



# Hunger News & Hope

...a Seeds of Hope publication

## Doing the Right Thing

by Katie Cook

This issue of *Hunger News & Hope* is about people endeavoring to do the right thing. We have just spent almost a year of living in what seems like the Twilight Zone: avoiding, against our instincts, physical contact with people we care about; watching the COVID numbers go up and up and up; being bombarded with stories of brutality toward our sisters and brothers of color, hearing the voices from our various echo chambers in ever-increasing volume and vitriol. At times it seemed (and seems) that the chaos will cause the universe to explode.

And yet, we also saw food pantries, homeless shelters, soup kitchens, counseling centers and countless other helping agencies scramble to find innovative ways to continue to serve the increasing numbers of people in need. We saw teachers—elementary school, middle school, high school and college—find ways to teach and encourage students.

We saw churches create new ways of worshipping and caring for each other—and for the world outside their walls. We saw a legislator in Florida and a rabbi in Boston give away their salaries to people who were devastated by the pandemic.

Yes, we saw people in denial of the need for health precautions, in denial of racial injustice. Yes, we saw the veil pulled back; we saw that our social safety net is almost non-existent. We saw that the lives of vulnerable people don't matter as much as those of others.

But. We saw so many others reaching out in any way they could think of. Trying to do the right thing. As we enter this new year, let's find those people. Let's thank them and emulate them—even if it's scary, even if it's hard. Every day, let's wake up and say, "Okay; what's the right thing to do today?"

—Katie Cook is the *Seeds of Hope* editor.



art by Sharon R. Rollins

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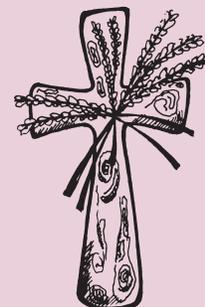
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Cross & Wheat logo by Erin Kennedy Mayer.

# The City That Makes Sure Everyone Eats Well

by Jessica Foumena Kempton

In the last *Hunger News & Hope* issue, we examined how the coronavirus pandemic has negatively affected food production and distribution in the United States and beyond. Wouldn't it be refreshing to find out how Belo Horizonte, Brazil's third largest city, kept feeding its citizens during the COVID-19 pandemic?

Belo Horizonte has become known worldwide as "the city that ended hunger."<sup>1</sup> Home to about 2.5 million people, Belo has become a world pioneer in governance for food security by defining the Right to Food as a human right rather than a commodity.<sup>2</sup>

In 1993, the city of Belo Horizonte voted on a municipal law that launched a food security program. The latter was meant to address hunger and malnutrition through the "Five A's": availability, accessibility, adequacy, acceptability and agency.<sup>3</sup>

Patrus Ananias, the then-newly elected mayor of Belo Horizonte, created a Secretariat for Food Policy and Supply made up of 20 representatives from various government sectors (municipal, state, and federal), labour unions, food producers and distributors, consumer groups, research institutions, churches and civil society.<sup>4</sup> Together, the Secretariat designed and implemented a new local food system that increased and guaranteed access to healthy food for all, using less than 2 percent of the city's annual budget.<sup>5</sup>

Policymakers and all parties involved took action to ensure that all Belo Horizonte residents had access to healthy and nutritious food.<sup>6</sup> The city offered financial support to some restaurants so they could serve food items to all resi-

*Ten years after the launch of Belo Horizonte's food security program, the city observed a 60 percent reduction in child mortality, 75 percent decrease in child hospitalization for malnutrition and 25 percent decline in poverty, with 700,000 farmers accessing credit for the first time in their lives.*

dents at low prices and cater directly to low-income neighborhoods through food vans. The program supplied fresh food, fruit and vegetables to food banks, public schools, daycare centers, health clinics, nursing homes, homeless shelters and different charities. In addition, Belo Horizonte facilitated direct trade and regulated pricing between local producers and consumers with local food markets, and farmers markets. The city invested in urban agriculture through the establishment of over a hundred community

and school gardens, and made a point to purchase food from local farmers and producers.

Overall, the city of Belo Horizonte put in place several strategies that addressed the core interests and needs of local farmers, producers and consumers. Local family farmers were able to select spots of public space from which they could sell directly to urban consumers.<sup>7</sup> Since wholesalers did not take a cut, farmers' profits increased while low-income



*Photo by Joa Souza.*

individuals and families got access to fresh and healthy food at affordable prices.<sup>8</sup> The policies have strengthened and increased local food sovereignty, while allowing the integration of logistics and supply chains of the food system, the reduction and stabilization of prices, the regulation of produce markets to provide high-quality food, as well as the implementation of educational opportunities on food security and good nutrition.<sup>9</sup>

Ten years after the launch of Belo Horizonte's food security program, the city observed a 60 percent reduction in child mortality, 75 percent decrease in child hospitalization for malnutrition and 25 percent decline in poverty, with 700,000 farmers accessing credit for the first time in their lives.<sup>10</sup> The improvement of children's health and farmers' economic status are clear indicators of the positive impact of the program.

By making access to food a right of citizenship to end hunger these past 27 years, the city of Belo Horizonte set up a strong local food economy that stood the test of the COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>11</sup> Belo's food infrastructure allowed for the successful distribution of fresh, healthy food at a low cost, or no cost, to individuals, families and communities. The success of Belo's program also had a positive impact on all of Brazil.

In 2003, former Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva used Belo Horizonte's food security program as a blueprint for his national *Fome Zero* (Zero Hunger) program.<sup>12</sup> Under the leadership of Patrus Ananias as Minister for Social Development and the Fight against Hunger, the Brazilian president's initiative aimed to combat hunger and extreme poverty in Latin America's largest country.<sup>13</sup>

Through the *Fome Zero* initiative, Brazil rescued about 50 million people from hunger, revived its economy and received accolades from UN agencies.<sup>14</sup> In 2010, the World Food Programme (WFP) honored Mr. Lula da Silva as a

***Belo Horizonte, the Brazilian city that makes sure everyone eats well since 1993, allows us to claim that ending hunger is not a pipe dream, but a possibility.***

Global Champion in the Battle against Hunger.<sup>15</sup> According to the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO), Brazil reduced the number of undernourished citizens by nearly 10 million in 20 years and attained its development goals in terms of its national efforts against hunger.<sup>16</sup> As of 2015, Brazil's Zero Hunger project had successfully reduced hunger, particularly in the most impoverished areas, with a budget of US\$500 million.<sup>17</sup>

Brazil, a country nearly the size of the entire European continent with a population of over 200 million people,<sup>18</sup> used Belo Horizonte's food security program to address hunger as a human right. Countries in Africa, North America

and around the world would benefit from replicating Brazil's model in providing healthy and nutritious food to their citizens, especially those in need.

Belo Horizonte, the Brazilian city that makes sure everyone eats well since 1993, allows us to claim that ending hunger is not a pipe dream, but a possibility. Like Belo Horizonte, we would benefit from investing our time and money in our local food economy. And to make that possible, we must simply start by supporting our local farmers and producers, one purchase at a time.

*Many Hunger News & Hope readers will recognize Jessica Fomena Kempton's name. She was a Seeds of Hope editorial intern in 2013 as part of her work for a master's degree in International Journalism at Baylor University. Hailing from Cameroon, Jessica returns to Seeds as our Africa specialist, but, as you see in this story her field is much wider. Her doctoral work at Texas Tech University centered around empowering African women's voices through digital storytelling. Based in Chimayo, NM, she now teaches online communications courses at various universities.*

## Endnotes

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# Grace Baptist Church Sees a Different Way

by Dawn Michelle Michals

*As a church community, we will continue to be with those that suffer. We will continue to advocate for better mental health and substance use services. We will continue to provide love, food, clothing and shelter to those in need.*

Rev. David Robinson, pastor of Grace Baptist Church in San Jose, CA, posted the above statement to the church's website less than 24 hours after five people were stabbed at the church's homeless shelter. Two of the victims died. The person accused is in police custody.

Thirty-two-year-old Fernando Jesus Lopez is accused of killing two shelter residents and the attempted murder of three others—one a shelter staff member. Fernando was a resident and volunteer at the shelter. In fact, on the night of November 22, he was helping set out mats to get the night shelter ready for its residents. "He had us all thinking, this dude is solid. He's helpful. He's respectful. He's thoughtful."

Anthony Mastrocola, the shelter's manager, had known Fernando for several months and was shocked at what happened on that cold night, when the shelter was only open because of the weather. The church's winter shelter is typically open from January to April only, but with cold, overnight temps rolling in and the city's shelter in place orders due to COVID-19, the night shelter was open.

Fernando changed the lives of so many people that night. John Paulson, 45, was a "humorous and down-to-earth man" who had been a regular guest at the shelter for past several years. Kimberly Susan Fial, 55, had the "ability to draw a laugh out of people around her" and

staff member, are now recovering at home.

Immediately, voices cried out for the shelter to close, saying that this incident shows that the people who live in homelessness in the area should be left to fend for themselves. That they couldn't be trusted. That they were unsafe.

Grace Baptist Church saw another way.

"This is what faith is all about. Faith is risking it all. We risk knowing both the rewards and the reality that there will be problems, pain and conflict. We are called to this radical hospitality for those who need it the most. This is our call, our purpose, our mission, and the way we love Jesus," Rev. David Robinson continued in his website message.

Words of encouragement came in from all over the world and denominations supporting the church and its ministry:

- You all are living up to the teachings by reaching out and giving shelter to those in need.
- A testament to our church and comfort to all of us.
- You are walking through a valley of many dark shadows.
- Holding you all in love and respect.
- I am grateful for places like Grace that are busy with real expressions of healing and love.
- Continue to show love to the homeless. God is pleased.
- How can I help?
- We stand in solidarity with the ministries that Grace does to bring love and hope to people who are particularly in greater need.
- Thankful to God that there are great people (like you) on the Earth who always try to find ways to help their fellow human beings in need [from a Muslim friend].
- Sending prayers and hoping you can find a measure of light through the enveloping darkness [from a rabbi].
- Very sad, and so disheartening when we know the shelter was assisting many in the community. Will certainly uphold the church and shelter in prayer [from Australia].

***Immediately, voices cried out for the shelter to close, saying that this incident should be forgotten and that the people who live in homelessness in the area should be left to fend for themselves. That they couldn't be trusted. That they were unsafe.***

had quickly moved from shelter resident to honorary staff person due to her eagerness to serve. Both John and Kimberly succumbed to their injuries.

Nguyen Pham is a city employee who volunteers at the shelter. He, along with another shelter guest and a shelter

- Your determination to continue your essential services, even while you are grieving, is an inspiration to us all, strengthens our resolve to face the trauma and root causes of homelessness. For 40 years, the loving people of Grace Baptist Church have provided vital services to the community. We hold you in our hearts, with gratitude for all the ways you have, and will continue, to make a difference in the lives of others. May God watch over you, as He always does in hard times.
- May He bring healing and hope into your lives.
- Our mission is to serve, treat them with respect and

vow to keep living the gospel and keep the shelter open. "That's what we do," Mastrocola said. "Someone needs to do it, and that's just what we do."

The church has asked that the following prayers be said:

- Pray for the injured guests and staff.
- Pray for the perpetrator.
- Pray for those guests and staff that were traumatized by this violent incident.
- Pray for our congregation, our community, and especially those that have been deeply affected.

—Dawn Michelle Michals is a freelance writer and social media specialist living in Waco, TX. She is the Seeds of Hope Social Media editor and an award-winning reporter for Hunger News & Hope. Longtime readers will have seen her work under the name Chelle Samaniego. Please visit [www.dawnmichellemichals.com](http://www.dawnmichellemichals.com) for more information.

RESOURCES: Grace Church official Website ([www.graceinsan-jose.org](http://www.graceinsan-jose.org)); Grace Solutions official website ([www.gracesolutions.org](http://www.gracesolutions.org)); "San Jose stabbing suspect skips court; victim remembered," Dec. 3, The Mercury News (San Jose, CA) ([mercurynews.com](http://mercurynews.com)); "Vigil honors victims of San Jose church stabbing," Dec. 1, The Mercury News; "Grace Baptist Church stabbing: Multiple dead after attack in California," Nov. 23, New York Post ([nypost.com](http://nypost.com)); "San Jose church worker who tried to intervene among five stabbed in homeless shelter, pastor says," KTLA TV (Los Angeles, CA). Notes of encouragement are from Grace Chimes, the newsletter of Grace Church.

***"This is what faith is all about. Faith is risking it all. We risk knowing both the rewards and the reality that there will be problems, pain and conflict. We are called to this radical hospitality for those who need it the most...."***

***—Rev. David Robinson***

dignity, get to know them, let them into our hearts.

- May God hold you all close during this challenging time.
- We commit ourselves to traveling that demanding road with them, as best we are able.
- Humanly speaking, this is very difficult to understand, cope with, accept or perhaps forgive. Our prayers are first and foremost for the families of those who died as we ask God to comfort and strengthen them. May He grant them peace in their hearts, faith to accept the situation, power to forgive and help to look ahead and go forward. God can restore, redeem and renew. And we pray that He will do just that [from Romania].
- We pray for you as a congregation that you will not be discouraged or frightened. The God that you worship and serve is greater than any mountain, valley, crisis or loss. He promises to be with you and lead you through these dark times and He will see you through. May you continue to serve the lost, poor and needy, may you keep showing Christ's unconditional love to all. Your reward in heaven will be great.
- May you experience greater fruits of your ministry from now on, and perhaps even as a result (or in spite) of this tragedy. God has a unique way of turning things around.

In spite of what happened, Grace Church and Grace Solutions, the nonprofit that runs the shelter,



art by Gertrud Nelson

# Rekindling a Conversation on Panhandling

**E**ditor's note: Over the past couple of years, we printed a series of articles and responses about panhandlers and what our response as Christians should be. [See "How Should We Respond to Panhandlers?" and "What I Learned from Panhandlers," HNH Vol 18 No 3, pages 2-3 for the articles. See "Continuing the Conversation on Panhandling" in both HNH Vol 19 No 1, page 6 and HNH Vol 19 No 2, page 5.]

These writings have struck a definite chord. Responses range from Rev. Charley Garrison's (Waco, TX) compassionate discussion of whether it matters if the person might use the money on drugs or alcohol, to Rev. Michael Vosler's (Rohnert Park, CA) claim that anyone with nothing or too little has a legitimate claim on him, to David Katya Ketchum's (Springfield, MO) ideas for combating antagonism toward housing-insecure or food-insecure people.

In this issue, we decided to reopen the discussion with these thoughts:

**I**n St. Louis, we put together and distribute "Blessing Bags" that include bottled water, meal replacement bars and new dry socks in a reusable drawstring bag and encourage people to keep them behind their drivers' seats for easy access and distribution.

—Steve Bowman, OEF, St. Louis, MO

**I** have thought long and hard about beggars, and mostly I fall into sin. I am too lazy or too preoccupied or too self-absorbed. I carry peanuts in my bag to provide and exchange when people ask me. Often, I give them. Sometimes people tell me no—often because they have no teeth. I have pondered why I step past such an obvious opportunity to honor and respect my sisters and brothers. Some of it is the culture; others around me on the train won't approve—as if that is something that should make any difference to me. But usually it is just my self-absorption. When I get to the pearly gates, St. Peter will ask all of these folk who have to beg whether I should get to enter. Sigh. My future does not look bright.

—John George "Juniper" Robertson, OEF, New York City, NY

Juniper, thanks for your wise and poignant words about your response to beggars. I think I'm in the same category. Sometimes I'm glad to help. One time, a man helped me with a deflating tire and then told me he didn't have bus fare to a nearby town. I had to go into the gas station and buy something to get cash for him, so I got him some crackers and water for the trip. When I gave them to him, he hugged me and cried. But sometimes I'm tired and don't want to mess with them. Sometimes I interrupt them and give them money because I don't want to listen to

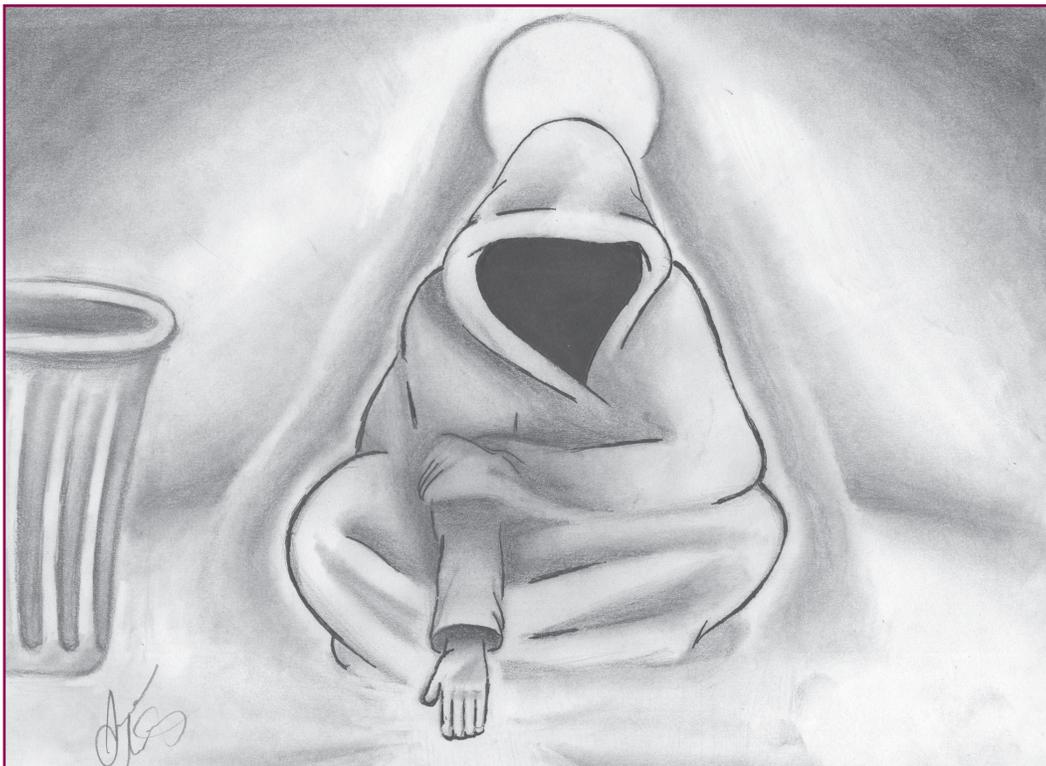
their stories. You and I will be standing together outside the pearly gates.

—Katie Cook

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We welcome your responses! This is a complicated issue and warrants careful discernment. We think our readership community is a perfect place to continue such a conversation. Please email [seedseditor1@gmail.com](mailto:seedseditor1@gmail.com) with your thoughts.

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



## Resources & Opportunities

### Hunger News & Hope

has received 15  
Associated Church Press  
awards in the last five years.  
Don't miss another issue!

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to the e-list. For more information about Seeds of  
Hope publications, go to [www.seedspublishers.org](http://www.seedspublishers.org).

Looking for ways to introduce your  
congregation to hunger issues?

### Hunger in God's World

Email [seedseditor1@gmail.com](mailto:seedseditor1@gmail.com) for  
a pdf of this four-session workshop  
from Seeds of Hope.

### Teach Justice through Worship.



Our theme for this liturgical year is *Breath of God*. Ask for a free promotional copy of a Lent, Advent or Hunger Emphasis worship packet from Seeds of Hope.

*Sacred Seasons* is a series of creative worship tools to help raise awareness of hunger and justice issues. A year's subscription of US\$100 includes Advent/Christmastide, Lent/Eastertide and a fall Hunger Emphasis resource. To order, call 254/755-7745 or e-mail [seedseditor1@gmail.com](mailto:seedseditor1@gmail.com). Single packets are US\$40. (Non-US subscriptions are US\$115; individual packets are US\$50.) For more information, go to [www.seedspublishers.org](http://www.seedspublishers.org).



## Hunger News & Hope

is published quarterly by Seeds of Hope Publishers, in partnership with the following groups:

- Alliance of Baptists
- Cooperative Baptist Fellowship

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#### *Statement of Purpose*

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

## Quotes, Poems & Pithy Sayings



art by Rebecca S. Ward

Winning? Is that what you think it's about? I'm not trying to win. I'm not doing this because I want to beat someone, or because I hate someone, or because I want to blame someone. It's not because it's fun. God knows it's not because it's easy. It's not even because it works because it hardly ever does. I do what I do because it's right. Because it's decent. And above all, it's kind! It's just that...just kind.  
—Doctor Who

#### *Editorial Address*

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

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