come back, I will repay you whatever more you spend.”

Epistle Reading

and from the Second Epistle to the Corinthians,
the eighth chapter, verses one through seven:

We want you to know, brothers and sisters, about the grace of God that has been granted to the churches of Macedonia; for during a severe ordeal of affliction, their abundant joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part. For, as I can testify, they voluntarily gave according to their means, and even beyond their means, begging us earnestly for the privilege of sharing in this ministry to the saints — and this, not merely as we expected; they gave themselves first to the Lord and, by the will of God, to us, so that we might urge Titus that, as he had already made a beginning, so he should also complete this generous undertaking among you. Now as you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in utmost eagerness, and in our love for you—so we want you to excel also in this generous undertaking.

Leader: This is the Word of God.
People: Thanks be to God.

Character One

—Two people enter from the back and process to the front carrying a large cardboard box (refrigerator size is best) and place it front and center. The front of the box, which ends up facing the congregation, has on it a very large collage of pictures of food — of recipes — of advertisements for grocery

stores and restaurants. On the left and right sides of the box are crosses taking up the entirety of the sides of the box. The two people who carried in the box exit. Character One enters from the back of the sanctuary and moves through the congregation. S/he is dressed in clothes just too big and moves very slowly to the front speaking as s/he goes. She pauses on occasion (leaning against one of the pews.) I am hungry. I’ve been hungry for a long time. I don’t remember ever not being hungry. Even eating doesn’t take away the reality of my hunger. Existence is but a continuous and painful reminder of something essential that’s missing. Maybe not so much the food itself — as important as that is — but knowing that food will be there. That ought to be something I should be able to rely on, don’t you think? — to trust that there will be food. I do not have that which I require to remain healthy, and I’m not — healthy. I am deprived of that which enables me to grow and flourish, and I don’t — grow or flourish. I don’t understand the world in which you live. The very idea of eating disorders would infuriate me, if I had the energy. I can’t understand the world in which you live. I don’t care about the concerns you have. They’re not as immediate as mine. Because you define things you want as things you need, I don’t get what I need. I try to explain this, but I don’t have the will. I am tired. I am empty. I hunger. Feed me. (S/he sits down behind the box, hidden from the congregation.)

Hymn of Reflection

“I Surrender All,” or
“We Give Thee But Thine Own,” or
“Take My Life and Let It Be Consecrated,” or
“Because I Have Been Given Much”

Character Two

—Two people enter and move the “hunger box” to one side. Character One stays behind the box, hidden from the congregation. Two people then enter from the back and process to the front carrying in another large cardboard box (refrigerator size is best). The front of this box, which ends up facing the congregation, has on it a collage of clothing advertisements. On the left and right sides of the box are crosses taking up the entirety of the sides of the box. The two people who carried in the box exit. Character Two enters from the back of the sanctuary and moves through the congregation. S/he is dressed in clothes inappropriate for the season and moves to the front speaking as s/he goes. S/he moves quickly and speaks quickly — not too quickly (as if nervous.) There aren’t too many naked people running around. You don’t see too many, do you? Have you ever? I mean in a public place. Somewhere where you wouldn’t expect to see someone naked? And I’m not talking about “streaking” — some kind of joke — something to attract attention. I’m talking about someone not wearing clothes because they don’t have any. I haven’t — seen that, that is. Not once. Naked isn’t really a problem. (wistfully) But it would be nice to have summer clothes in the summer and not the winter — to have winter clothes in the winter and not summer ones. It would be nice to have a raincoat when it rains. At the very basic level, it has to do with safety — shelter from the ele-

ments — enough warmth — not too much warmth. But it also has to do with (and I know it's an odd word, but I do think it's the exact right word) — in another way it has to do with appropriateness. Appropriateness. Not standing out as someone who doesn't fit in. More than that, though — not fitting in. It has to do with the way the world sees me — and thus the way I see the world. It has to do with the way I can interact with people — the way people interact with me. I need some clothes. Clothe me. (S/he sits down behind the box, hidden from the congregation.)

Meditation

And now I commend you to God
and to the message of his grace,
a message that is able to build you up
and to give you the inheritance among all who are sanctified

...
that by such work we must support the weak,
remembering the words of the Lord Jesus,
for he himself said,
“It is more blessed to give than to receive.”

— Acts 20:32-35

Character Three

—Two people enter and move the “clothes box” to the other side as the “hunger box.” Character Two stays behind the box, hidden from the congregation. Two people then carry in a large cardboard box (refrigerator size is best). The front of the box (that ends up facing the congregation) has on it a collage of hospital images — doctors, nurses, hospital beds — include, if you can, pictures of your local hospital and/or nursing home. On the left and right sides of the box are depictions of broken bread, a pitcher and a goblet taking up the entirety of the sides of the box. The two people who carried in the box exit. Character Three enters from the back of the sanctuary in a wheelchair or on crutches and is moved or moves through the congregation. S/he is dressed in a hospital gown. When s/he gets to the front the person pushing the wheelchair exits or Character Three puts down the crutches and speaks from the front.) I am sick and tired of being sick and tired. It's actually more than wanting to be healthy again. That would certainly be nice, but that's not the main thing. It's wanting people to see me rather than my disease. I wouldn't mind being sick so much if it didn't change the way everyone seems to treat me. What I am in need of — more than medicine — more than health — is relationship — being a part of a network of friends. I am in need of people who care about me. I want someone to sit down with me — not be in a hurry to leave — someone not there because they feel obligated to be there — someone to tell my story to — someone who will then stay with me and tell me their story. Conditions isolate me. Conditions have taken away my ability to initiate. I must rely on others to come to me. I am imprisoned by the conditions of my being. Come visit me . . . please . . . me — not my sickness. (S/he sits down behind the box, hidden from the congregation.)

Offertory/Communion

During the offertory, Characters Four, Five and Six (who are seated in the congregation and look like representatives of the congregation) get up from their seats and move to the front of the sanctuary. When they get to the front, they split up. Character Four goes to the “hospital box.” Character Five goes to the “clothes box.” And Character Six goes to the “hunger box.” Each one removes from his or her pocket or purse a billfold or a check book — each one reaches into the billfold — replaces the billfold in the pocket or purse and as they approach the boxes, they kneel and offer to the box their hands. If one withdraws a checkbook, he or she mimes writing a check before replacing the checkbook in pocket or purse and kneeling in front of their box — extending their hands. Unseen by the congregation, Characters One, Two and Three are in the exact same position on the others sides of the boxes (kneeling with hands extended). Ideally, each of the boxes, and the two characters in front of and behind the box, are positioned on a large equivalent of a lazy susan so they can be turned clockwise to the side such that the congregation sees the crosses on what was the right side of the two outside boxes and the communion elements on what was the right side of the center box as well as the two characters mirroring each other with the cross or the communion elements between them. Alternately (and probably!), have one of the persons who places the box, step inside the box so that s/he can rotate it clockwise. The characters in front of and behind the box then have to be in a position in which they can move as the box does.

Get mirrors that fit in the bottom of your offering plates. Get some adhesive lettering and lay out around the circumference of the mirror: “for the hungry,” “for the naked,” and “for the sick.” Place the mirrors with the lettering on them in the bottom of your offering plates and as characters one - six freeze in a tableau at the front, pass the offering plates through the congregation.

Attach the same adhesive lettering (making sure it is easily removable!) to the outside rim of your communion plates (“for the hungry,” “for the naked,” and “for the sick”) and after the offering has been collected, pass the communion plates with wafers/crackers/bread.

A minister goes up to stand next to Characters Three and Four — next to the box with the depiction of the elements of the Lord's Supper. Sisters and brothers, this is not communion we share. This is not the body of Christ broken for us that we receive. This is not a sharing modeled on the last supper Jesus served his disciples in that upper room. Take a look at the bread you have in your hand. What is it? In your hand is a providing that links us to the children of Israel escaping Egypt. In your hand is the assurance God has always provided for God's children: I am with you and I will provide. In your hand is the bread of deliverance — broken for all God's children. We are created to be in relationship with God and in relationship with our sisters and our brothers, and you hold in your hand that

which will deliver you from all that might hinder those relationships. In your hand is the bread God provides for us — a bread we share with each other. Take and eat of it, but beware, it cannot be eaten alone — it cannot be eaten to the exclusion of any. This bread breaks down barriers. This bread creates unexpected and often scary relationships. This bread delivers. Just so you know what you're getting yourself into! The minister takes bread and shares it with Characters Three and Four. S/he then shares bread with Characters One and Six and Characters Two and Five. S/he then takes a seat.

Character Four

—Character Four moves front and center to face the congregation. Character Three comes with him/her.) I had no idea what I was getting myself into. I mean, I had never realized it, but I always thought of those for whom I gave not as people but as what was missing that I was providing. Food, rent, utilities, clothes — (takes Character Three's hand) a visit. I was always told you were supposed to give without any thought of recompense — give without expectations. That's what I was taught in Sunday School. That's how I understood the Bible. Giving was me meeting someone else's need or wish. Period. A one-way street. Which I guess at least partially explains why I would see someone as a need rather than as a person. And this idea of not getting anything back, in a weird sort of way, kept any kind of relationship from developing. Now it seems to me that the relationship is the point. The need isn't the big deal — the person is. This whole giving thing isn't about meeting needs — it's about meeting people. (Characters Three and Four eat their bread.)

Meditation

Those who try to make their life secure
will lose it,
but those who lose their life
will keep it.

(Luke 17:33

Character Five

—Character Five moves to the front (but to the right of Characters Three and Four) to face the congregation. Character Two comes with him/her.) Appropriate. It's an ugly word in some ways. It implies conditions — parameters of acceptability. This is appropriate — that's not. I guess it makes sense that appropriate can also mean to take away from someone. What we deem appropriate appropriates the dignity of those deemed inappropriate. We appropriate someone's well-being in assessing their being. Somehow that doesn't seem to fit too well with unconditional grace. Jesus deemed people appropriate not conditions — be they socio-economic, physical or even religious. Maybe I need to start thinking in terms of my giving not making people more appropriate, but allowing people to appropriate for themselves what's been taken from them — their right to make their own decisions — their own choices — their right to live their own life. (Characters Three and Four eat their bread.)

Hymn

(one of the hymns not used above)

Character Six

(Character Six moves to the front (but to the left of Characters Three and Four) to face the congregation. Character One comes with him/her.) You are hungry. If I feed you, you still don't know where your next meal is coming from. Why should you be grateful to me — how can you be grateful — until there is trust? My way of life does not acknowledge you. I must change. I must become aware of my own hunger — my hunger for a world in which all persons are acknowledged — my hunger for a world in which all persons are celebrated as appropriate — my hunger for a world in which relationships are sought not just with people like us (for everyone does that) but with people as different from us as different can be. (to congregation) I hunger for a world so different that I, too, will not understand the world in which you live . . . we live. I hunger. (Characters Six and One eat their bread.)

Epistle Reading

Hear again the Word of God,
taken now from the Second Epistle to the Corinthians,
chapter eight, verses eight through fifteen:

I do not say this as a command, but I am testing the genuineness of your love against the earnestness of others. For you know the generous act of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that by his poverty you might become rich. And in this matter I am giving my advice: it is appropriate for you who began last year not only to do something but even to desire to do something — now finish doing it, so that your eagerness may be matched by completing it according to your means. For if the eagerness is there, the gift is acceptable according to what one has — not according to what one does not have. I do not mean that there should be relief for others and pressure on you, but it is a question of a fair balance between your present abundance and their need, so that their abundance may be for your need, in order that there may be a fair balance. As it is written, “The one who had much did not have too much, and the one who had little did not have too little.”

Gospel Reading

and from the Gospel of Matthew,
the twenty-fifth chapter,
verses thirty-one through thirty-six:

“When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on the throne of his glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, and he will put the sheep at his right hand and the goats at the left. Then the king will say to those at his right hand,

'Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for 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, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.'

Leader: This is the Word of God.

People: Thanks be to God.

Doxology

Praise God from whom all blessings flow.

Praise God all creatures here below.

Praise God above, ye heavenly host.

Praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost. Amen.

Call to Worship

Leader: I will give thanks to the Lord with my whole heart.

People: I will give to the Lord the thanks that are due —

Leader: but in giving God thanks through the least of these,

I find that they are due their own thanks,

People: for I give of my money, and am enriched.

I give of my time, and receive eternity.

I give of my resources, and find myself resource full.

I give of my energy and am refreshed.

I give of myself to discover more of who I truly am.

Meditation of Commitment

Giving is not something I do. It's something in which I participate.

Giving is actually a sharing. And I get as much as I give. And more.

The more I don't give, the less I find out what I truly need.

The more I don't give, the more of my own needs don't get met.

individuals groan —
and in meeting needs,
my own need
(to meet needs)
is met.

all creation groans —
and in meeting needs,
my own need
(to work towards all needs being met)
is met.



I groan —
and in meeting needs,
my own need
(to acknowledge my need that only God can meet)
is met.

Benediction

What is it, God?

Bread — that is a gift from you.

Bread — that commissions us —
that sends us out into this world —
to change it.

Bread — we share one with another.

Bread — that binds us, sister to brother, brother to sister.

Bread — that is part of the way You continue to create the world you envision.

What is it, God?

Deliverance.

May it become one with our very being —
part of everything we do.
Amen.

Postlude

the service beyond the service:

— youth and children option: Have your youth or children make the collages on the boxes and take the opportunity to have some conversations with them about the differences between wants and needs — about peer pressure — about what society does to those who don't measure up to its strict norms.

— missions option: Keep the boxes in a prominent place in your church. Fill the "hunger box" with non-perishable food items. Fill the "clothes box" with clothes. Attach a sign up for visitation of the homebound and/or the sick to the "hospital box." Keep your congregation aware of the response by providing a weekly update in your bulletin and/or newsletter until the boxes are full and until all your homebound and sick have received a visit.

—*John Ballenger has volunteered as the Seeds of Hope poetry and drama editor for eight years. In his real job, he serves as an associate pastor in Waco, Texas.*

About Global Hunger...

- It has been estimated that some 800 million people (about one fourth of the population of the world) live in absolute poverty, unable to meet even their basic subsistence needs.

- Nearly one in five people worldwide is chronically malnourished—too hungry to lead a productive, active life. This has been estimated at 841 million people.

- Worldwide, more than 1.3 billion people live on the equivalent of less than one dollar a day.

- Today 60,000 people will die of hunger-related illness—two-thirds of them children. 34,000 children under age five die from hunger and preventable diseases—twenty-four children a minute. That is equal to three 747 jets crashing every hour, every day, all year.

- One third of the world's children are significantly underweight for their age.

- Half the deaths of children under five are caused by malnutrition. Seventy percent of all childhood deaths are associated with malnutrition and preventable diseases.

- Most malnourished children who survive will suffer some form of irreversible brain damage and stunted growth.

- In some societies, forty percent of the children die every day of hunger and related causes.

- Of all deaths of children under five, less developed areas account for ninety percent.

- Of the 105 million children born in less developed countries each year, less than ten percent ever see health care workers in their lifetime.

- More people have become refugees in this century than at any other point in history. Today, refugees throughout the world number approximately 16 million.

- Average life expectancy is forty-five years in the least developed countries, compared to fifty-three in the rest of the developing world. Those in the developed world can expect to live seventy-two years.

- Reducing hunger and poverty is crucial to reducing birth rates. Economic and social improvements, and education of girls are highly correlated with reduced fertility.

- Thirty-four percent of the world's population uses more than eighty-seven percent of the world's gross national product. That leaves two thirds of the world's population with only thirteen percent of the world's output. The poorest one-fifth—more than a billion people—receive only about 1.4 percent.

- If everyone now in the world lived as the richest 20 percent do, humanity would consume 10 times as much fossil fuel and 200



times as many minerals—clearly impossible, even without population growth.

- About sixty-five percent of the produce grown in Central America for export to developed countries is dumped or used as animal feed; the region's hungry people cannot afford to buy it.

- Haiti has the lowest life expectancy, child immunization rate, per capita gross national product and adult literacy rate, and the highest infant mortality rate in the Western Hemisphere.

- Nearly 3 million people in Bosnia are at risk of hunger and exposure and are dependent on UN rations.

- Violence in Rwanda may have left 1 million people dead and nearly 5 million displaced out of a total population of 8 million.

- Global military expenditures are estimated at \$767 billion for 1994—more than the total income of the poorest 45 percent of the world's population.

- One in four persons lacks access to safe drinking water.

- World population, now at 5.7 billion and increasing by 90 million people each year, is likely to exceed 10 billion by the middle of the 21st century. Virtually all the additional people will be in poorer countries.

Sources: Agribusiness in Latin America, Bread for the World Institute, Church World Service, Food For The Hungry, National Academy of Sciences, Population Bureau, Inc., Population Reference Bureau, United Nations (UN) Administrative Committee on Coordination/Subcommittee on Nutrition, UN Commission on International Development, UN Development Program (UNDP), UNICEF, World Bank, World Health Organization, World Politics, World Vision, Worldwatch. This list was compiled by Seeds of Hope Publishers. Art courtesy of Brown Univesity..

About U. S. Hunger...

- 20 million U.S. people went without meals for lack of money in 1985. 30 million did so in 1991.
- Not only has U.S. poverty persisted in the face of an extended economic recovery, but the poor have become even more impoverished. The average poor household in the United States has an income \$4,851 below the poverty line.
- More than a million Americans fell into poverty in 1993. In all, 39.3 million people—15.1 percent—live below the poverty level, which is \$14,763 for a family of four.
- Nearly 40 million people in the United States—including 9.6 million children—lack health insurance. Hungry children are two to three times more likely to experience health problems.
- One of every five children in the United States (twelve million) lives in poverty. One in four U.S. children younger than twelve lacks basic nutritional needs.
- 5.5 million children in the United States regularly go without food. Another six million children in the U.S. are at risk for poverty-related malnutrition. These children do not learn well in school because they are undernourished.
- Undernutrition during any period of childhood can have detrimental effects on the cognitive development of children and their later productivity as adults.
- 10,000 U.S. children die each year because of poverty. That's every fifty-three minutes.
- Ten of every one thousand children die before reaching their fifth birthday. Every year, nearly 40,000 infants in the United States die before their first birthday.
- Children born in South Korea, Hong Kong, or Singapore have a better chance of surviving to their first birthday than children born in the United States.
- The child poverty rate in the U.S. is more than double that of any other industrialized country. (This is nearly 23 percent of U.S. children under age 18—15.7
- The United States ranks twenty-eighth among the nations of the world in percentage of low birth-weight babies (less than 5.5 pounds) and ranks twenty-first in infant mortality rate.
- In the last ten years, more than two million U.S. children fell into poverty, while the number of billionaires increased by five times. The proportion of children living in poverty increased by twenty-three percent.
- Four times more malnourished children are female.
- Eighty percent of the clients who come to emergency programs for help are female—young mothers with children, cannot afford child care, elderly on fixed incomes.
- Female heads of households are almost always poor.
- A growing number of men and women who work full time or more, all year, can't make ends meet.
- One of the fastest growing groups of poor people are people who have worked all their lives and have never had to ask for help before.
- Mentally ill, severely retarded, or severely disabled persons are finding it increasingly difficult to make ends meet.
- Although more than twice as many white Americans live in poverty, the poverty rate for African Americans is nearly triple the rate for white Americans—33.1 percent in 1993. About 46 percent of African American children are poor, compared to nearly 18 percent of white children.
- Nearly one in three Hispanics—30.6 percent—and two in five Hispanic children—40.9 percent—are poor.
- In 1989, the last year for which information is available, 31 percent of Native Americans lived below the poverty level—more than any other U.S. population.
- The wealthiest fifth of U.S. households earned 48.2 percent of the nation's income in 1993, while the poorest fifth earned 3.6 percent.
- In 1991, U.S. consumers spent more on jewelry and watches—\$30.1 billion—than on federal food and nutrition assistance—\$28.5 billion—or the entire gross domestic product of 20 developing countries.
- An expansion of the federal food programs of less than \$10 billion—1 percent of the federal budget—would quickly eliminate widespread hunger in the United States.



two-to-three
ely to suffer
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adaches, and

Sources: Bread for the World Institute, Children's Defense Fund, Church World Service, Community Childhood Identification Project (Food Research and Action Center), the Manna Project, National Center for Health Statistics, RESULTS, Second Harvest, Tufts University Nutrition Center on Hunger, Poverty, and Nutrition Policy, UNICEF, U.S. Census Bureau. This list was compiled by Seeds of Hope Publishers.

How to Start Caring and Keep Caring

by Katie Cook

Thinking about hunger can be thoroughly depressing. We all feel a strong temptation to ignore the whole issue, for several reasons. First, we don't feel that we can do anything to make hunger go away in the world. It's like coming to the edge of a huge ocean when we aren't really sure we can swim. Also, we have a tendency to feel guilty. Religious people are really skilled at fixing guilt on ourselves, although most of us—especially “recovering fundamentalists” are trying to train ourselves not to fall into those patterns. So, as a reflex, we cry out, “What do you want *me* to do about it? This is not my fault!”

By the time our interest in hunger issues is strong enough to get this far into a Hunger Emphasis packet, we are aware of the strong, ubiquitous words from the Bible about feeding the poor. We're convinced that this is what God wants us to do. What we need now is to learn to look at the issue without feeling guilt, or confusion, or depression. The first step in doing that is to find some way to respond that fits each one of us. The second step is to understand that our response is *not* going to be a drop in that huge ocean—that it *really counts*.

Then, once you begin to take small steps, you want to be able to stay with it. You want to keep caring. This could be even more difficult than starting out. It's hard to keep caring about all the hungry people in the world, day after day...after day. It's sometimes hard for those people who have devoted their entire lives to it.

In the last few years, we in the “anti-hunger world” started hearing that some of our leaders were dropping out of the “movement.” These were people who had worked for years to bring an end to hunger, people who cared *passionately* about the cause. We called it “compassion fatigue” or “compassion burnout.” The truth is that many of us didn't know how to keep from becoming weary, depressed, and demoralized.

So how do you and I prevent this from happening to us? Two friends of mine¹ effectively addressed this issue in the pages of *Seeds Magazine* and the supplement *Sprouts* several years ago. They suggested three secrets for avoiding burnout:

(1) The first is to **remember what our motives are**. You and I hopefully have a head start on this one. Those of us who have a spiritual beginning for our compassion have a source of energy and strength that others do not have. I frankly don't know how people who have no faith are able to stay with the struggle.

The church is there to allow us to rest, re-create ourselves, and get our batteries recharged for the next effort. We have access to an inner strength that only comes from faith. Our motive comes from the fact that we love God and want to do what God asks. Our strength comes from our gratitude to God for caring about us, and the hope that God will be with us in our efforts to care for others.

(2) The second secret is to **know what's going on in the hunger world**. Find out what the issues are, where the “hot spots” are, and what are the most effective ways to help. This insures that you are not wasting your time or money. You feel better about your gifts of yourself and your resources, because you know they are being used well. You didn't just throw money at the first appeal you saw on TV (mostly to get rid of your guilt). You responded intelligently. You're part of the solution!

(3) The third secret is to **give of yourself and your resources regularly**, not just when a disaster strikes somewhere. We all have a huge temptation to respond to victims of hurricanes, earthquakes, or fires. We all feel the urge to help the “refugees of the week.” But, after a while, we lose our energy to crank ourselves up for the fray. A better way is to put our offering aside day by day and send it in monthly, to work at the food pantry an hour every week—not just at Thanksgiving and Christmas.

If we do that, when disaster strikes badly enough somewhere for the TV newspeople to cover it, we won't feel like we've got to scamper around and come up with a response. We've been responding all along. And our resources are ready to be used when those catastrophes come. The teams who move in to disaster areas won't have to come to us and ask for food and blankets. They'll already have ours.

If you can remember these three secrets, and try to keep them on track, you can avoid burnout. Never forget how important prayer, meditation, and fellowship with God's people are to keeping up your strength and hope.



art by Erin Kennedy

This is a quest, an adventure. Working for the end of hunger is like looking for the Holy Grail. You and I have been commissioned by God to go forth and slay the dragon. It can be exciting. It can even be fun.

1. Howard Hartman works for the CROP walk division of Church World Service, and Joe Haag works for the Christian Life Commission of a state denominational agency.