

Hungry for Justice



Worship Resources for the Creative Church - Hunger Emphasis 2020

Sacred Seasons, a series of worship packets with a peace and justice emphasis,
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Sacred Seasons



Worship Tools for the Creative Church

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Statement of Purpose

Seeds of Hope, Inc., is a private, independent group of believers responding to a common burden for poor and hungry

Hungry for Justice

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Art by Scott Turner



people of God's world, and acting on the strong belief that biblical mandates to feed the poor were not intended to be optional. Since 1991, the group has sought 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 hunger and poverty.

Editorial Address

The Seeds of Hope ministry is housed by the community of faith at Seventh & James Baptist Church. The mailing address is: 602 James; Waco, TX 76706; 254/755-7745; seedseditor1@gmail.com; www.seedspublishers.org. Copyright © 2020.

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A Word about This Packet

This packet's theme is the completion of a trilogy of justice themes for this liturgical year. Our Advent theme was "Bringing Justice into the World" and the Lenten theme was "Turning Our Hearts Toward Justice."

As always, we are indebted to a lot of people for their generous contributions to this packet. I am indebted to our liturgical team—Guilherme Feitosa de Almeida, Erin Conaway and Alec Ylitalo—for the direction and theme, and for most of the elements of the liturgies.

Guilherme, a minister and a native of Brazil, teaches in the Baylor University Department of Theatre Arts. He developed the "Theatre of the Oppressed" workshop that is part of Seeds' Creating Hope project. Erin is pastor of Seventh & James Baptist Church in Waco, TX, where the Seeds offices are housed. Alec is pastor of Richfield Christian Church in Waco and is very active in hunger-related and interfaith efforts in the community.

Scott Turner, a Divinity student at George W. Truett Theological Seminary in Waco, joined our liturgical team in May and contributed to the discussion about themes. He also created the cover art and the art on pages 8 and 14. Scott, a native of Georgetown, TX, is a graduate of Howard Payne University and says he loves to explore how congregational ministry and art intersect.

Another piece of art that was created especially for this packet is the "Loaves & Fishes" piece on page 10 by Jesse Manning.

With the liturgy, the communion service, the sermon, the reflections and prayers, we are trying to learn together the best ways to work for justice on a variety of fronts. The coronavirus pandemic has created new areas of poverty and exacerbated others. Minoritized people are feeling and speaking the oppression they have felt for a long, long time. Food security is bound up in all of these realities.

Our 40-day Hunger Calendar is very different this year. Many of the activities we would normally suggest are not feasible or safe in this time of COVID. We have also diversified the field, so to speak, to respond to various kinds of racial injustice in the activities as well as poverty and food security issues. We are indebted to Paul Vanderbroek, our summer

intern for many of the ideas and scriptures included in the calendar.

Originally from Southern California, Paul is a Professional Writing student at Baylor University in Waco, and will graduate in August. He also compiled this year's list of statistics, with particular attention to how COVID-19 is affecting food security—and in what groups of people.

You will find a sermon by Brett Younger, who is pastor of the historic Plymouth Church in Brooklyn, NY. There is a reflection taken from a sermon by Charley Garrison and the theme interpretation on page 4 is from a sermon by Erin Conaway. The children's sermon is one of the many wonderful writings of Leslie Rosencrans, associate pastor at Seventh & James Baptist Church, and one of the pastoral prayers is by Stephen Gusukuma, minister of music at Seventh.

You will find other writings by Denise Magnuson and John Michael Longworth, both members of the Order of Ecumenical Franciscans.

We hope all of these elements will come together to help you as you plan for your church's hunger emphasis, whatever form it takes in this virtual world.

As always, we are deeply grateful for all of you who subscribe to *Sacred Seasons*, and who make use of these gifts in your worship and work. And, as always, we are counting on you to adapt these contents to your own needs, resources and inclinations. We would love to hear about how you used them.

The contents of this packet are your congregation's to use freely and we want you to share them with others. We truly hope that the writings and art will contribute to many steps toward a more just world.

—Gratefully,
Katie Cook, on behalf
of the Seeds staff
and Council of
Stewards



Art by Rebecca S. Ward

Walking Away from Omelas

by Erin Conaway

With a clamour of bells that set the swallows soaring, the Festival of Summer came to the city Omelas, bright-towered by the sea. The rigging of the boats in harbour sparkled with flags. In the streets between houses with red roofs and painted walls, between old moss-grown gardens and under avenues of trees, past great parks and public buildings, processions moved. Some were decorous: old people in long stiff robes of mauve and grey, grave master workmen, quiet, merry women carrying their babies and chatting as they walked. In other streets the music beat faster, a shimmering of gong and tambourine, and the people went dancing, the procession was a dance. Children dodged in and out, their high calls rising like the swallows' crossing flights over the music and the singing.¹

Thus Ursula K. Le Guin begins her award-winning short story, "The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas." She is brilliant in her description of this idyllic town—all along the way confessing she doesn't completely understand it all and invites the reader to supply his or her own images of a fairy tale city with no king, no slavery, no bomb, no

advertising, no secret police and no stock exchange. By the time she is through, the reader has her bags packed, ready to go to Omelas to enjoy the Festival of Summer with them.

Le Guin wrote this chilling story in 1973. I am undone by how hauntingly relevant it is in the current conversations we are having as a country about systemic racism and white fragility and the American Dream of idyllic happiness at maybe any cost.

The narrator slyly asks the reader, "Do you believe? Do you accept the festival, the city, the joy? No? Then let me describe one more thing." We then discover that the Omelas keep one small child in utter degradation in a damp, windowless room in a basement.

The child is malnourished and filthy, with festering sores. No one is allowed even to speak a kind word to it, though it remembers 'sunlight and its mothers voice,' it has been all but removed from human society.²

Everyone in Omelas knows about the child. Most have even come to see it for themselves. The narrator tells us, "They all know that it has to be there." The child is the price of the utter joy and happiness of the rest of the city. We learn that occasionally someone who has seen the child will choose not to go home—instead walking through the city, out the gates and toward the mountains. The narrator has no idea of their destination, but they note that the people "seem to know where they are going, the ones who walk away from Omelas."

Later in the story, we read:

[The one thing] there is none of in Omelas is guilt. Their happiness doesn't come from innocence of stupidity; it comes from their willingness to sacrifice one human being for the benefit of the rest. Every child in Omelas, upon learning of the wretched child, feels disgusted

Art by Sally Lynn Askins



and outraged and wants to help. But most of them learn to accept the situation, to view the child as hopeless anyway, and to value the perfect lives of the rest of the citizenry. In short, they learn to reject guilt.³

The ones who walk away are different. They refuse to accept the child's misery and they refuse to teach themselves to reject the guilt. It is a given they are walking away from the most thorough joy anyone has ever known, so there can be no doubt that their decision to leave Omelas will erode their own happiness.

But perhaps they are walking toward a land of justice, or at least the pursuit of justice, and perhaps they value that more than their own joy. It is a sacrifice they are willing to make.⁴

Le Guin wrote this chilling story in 1973. I am undone by how hauntingly relevant it is in the current conversations we are having as a country about systemic racism and white fragility and the American Dream of idyllic happiness at maybe any cost.

The story of the Omelas is so haunting to me because I can understand the people who stayed all too well. I think the history of our people, right up to this present moment, betrays our hearts as perfectly willing to sacrifice the lives of some for the benefit and the joy of many. Somehow, it has been acceptable to us for people to suffer so that we can have a place to call our own. Somehow, it was acceptable to us to take land that belonged to others, because we deemed them less than, and make our own place.

Somehow it was acceptable to us to enslave children of God from Africa and even justify it using bits of Scripture. Somehow it is acceptable to us to continue to live in excess while there are people dying from hunger in the wealthiest nation in the world. Somehow, it has been acceptable to us to live and prosper in a system of systemic racism and pretend we cannot see the suffering children because we don't personally own slaves or hate Black people and other people of color.

We must walk away from Omelas. We cannot anesthetize our conscience any more. We must walk away from the illusion that we all have the same opportunities, the same chances, the same privileges in this country—and we must do it quickly, before any more Black men and women are murdered because the color of their skin raises suspicion in the people who are charged to protect our communities.

This has to be a time when we listen to the prophets among us crying out to open our eyes and see that our happiness, our joy, our bounty does not have to come at the expense of a suffering child, locked away in an unrelenting system of cruelty and hate. We need all of us to come together, willing to acknowledge our part, willing to own our role, and

This has to be a time when we listen to the prophets among us crying out to open our eyes and see that our happiness, our joy, our bounty, does not have to come at the expense of a suffering child, locked away in an unrelenting system of cruelty and hate.

no longer go about our festivals of joy as if we do not care that a child is suffering.

God's children are suffering. We are called to serve. May our steps sound like righteous thunder as we walk out of Omelas and into a new world of hope and equality for all of our sisters and brothers. Yes; there will be suffering. Yes; it will be hard work. Peeling off scales is never painless, but it is the work to which God is calling us. It is the work to which God has been calling us from the very beginning. You are a child of God, and you are called to serve. Let us continue to serve together, eyes and hearts wide open. Amen.

—Erin Conaway, a native of Midland, TX, is a member of the Sacred Seasons liturgical team and a frequent contributor to Seeds publications. He is the pastor of Seventh & James Baptist Church, where the Seeds offices are housed. The reflection above is excerpted from a sermon titled "Walk Away from Omelas," based on Exodus 19:2-8a. For a manuscript of the complete sermon, email seedseditor1@gmail.com.

Endnotes

1. "The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas" by Ursula K. LeGuin, originally published in 1973 by Nelson Doubleday/SFBC in *New Dimensions 3*, a science fiction anthology.
2. "'The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas' Analysis" by Catherine Sustana, 2019 on ThoughtCo (www.thoughtco.com).
3. Sustana.
4. Ibid.

Hungry for Justice

A Hunger Emphasis Liturgy

by Guilherme Almeida, Erin Conaway, Katie Cook & Alec Ylitalo

Call to justice

One: Scripture cries out for a world where the hungry are fed, the homeless are housed, the naked are clothed, the prisoners are set free.

Many: And so we are called to do the work of justice: fixing broken systems, advocating for the voiceless, taking care of the least of these.

One: Scripture cries out for a world where people and nations are not guided by hatred and spite, violence and war, greed and oppression.

Many: And so we are called to love kindness: welcoming the stranger, embracing the 'other', becoming peacemakers by beating swords into ploughshares.

One: Scripture cries out for a people who will listen with their hearts, be guided by the Word, and follow the example and teachings of Jesus.

Many: And so we are called to walk humbly with our God: learning from our mistakes, changing when we're wrong, becoming something newly molded in the image of God. As we worship, may these callings pull at our heart-strings, that they may not just be hollow words we say, but words that come alive within us. Amen.

Reading from the Hebrew Scriptures

Isaiah 1:1-17

Hymn

"Lord, Who May Dwell within Your House?"

WORDS: Christopher L. Webber

MUSIC: Roy Hopp

RIDGEMOOR, CM

Hymnal: Glory to God No. 419

Reading from the Psalms

Psalm 82:1-4

Litanies of Treasure

One: Lord, you told us not to store up treasures on earth because they don't last: they rot, they rust, they get robbed.

Many: Do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, or about your body, what you will wear.

One: You told us finding our treasure will reveal the location of our hearts. We confess to you we are desperately failing on this scale. Our society, our unspoken agreements, our norms all work on money. We measure our worth, our charity, our place



Art courtesy of the Zimbabwe Council of Churches

in the system with wealth: how much we have and how much we can give.

Many: Look at the birds of the air; they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?

One: It is hard to imagine how radical you are calling us to truly be in this world of wanting, working, and saving. You call us to care for one another while we trust you to care for us. This is indeed a narrow path.

Many: Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith?

One: Lord, we believe, help our unbelief.

Many: Lord, we believe, help our unbelief.

Meditation of Preparation

We have lived our lives by the assumption that what was good for us would be good for the world. We have been wrong. We must change our lives so that it will be possible to live by the contrary assumption, that what is good for the world will be good for us. And that requires that we make the effort to know the world and learn what is good for it.

—Wendell Berry

Hymn

"A Place at the Table"

WORDS: Shirley Erena Murray

MUSIC: Brian Mann

FOR EVERYONE BORN, 11.10.11.10. with refrain

Hymnal: *Glory to God* No. 769

Reading from the Epistles

James 5:1-6

Gospel Reading

Matthew 6:19-24 or Matthew 9:35-10:14

Pastoral Prayer

See "A Prayer for Our Times" on page 19, or "A Pastoral Prayer in a Time of Strife" on page 20.

Hymn

"Inspired by Love and Anger"

WORDS: John L. Bell, Graham Maule

MUSIC: Irish Folk Melody

SALLEY GARDENS, 13.13.13.13

Hymnal: *Iona Abbey Music Book* No. 62

Sermon

See "We're on a Mission from God" on page 10. (For more ideas see also "Walking Away from the Omelas" on page 4 and "Toxic Religion" on page 16.)

Meditation of Confession

If you live out a Christianity that is good but that is not sufficient for our times, that doesn't denounce injustice, that doesn't reject the sins humankind commits, so as to be accepted by those classes, then you are not doing your duty, you are sinning, you are betraying your mission. The church is here to convert humankind.

—Oscar Romero

Communion

See the communion service on page 8.

Meditation of Commitment

We walk towards God's inbreaking justice in the world, which is coming whether we are flying, running, or crawling. Our small acts of justice—those single steps that we refuse to stop doing, even though we can't see how they'll make a difference—are met by a generous, just God who is multiplying our small efforts into making all things new.

—Laura Jean Truman

Hymn of Commitment

"He Comes to Us as One Unknown"

WORDS: Timothy Dudley-Smith

MUSIC: C. Hubert H. Parry

REPTON, 8.6.8.8.6.6.

Hymnal: *Worship and Rejoice* No. 412

Benediction

And now my friends, my sisters and brothers, go out from this place, into the wide and wild places of our world and do good. Work tirelessly to make our world more just for every single inhabitant. Be kind in all that you do and say and hear, so much so that you fall in love with a kind outlook to life and all of its characters. And keep walking. Even though you have fallen down a hundred times, keep walking in humble awe of God, who knows you and loves you completely. Amen.



Hungry for Justice

A Service of Communion

by Katie Cook

Author's Notes

This communion service, written to accompany "Hungry for Justice," the liturgy on page 6, has been arranged so that it can be observed through virtual connections. You will need a leader or celebrant in one place, and five teams of two in five places. Each of the five teams (family members or people who can be physically close with safety) should choose a table, communion dishes and elements as they feel inspired. (It would be fun if they varied in color and arrangement.) We recommend that you ask each team to record their parts ahead of time, so that you can gather them into one video for the service.

If you're really ambitious, you might consider preparing a worship guide that includes the prayers that go with each raising of the bread and cup, so that participants can voice the prayers along with the leaders.

The teams should lift their bread and cups in succession after the invitation to the table is given. (They should feel free to divide the speaking and raising of elements as they feel most comfortable doing it. For instance, one could do all of the raising and the other all of the speaking.)



Art by Scott Turner

After the leaders at the five tables have been shown, the celebrant will invite the virtual participants to take their own bread and wine (or juice). This service is designed to go immediately after the meditation of confession in the liturgy and just before the meditation of commitment—or to be used separately.

Invitation to the Table

We are living in a strange time. We have experienced abrupt and unsettling changes in our lives. We seek to become, in deeds and in truth, the people Christ calls us to be today, in the midst of turmoil and uncertainty, in the midst of division and heightened emotions, in the midst of fear and pain. Our sisters and brothers all over the world are hungry for food, water, shelter and security—but, most of all, they are hungry for justice. And so, too, are we. We, too, hunger and thirst for justice, but we don't always know the right thing to do. We come to the table of the Lord with prayers for guidance. We come to the table for sustenance in this journey. As we gather at the table, let us renew our prayers and vows for the healing of the world.

First Table

(Video switches to the first table scene. One person at this table raises the bread.)

First Person: We break this bread for those millions of people who don't know where their next meal is coming from, for those who don't have the right kind of food to be healthy.

Response: Christ Jesus, hear our prayers for our hungry sisters and brothers. Hear our vows to work until everyone has plenty of nutritious food to eat.

(The second person raises the cup.)

Second Person: We raise this cup for those who have been toiling for years to bring food security to all corners of the globe, for whom the task is now harder than ever.

Response: Christ Jesus, hear our prayers for those who

work to end hunger in the world. Hear our vow to learn how we can sustain them in their work.

Second Table

(Video switches to the second table scene. One person at this table raises the bread.)

First person: We break this bread for our sisters and brothers of color who are being strangled by centuries of oppression and who are the most vulnerable to the devastation of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Response: Christ Jesus, hear our prayers for these, your beautiful children, and our vows that we will continue the struggle for racial healing and freedom.

(The second person raises the cup.)

Second person: We raise this cup for those whose jobs bring them every day into the danger of contagion, and for those for whom this pandemic has created economic hardship.

Response: Christ Jesus, hear our prayers for those who work on the front lines of the fight against COVID-19. Hear our vows to help those whom the pandemic has hit the hardest.

Third Table

(Video switches to the third table scene. One person at this table raises the bread.)

First person: We break this bread for those who have no home, for refugees and strangers.

Response: Christ Jesus, hear our prayers for homeless people and refugees, and our vows that one day everyone on this planet will have a safe and healthy home.

(The second person raises the cup.)

Second person: We raise this cup for all of the people who are isolated, pushed aside or forgotten in this time of pandemic.

Response: Christ Jesus, hear our prayers for those who have fallen off of our radar. Hear our vows that we will search them out and tend to their needs.

Fourth Table

(Video switches to the fourth table scene. One person at this table raises the bread.)

First person: We break this bread for those who are marginalized because of the way they worship God.

Response: Christ Jesus, hear our prayers for our sisters and brothers in other faiths. Hear our vows that we will embrace them with the love that comes from true siblings.

(The second person raises the cup.)

Second person: We raise this cup for those who are persecuted for whom they love.

Response: Christ Jesus, hear our prayers for those among us who are in the LBGTQ community. Hear our vows to stand together, all of us, against those who would hurt some of us.

Fifth Table

(Video switches to the fifth table scene. One person at this table raises the bread.)

First person: We break this bread for Sister Earth, our Mother, that she may know the true care of her fellow creatures.

Response: Christ Jesus, hear our prayers for the healing of the earth. Hear our vows that we will work for true environmental justice, for the earth and all her inhabitants.

(The second person raises the cup.)

Second person: We raise this cup for those who live in war zones.

Response: Christ Jesus, hear our prayers for those who suffer from armed conflict. Hear our vows that we will work to bring food into their regions and that we will work for peace and justice in your world.

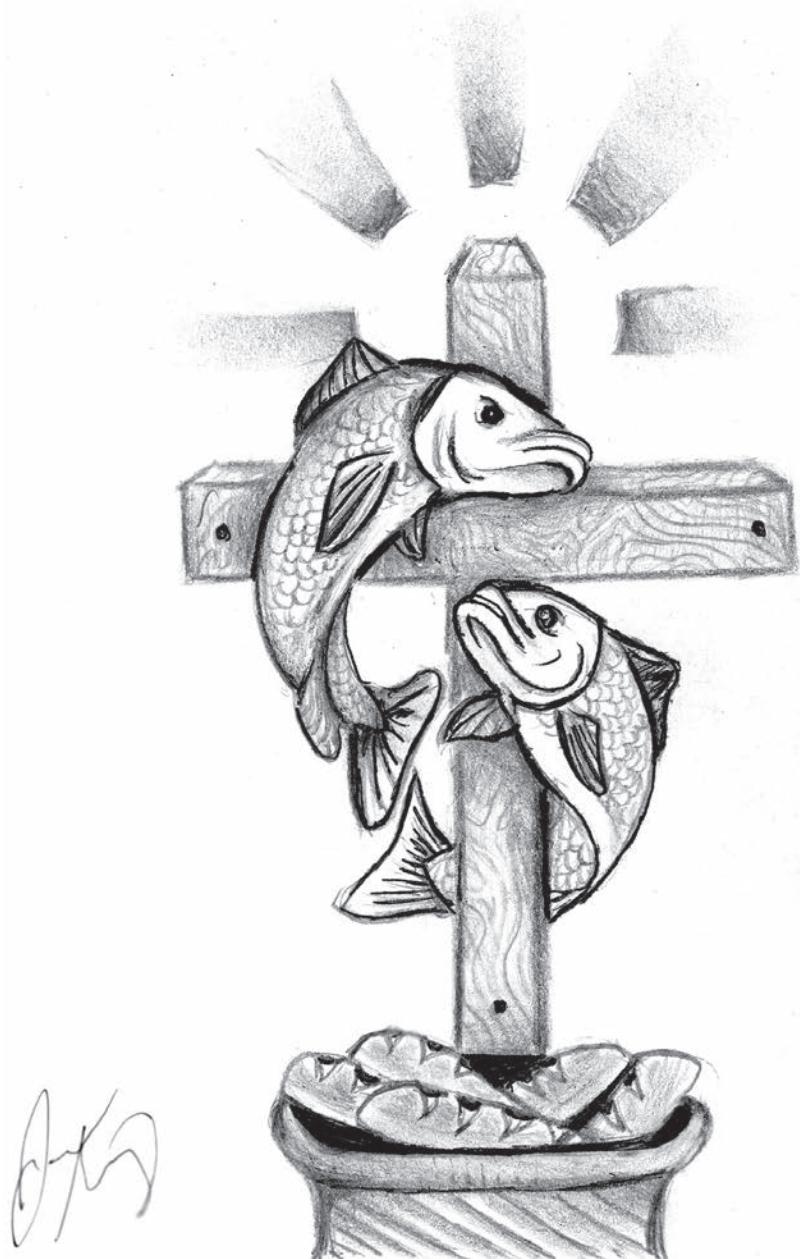
(Video switches back to the first leader, who reads the following.)

Bread for the Journey

Is it enough now, O Lord, that we just meet here this one time at the table of love from differing perspectives, differing yearnings, differing hungers, and then go our separate ways? Do we just think this is the endpoint like Elijah did under that broom tree, the end of all of our problems? In fact, the bread and cup we find at this table, like the cake and water Elijah was provided by the angel of the Lord, are merely one sustaining step in the middle of the work, to nourish us for the lengthy journey that lies ahead. It is not enough to simply eat and drink as one body and think the work is done, no, we must now take the next difficult step away from this table of bounty out into a broken world on the strength of this meal of grace. Whether it takes 40 days, 40 years, or 40 centuries, we are called to see that the bread and cup multiply through our hands to become kindness and generosity that will feed hungry stomachs, justice that will feed broken and yearning systems, righteousness that will feed rumbling souls.

—Written by Alec Ylitalo, based on I Kings 19:4-8

Bulletin Art



And this is it. This is the life we get here on earth. We get to give away what we receive. We get to believe in each other. We get to forgive and be forgiven. We get to love imperfectly. And we never know what effect it will have for years to come. And all of it...all of it is completely worth it.

—Nadia Bolz-Weber,
Accidental Saints: Finding God in All the Wrong People

Art by Jesse Manning

We're on a Mission from God

A Sermon by Brett Younger

Text: Matthew 9:35-10:14

When this pandemic began (can you remember back that far?) people were saying, "We're all in the same boat. We're all in danger. We're all concerned." New York, the city that never sleeps, became the city that could not sleep. The fear was that the ambulance outside our window would become the ambulance outside our door. We were all afraid.

As a culture, the resource we are short on is not toilet paper. We are short on the compassion that can give us the patience and strength to get through this.

A couple of months later, it is clear that, while we are in the same storm and we are still afraid, we are in different boats. There have been over 300,000 deaths worldwide, over 85,000 in the United States, and over 20,000 in New York. For many this crisis is much harder than it is for people like me. Many have lost someone they love, have almost died from the virus, or are not sure if their loved ones are going to make it. For some who live alone, this is a painful time of unbearable loneliness. For others, this has become a desperate family crisis. We are not in the same boat. We are on different boats.

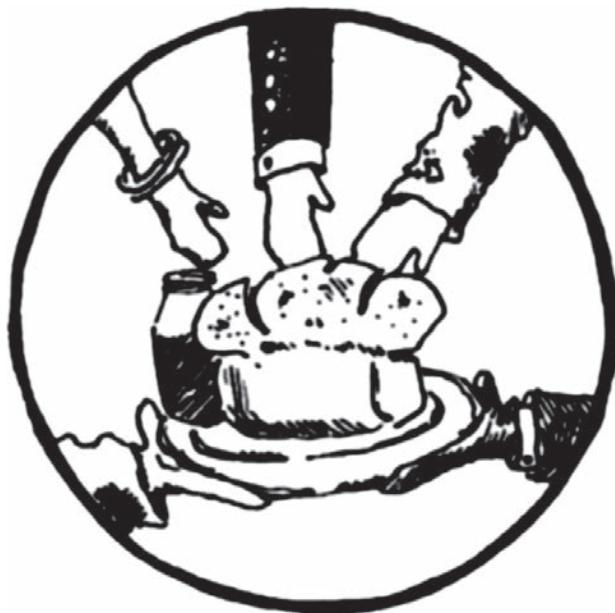
COVID-19 is harder for the elderly. Residents of nursing homes are in the highest risk categories. Some elderly people are broken-hearted because they cannot see their families. Some are not able to understand why their family is not visiting them. Fifty-five residents of the Cobble Hill Health Center nursing home [in Brooklyn] have died.

COVID-19 is harder for people of color. Hispanics and African Americans are dying at twice the rate of white New Yorkers. As with most crises, our long national history of white supremacy makes the impact far worse for minorities.

COVID-19 is harder for the poor. Our healthcare system does not work for everyone in the same way. The homeless and working poor do not have the luxury of staying home and doing their work from their living room on a laptop.

How can low-income people make it when their workplace shuts down? How can they make it when there are no tables to clear? How can they make it when their shop is boarded up with plywood, as if a hurricane is about to rip through—which, economically, it has?

No one can be blamed for the existence of COVID-19, but some of the decisions being made have terrible consequences for the poor. We have seen pictures that look like they are from the Great Depression. In one photo from the Corona neighborhood in Queens, there is a line outside a food bank that stretches more than 200 yards. Two months ago these people had full-time jobs. Now they line up for hours for the most meagre provisions—a can of corn, a gallon of milk, and a box of crackers. The United States has been hit harder



Art by Erin Kennedy Mayer

by the virus because of problems that we have had for a long time—income disparity, racial inequality and the denigration of science.

There is and will be horrible economic pain, but it will eventually pass. Some think that the most vulnerable people are dispensable. Protestors with signs that say “The cure is worse than the disease” are wrong. Poor people are not able to eat at Henry’s End [an upscale restaurant in Brooklyn], but they can usually find a sandwich. If they were dead, they would be dead. Poor people are not able to buy a BMW, but they can walk in the park. If they were dead, they would be dead. Poor people cannot afford a big house, but most have a home and a family. If they were dead, they would be dead.

The political tactic of re-opening in order to relieve the state from the responsibility to pay unemployment benefits to workers who now have to return to jobs that endanger their lives is sinful. Some self-centered people really believe that the health of their portfolio is more important than the lives of the elderly, the poor and minorities.

Mary Oliver warned us in her poem, “Of the Empire”:

We will be known as a culture that feared death and adored power, that tried to vanquish insecurity for the few and cared little for the penury of the many. We will be known as a culture that taught and rewarded the amassing of things, that spoke little if at all about the quality of life for people (other people), for dogs, for rivers. All the world, in our eyes, they will say, was a commodity. And they will say that this structure was held together politically, which it was, and they will say also that our politics was no more than an apparatus to accommodate the feelings of the heart, and that the heart, in those days, was small, and hard, and full of meanness.

Our ancestors would say that they survived the Great Depression because they valued community, cooperation and sacrifice. Those values have been attacked by an acquisitive individualism that has trouble even imagining a lifestyle of less. As a culture, the resource we are short on is not toilet paper. We are short on the compassion that can give us the patience and strength to get through this.

Jesus’ world needed more compassion, too. In first-century Palestine, power was for the few and poverty for everyone else. The leaders had a short list of people who were worth protecting. The wealthy did not think much about those who

struggled. Successful people found it easy to keep their distance from the unsuccessful. They would let them know when they needed something built, fixed or cooked. Palestine was run by people who had more than they needed and wanted more.

When it was time for Jesus to choose disciples, he picked a bunch of nobodies. Jesus traveled from little towns to tiny villages teaching in small congregations, talking about God’s love, listening to

When people are waiting for a sympathizing tear, we are the ones who shed it. When people need an encouraging word, we speak it without hesitation. When people hunger for a decent meal, we provide it without question.

the left out and caring for the hurting. The crowds—farmers and merchants, children and the elderly, the lonely and forsaken—moved Jesus to compassion, because they had been misled by their leaders.

He told his disciples, “There’s a big crop of people who need someone, but not many who care. We need to treat hurting people like part of the family.”

Jesus gave his followers the power to care for broken people, even though the disciples had no qualifications. They did not even look particularly compassionate. Before they met Jesus, these twelve thought they knew what their lives were about. Matthew was a tax collector. Peter had a family. When people asked Andrew, “What do you do?” he said, “I’m a fisherman.”

But Jesus said, “You’re with me now. You have something more important to do. You have a mission from God.”

Jesus held a briefing session before he sent them out:

*You’ve got the picture by now. It’s time for you to do what I’ve been doing. Stand against greed. Heal broken people. Awake the insensitive. Treat the outcasts like sisters and brothers. Point out the meanness. Don’t worry about adequate resources. Lean resources make for creativity. Tell them that God is here and they shouldn’t miss it. You received God’s love as a gift; go share it as a gift.**

One surprising thing about this story is that the disciples did not go—not right then anyway. Jesus

told them to get to work and in the next few verses and the next few chapters, they did not go anywhere. They kept hanging around. They went only after Jesus died. By then, the cross has made it clear that it was not going to be easy. Tradition is that all but one of the 12 disciples died violently.

Jesus said,

*The number of broken people is huge, and there aren't enough people loving them. It's going to kill me and it may kill you, but we're not going to give up. I'm not going to give up on family.**

In the second century, an epidemic swept through Rome. By some estimates Ancient Rome was three times more densely populated than New York is today—making it a perfect breeding

Sometimes Christian churches forget that our mission is to do what Christ did. Care for the sick. Share with the poor. Listen to the lonely. Stand against greed.

ground for disease. Historians suggest that between a quarter and a third of Rome's people died in the epidemic.

The wealthy were more likely to survive. No one understood what was causing people to die, but one small group did better than the odds would suggest. Christians survived in larger numbers than most of the population. What those early Christians did, without realizing the implications, was make small contributions to the health and well being of those around them.

Dionysius, Bishop of Alexandria, wrote that Christians "took charge of the sick, attending to their every need, and ministering to them in the name of Christ."

This started a virtuous cycle. Simple kindnesses like a cold cloth on a feverish forehead or food provided to people too weak to feed themselves meant that Christians survived in greater numbers. Many people became part of the church because of that kindness and their survival, which, lacking a scientific explanation, seemed miraculous.

Sometimes Christian churches forget that our mission is to do what Christ did. Care for the sick. Share with the poor. Listen to the lonely. Stand against greed.

Jesus says, "You received God's love as a gift, now go share it as a gift."

We can share God's compassion. God's compassion strengthens us to speak the truth when others are being mistreated. God's compassion provides energy to care for the hurting. God's compassion gives us the desire to do what is right.

Most of the time we assume we know what our lives are about. We think of ourselves as employers, employees, parents, children, students, teachers, victims, survivors, successes or failures. The pandemic reminds us that those understandings miss what is most important. We are God's people, called to feel the concern Jesus felt.

Jesus is saying,

*You have something important to do. You have to feel compassion. You have to act with compassion. You feel what God feels and do what God does. That's what your life is about.**

God feels compassion for minorities who never had a chance, the elderly who have been forgotten, and the poor who have everything stacked against them. How would we view this pandemic if we loved like God does? What would we do if we felt the compassion God feels?

You and I try to do the right things. We vote our convictions, stay at home to protect others, wear masks, give to the church and to organizations trying to help the most vulnerable.

A church in Lee's Summit, MO, decided that the most important thing for them in this moment is to act like Christians. On March 22, their second Sunday of online worship, they decided to give away half of everything they received that week to neighbors who were being impacted by the Coronavirus.

They gave to a local non-profit that helps the poor and they gave to employees of shops, restaurants and bars in their neighborhood who were experiencing lost wages. Imagine how surprising it was for the bartenders who received checks from the church down the street.

Plymouth Church is fortunate to have partnerships that help us live with compassion. Plymouth does not have a soup kitchen or a food pantry and people are hungry. If we are going to be the church, we need Greenpoint Hunger Program, which has reoriented its food distribution to meet the need. Brooklyn Delivers is meeting increased hunger needs through the mail. CHIPS is providing grab-n-go meals.

Habitat for Humanity is giving mortgage relief to Habitat homeowners. Restore is paying living

expenses for trafficking survivors who have lost their jobs. Bloom Again Brooklyn is supporting health care workers caring for elderly people in nursing homes. Heights and Hills has created new ways to check in on vulnerable seniors. Mission School of Hope is providing health services. Read 718 will increase online tutoring to keep children from falling behind.

We help those who are helping the most vulnerable. During a crisis, we need partners more than ever, because we need to live with compassion more than ever. When people are waiting for a sympathizing tear, we are the ones who shed it. When people need an encouraging word, we speak it without hesitation. When people hunger for a decent meal, we provide it without question.

This terrible crisis is a chance to create a more compassionate world. We can act generously toward and advocate for health-care professionals, first responders, grocers, the elderly, custodians, postal workers, teachers, delivery persons, garbage haulers, impoverished families, social workers and homeless shelter workers.

We are not in the same boat, but we are in the same storm. We can live with God's compassion as we move to the other side.

—Brett Younger is pastor of Plymouth Church in Brooklyn, NY, and a frequent contributor to *Sacred Seasons*. He preached this sermon this May, two months into the COVID-19 crisis in New York City.

*Paraphrases of Jesus' words were written by the author.



Art by Scott Turner

"Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal; but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal.

For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

The eye is the lamp of the body.

So, if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light; but if your eye is unhealthy, your whole body will be full of darkness.

If then the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness! No one can serve two masters; for a slave will either hate the one and love the other, or be devoted to the one and despise the other.

You cannot serve God and wealth."

—Matthew 6:19-24

Quotes, Poems & Pithy Sayings

Saving our planet, lifting people out of poverty, advancing economic growth, these are one and the same fight.

—Ban Ki-moon

"Some people," Aunt Emily answered sharply, "are so busy seeing all sides of every issue that they neutralize concern and prevent necessary action. There is no strength in seeing all sides unless you can act where real measurable injustice exists. A lot of academic talk just immobilizes the oppressed and maintains oppressors in their positions of power."

—Joy Kogawa, *Obasan*

In every age, no matter how cruel the oppression carried on by those in power, there have been those who struggled for a different world. I believe this is the genius of humankind, the thing that makes us half divine: the fact that some human beings can envision a world that has never existed.

—Anne Braden, Civil Rights leader from Louisville, KY

Part of what can prevent us from carrying out compassionate action is not only the complexity of what needs to be done in our lives and our world, but the sheer amount of mess and even chaos within us and between us.

—John Philip Newell, *The Rebirthing of God*

Civilization consists not in walls of brick and stone, but in the ideals created within them, in the humane goals of life pursued by the predecessors who attempted to moderate naked power, as the Sumerians said, to cause justice to prevail in the land, that the strong may not oppress the weak.

—Michael Wood, *Legacy: Origins of Civilization*

Today, most of us try to find personal and individual freedom even as we remain inside of structural boxes and a system of consumption that we are then unable or unwilling to critique. Our mortgages, luxuries, and privileged lifestyles control our whole future. Whoever is paying our bills and giving us security and status determines what we can and cannot say or even think. Self-serving institutions that give us our security, status, or identity are considered "too big to fail" and are invariably beyond judgment from the vast majority of people. Evil can hide in systems much more readily than in individuals.

—Richard Rohr, *Spiral of Violence: The World, the Flesh, and the Devil*

Obviously, while I love all, I must, like Christ, have a special love for the poor. At the last judgement, we shall all be judged by the treatment we have given to Christ, to Christ in the person of those who are hungry or thirsty, who are dirty, wounded, and oppressed.

—Dom Helder Camara



The People God Created Us To Be

A Children's Sermon

by Leslie Rosencrans

Editor's note: It is Leslie Rosencrans' habit, during each week's children's sermon at Seventh & James Baptist Church in Waco, TX, to show pictures to the children as she talks. There is generally a picture for every paragraph. This manuscript could be used effectively with or without pictures.

I've been thinking this week about some things that are happening in our country—about the ways that some people are treating other people. And I've been thinking this weekend about who God created us to be. I've been thinking about how diverse our world is—how we're different in lots of ways, but we're not so different in lots of wonderful ways. I have some pictures for us to think about these things together.

We are different. We like different colors. We like different books and we're good at different things.

But we're not so different. We know what it feels like to fight with our friends, to be nervous about trying something new and to be left out.

We are different. Our eyes are different shapes and colors, we like different kinds of ice cream and we like different movies.

But we're not so different. We know what it feels like to blow out the candles on a birthday cake, to open presents on Christmas morning or our birthdays and to be with people we love.

We are different. We worship in different ways, we speak different languages and we're good at different subjects in school.

But we're not so different. We know what it feels like to be sad. We know what it feels like to be happy. We know what it feels like to be loved.

God created each one of us in God's image. We are all created to be unique. To be different. But we're

not so different, after all. We're all God's children and we all have a place in the family of God.

It is a wonderful gift from God to be part of such a diverse world. To have so many languages and cultures, interests and gifts. And sometimes we begin to think that our differences make us better than other people. But that's wrong. And I hope you will always remember that.

Since the beginning of our country there have been and there continue to be people who think that having white skin is better than having Black skin. That's called racism, and it is wrong. It is always wrong. And it has no place in our homes, in our churches, in our communities or in our country. That's not how God created and hoped and dreamed us to be.

I hope that if you see someone being treated badly because of their differences, that you'll have the courage to stand up and say that's wrong, and that's not how God created us to be.

I hope when you hear people making comments that are unkind, unjust and racist about our brothers and sisters who are Black, that you'll have the courage to stand up and say that's wrong. That is not who God created us to be.

We are all created in the image of God, in diverse and wonderful ways. May we have the courage to live up to the people God created us to be.

Let's say a prayer.

Dear God, may we be the people you long for us to be. Amen.

—Leslie Rosencrans is Minister for Congregational Life at Seventh & James and works in an office just downstairs from where the Seeds offices are housed. She is also a former Seeds business manager. This children's sermon is from June 2020.

Toxic Religion

A Reflection

by Charley Garrison

Editor's note: The following is an excerpt from the sermon "Toxic Religion that Looks the Other Way," written by Seeds friend Charley Garrison. The text is Genesis 21:9-10, 14 and is about the mistreatment of Hagar and Ishmael by Sarah, as well as Abraham's compliance with that treatment.

Today's story is a story of Sarah's hate and discrimination, of her prejudice and intolerance, and of her rejection of the humanity of Hagar and Ishmael. And it's a story of Abraham's sin of turning away from the oppression that was taking place right under his nose and within his own household.

I think God is disappointed in the Church when it refuses to take a stand against prejudice and discrimination, just as disappointed as God must have been when Abraham refused to say "no" to Sarah.

And to that degree, it's a story for our own day because, within our country today, there are people who have been told that they are not entitled to the inheritance of justice and opportunity that others enjoy. There are people today whose humanity has been rejected, people whose human rights have been denied them.

I'm talking about any who are followers of faiths other than Christianity: Jews and Muslims, Sikhs and Hindus, people who embrace earth-based spirituality, and those who identify as spiritual but unaffiliated—all good people who have experienced everything from rejection to outright violence by others who profess to be Christians.

I'm talking about women who earn less than men while doing the same job. Women for whom sexual harassment is a way of life. Just like Sarah refused to acknowledge the humanity in Hagar,

men continue to deny the humanity of women as evidenced by the spike in domestic violence during the COViD-19 pandemic—as much as a 33 percent increase.

I'm talking about the asylum-seekers who are fleeing the violence of their countries, and who are caged like common animals in ours. Migrants, forced to live in the shadows, who don't have access to decent work, health, or housing.

I'm talking about transgender people who, by order of the White House, are no longer entitled to healthcare if a doctor or hospital so chooses. I'm talking about the fact that it takes a Supreme Court battle to protect LGBTQ people from being fired from the workplace because of who they are and how they love—a battle won against the Trump administration, which had urged the justices to take a narrow view of the half-century-old Civil Rights Act.

I'm talking about Black people, Indigenous people, and people of color who have been saying for centuries that they can't breathe. I'm talking about the everyday racist policies that devalue these people and work in favor of white people. I'm talking about the people dying every day because of the color of their skin, and no one even taking notice of it.

And I'm talking about a Church that, like Abraham in this morning's story, is complicit in all this violence. A Church that turns away from the hate and discrimination that's taking place all around it. I'm talking about a Church that is more concerned with its feel-good spirituality than it is about the blood of victims staining its sidewalk. I'm talking about a Church that has gone toxic.

In his letter from the Birmingham jail, Martin Luther King, Jr. wrote words that are apropos of today:

The contemporary church is so often a weak, ineffectual voice with an uncertain sound. It is so often the arch supporter of the status quo.

Far from being disturbed by the presence of the church, the power structure of the average community is consoled by the church's often vocal sanction of things as they are. But the judgment of God is upon the church as never before. If the church of today does not recapture the sacrificial spirit of the early church, it will lose its authentic ring, forfeit the loyalty of millions, and be dismissed as an irrelevant social club with no meaning for the twentieth century. I meet young people every day whose disappointment with the church has risen to outright disgust. I hope the church as a whole will meet the challenge of this decisive hour.

When an Atlanta megachurch pastor says, "We miss the blessing of slavery, that it actually built up the framework for the world that white people live in and lived in," the Church has gone toxic.

When evangelical leader Franklin Graham sounds off on the Supreme Court's ruling that LGBTQ people are protected against employment discrimination and says he believes the decision "erodes religious freedoms across this country," then the Church has gone toxic.

I think God is disappointed in the Church when it refuses to take a stand against prejudice and discrimination, just as disappointed as God must have been when Abraham refused to say "no" to Sarah. So disappointed, in fact, that if you read further, you discover that God intervened, rescuing Hagar and Ishmael, and providing them with water in the desert.

In places around the globe where [COVID-19] cases have decreased some common variables emerge: vigilant social distancing, absolute adherence to face-masks, hand washing regimen, and shelter-in-place guidelines that take seriously the necessity of limited contact with others. We are all tired and cabin fever has many of us feeling isolated and anguished of spirit. But love of neighbor, love of self, and the hospitable welcome we give to others demands certain behaviors right now. Lives are dependent on it.

—Marcus McFaul

God calls us to intervene, too. God calls us to the hard work of detoxing the Christian Church. The Church can be better than who we have been thus far. God invites us to open our eyes and recognize the humanity of our sisters and brothers. God summons us to the work of dismantling the racism

I'm talking about a church that is more concerned with its feel-good spirituality than it is about the blood of victims staining its sidewalk. I'm talking about a church that has gone toxic.

that is embedded within our systems and structures. God beckons us to insist on equal rights for women, and the disabled and elderly, the migrants and refugees, and the LGBTQ community.

There's a lot of work to do. And the temptation is to turn away from it all, like Abraham did in this morning's text. But God calls us to a higher plain. And so we depend on God to renew our strength so that we may mount up with wings like eagles, run and not be weary, and walk and not faint in the work that is before us. (Isa. 40.31). Amen.

—Charley Garrison is pastor of the Central Texas Metropolitan Community Church in Waco, TX, and a frequent contributor to Sacred Seasons. For a copy of the complete sermon manuscript, email seedseditor1@gmail.com or call 254/755-7745.



Art by Erin Kennedy Mayer

We Are Called to Be Anti-Racist

by John Michael Longworth

We do not get to live into a generic world history. If we are white in the United States we must acknowledge that virtually everything privileges whiteness over non-whiteness, with anti-blackness being the peak expression of this. We do not get to scrub 400 years of chattel slavery, and 150 years of lynching, mass killings, police brutality, assassinations, redlining, mass incarceration and segregation all designed to return Black people in America to as close to their state of slavery as possible.

This violence was and continues to be done for the benefit of white people. It is not possible to be racist against white people in our current system, there is not a single power system designed to classify white people as inferior to anyone. Racism in America is a white person problem.

I am a white person; it is my problem. Interpersonal work is powerfully transformative when it comes to racial prejudice, if that does not lead to active dismantling of the racist system then we will be falling short of our calling to strive for a more just world.

It is not enough to be non-racist. I believe that Christ calls us through his brown-skinned body hanging from the tree to anti-racism. Being non-racist is like rooting for the fake shrubbery at a dog show; as long as it looks nice we can be indifferent to the outcome.

—John Michael Longworth is pastor of the Good Shepherd Lutheran Church in Rutland, VT, and is a professed member of the Order of Ecumenical Franciscans.

A Prayer for Our Times

by Denise Magnuson

Most Holy One, all that you are and all that you do is good and just and loving. You give us a world so beautiful that it fills us with awe and our hearts overflow with joy and wonder. We thank you for breathing your breath of life into your creation. We thank you for life. It is so good to be alive and to be near you. Thank you, most Holy One of breath and life.

Holy God, we confess that we have taken you for granted, we have taken our world for granted and we have taken our lives for granted. We have sinned against you, our world and each other. We are sorry. Please forgive us. By our blindness, we are snuffing the life out of the poor. We aren't letting them breathe. Oh, God, it is your breath which we are taking away from them. Our sin of racism runs deep in the fabric of our lives and we are just beginning to acknowledge its presence.

O God, send your Holy Spirit to strengthen us in our work of repentance and restoration. Give us the will and the love to work so that our Black brothers and sisters will be truly free and truly alive. Be our light. Show us the way to follow Jesus and bring healing and justice to our world.

We trust in you, O God. We trust in your merciful love. Bless each of us with the courage and love to do what is ours to do and to love and cherish all of your children.

In Jesus' name we lift up these prayers. Amen.

—Denise Magnuson is a retired professor, a former nun and a current member of the Order of Ecumenical Franciscans. She lives in College Station, TX.



Art by Sharon R. Rollins

Pastoral Prayer in a Time of Strife

by Stephen Gusukuma

Art by Kathe Kollwitz

You have called us to make disciples,
Disciples who would come after you
and follow in your ways.

Those ways taught us to love one another.

Those ways taught us to welcome
the Samaritan woman at the well.

Those ways taught us to meet on the rooftop
with Nicodemus, a Pharisee.

Those ways taught us to broaden our ideas
of who exactly is called our neighbor.

We are wrestling with those teachings, Lord.

As turmoil and strife
and generations of pain confront us,
The embitterment, the racism,
the entrenchment is unmistakable.
For many of us, this has been a time
of personal reflection,
As we watched George Floyd's final moments,
we all reflected on the number of times
we have seen these types of events,
and on the systematic oppression of people—
recognizing, some for the first time,
even among our friends and neighbors,
those who have experienced the same.

Some of us reflected on our own personal
experiences as targets of racism
and systemic oppression.

Some of us reflected on Derek Chauvin—
and the times we have actively taken part
in the oppression of others.

Some of us reflected on the officers
standing beside—recognizing the times
we have watched racist words and actions
take place, but failed to offer any response.

Some have reflected on the bystanders—
watching all this unfold and feeling powerless
to save the life of a man crying out for help.

We pray for understanding.
What is our place in all of this?
What voice do we have to offer
to the conversation, to a friend, to a neighbor,
in support of the oppressed,
in opposition to the oppressor?

We pray for those who are peacefully
raising their voices—
voices that are being heard
after so many years
of being silenced.

We pray for the police and those commissioned
to preserve peace and protect,
those who wake up in the morning
knowing they are donning a uniform
that for so many represents the very
oppression
that needs to be recognized and changed.

We are wrestling, Lord.
We find that there are very few complete answers.

Lord, have mercy.
Have mercy on those who are colliding
on the front lines of this issue,
either on the streets,
or in the conference room,
or the legislative hall.

Christ, have mercy.
Have mercy on all those who have felt
the sting of racism against them,
and others like them, and on all those who
have been complicit in action and inaction.

Lord, have mercy.
Have mercy on our own blind spots
and ignorance, frustration and anger.
Amen.

—Stephen Gusukuma is a choral conductor in the Baylor University School of Music and the minister of music at Seventh & James Baptist Church in Waco, TX. This pastoral prayer is from May of this year.

Facts about Global Hunger in a Time of COVID

compiled by Paul Vanderbroek

Editor's note: A 2019 report from the Food and Agriculture Organization (The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World) said that an estimated 820 million people did not have enough to eat in 2018, up from 811 million in the previous year, which was the third year of increase in a row. The report indicated that undernourishment was rising sharply in areas of conflict, such as southern Africa, Venezuela and Yemen. It cited drought as a leading cause of undernourishment. Now, less than a year later, the coronavirus pandemic is on track to wreak havoc with those numbers. Read on to learn just a few of the statistics we have at press time about how the pandemic is affecting food security.

The COVID-19 virus will hit the most vulnerable populations hardest. Prior to the spread of coronavirus, there were: 820 million people suffering from hunger; 2 billion people malnourished; and 700 million people lived below the poverty line. The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) predicted that 100 million people would be in need of humanitarian assistance in 2020. These numbers are set to proliferate if we do not take urgent multilateral action now.

—H.E. Tijjani Muhammad Bande, President of the 74th Session of the United Nations General Assembly

Before COVID-19, one in every nine people in the world went to bed hungry each night, including 20 million people affected by 2019 famines in South Sudan, Somalia, Yemen and Nigeria.

—Mercy Corps

Ten countries constituted the worst food crises in 2019: Yemen, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Afghanistan, Venezuela, Ethiopia, South Sudan, Syria, the Sudan, Nigeria and Haiti.

—World Food Programme

As of July 2020, there have been 11,327,790 total COVID-19 cases worldwide. As of July 2020, there have been 532,340 total COVID-19 deaths.

—World Health Organization

The ongoing coronavirus crisis could increase the number of children living in monetary poor households by up to 106 million by the end of the year 2020.

—UNICEF

Most governments around the world have temporarily closed educational institutions in an attempt to contain the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic. These nationwide closures are impacting over 60 percent of the world's student population.

—UNESCO

More than two-thirds of countries have introduced a national distance learning platform for students, but among low-income countries the share is only 30 percent. 368.5 million children across 143 countries who normally rely on school meals for a reliable source will lose this source because of distance learning.

—UNICEF

Two out of five people, or 3 billion people, around

Please see "Global Hunger" on page 23.

Art by Sharon R. Rollins



US Hunger & Homelessness in a Time of COVID

compiled by Paul Vanderbroek

As of July 2020, the United States has the highest number of COVID-19 cases in the world at 2,833,552.

—World Health Organization

While changes taking place because of COVID-19 are disrupting the lives of nearly everyone in some way, food-insecure individuals—who, in 2018, numbered over 37 million (11.5 percent), including over 11 million children—will face particular challenges, and the number of people who experience food insecurity is already increasing.

—Feeding America

An estimated 5.5 million seniors age 60 and older are food insecure, as are 4.8 million adults age 50-59. Many seniors regularly face challenges accessing food due to mobility and transportation limitations, and with social distancing measures in place due to COVID-19, these challenges are likely to be heightened.

—Feeding America

Among all US counties, the projected rate of food insecurity among the overall population for 2020 ranges from a low of 8.6 percent to a high of 34.2 percent.

—Feeding America

Since the coronavirus pandemic hit the US, food insecurity has tripled among households with children.

—Food Research & Action Center

The overall cumulative COVID-19 hospitalization rate is 102.5 per 100,000, with the highest rates in people aged 65 years and older (306.7 per 100,000) and 50-64 years (155.0 per 100,000).

—US Centers for Disease Control

One in six children in the United States are living in food-insecure households.

—Children's Defense Fund

Overall homelessness has decreased by 12 percent since 2007, the year nation-wide data collection began. The current COVID-19 crisis has the potential to diminish or completely wipe out these modest gains.

—National Alliance to End Homelessness

Over the last five years, the number of temporary housing beds (Emergency Shelter, Safe Haven, and Transitional Housing) has decreased by 9 percent.

—National Alliance to End Homelessness

While the number of temporary housing beds decreased by 9 percent, the number of permanent housing beds (Permanent Supportive Housing, Rapid Re-Housing, and Other) increased by 20 percent over the last five years.

—National Alliance to End Homelessness

On a single day, an estimated 202,623 single adults experiencing homelessness are over age 50, suggesting they may be uniquely vulnerable to becoming seriously ill during the pandemic crisis.

—National Alliance to End Homelessness

Long-standing systemic health and social inequities

Please see "US Hunger" on page 23.



Global Hunger, continued from page 21

the world lack access to basic handwashing facilities.
—UNICEF

Undernutrition is the cause of about 45 percent of deaths among children under five.
—Mercy Corps

270 million people could be acutely food insecure by the year's end in the countries where the World Food Programme operates. This is an 82 percent increase from before the coronavirus pandemic and includes 121 million people driven into severe hunger from the fallout of COVID-19.

—World Food Programme

The fallout from COVID-19 is being felt hardest in Latin America and the Caribbean, where needs are projected to rise 269 percent, and in West and Central Africa, where the pandemic's compounding effects could drive 57.5 million people into acute food insecurity. In particular, urban communities in low- and middle-income countries are being dragged into hunger by job losses and a precipitous drop in remittances.

—World Food Programme

Latin America is now the epicenter of the COVID-19 pandemic. We are witnessing a health crisis on top of a food and nutrition crisis in places like the dry corridor in Central America and the border between Colombia and Venezuela. As many as 14 million people in the region could face severe food shortages by the end of the year due to COVID-19.

—Bread for the World

COVID-19 will rewrite the future of Latin America—especially for Indigenous and Afro-Latino populations. Even before the pandemic, these populations were already experiencing higher rates of hunger and malnutrition as a result of centuries of discrimination.

—Bread for the World

Ninety-eight percent of the world's hungry people live in developing regions. The highest number of malnourished people, 520 million, lives in Asia and the Pacific, in countries like Indonesia and the Philippines.

—Mercy Corps

Up to one-third of the food produced around the world is never consumed. Some of the factors responsible for food losses include inefficient farming techniques, lack of post-harvest storage and management resources, and broken or inefficient supply chains.

—Mercy Corps



Art by Erin Kennedy Mager

US Hunger, continued from page 22

have put members of racial and ethnic minority groups at increased risk of getting COVID-19 or experiencing severe illness, regardless of age. As of June 12, 2020, age-adjusted hospitalization rates are highest among non-Hispanic American Indian or Alaska Native and non-Hispanic Black persons, followed by Hispanic or Latino persons. Non-Hispanic American Indian or Alaska Native persons have a rate approximately 5 times that of non-Hispanic white persons, non-Hispanic Black persons have a rate approximately five times that of non-Hispanic white persons, and Hispanic or Latino persons have a rate approximately 4 times that of non-Hispanic white persons.

—Center for Disease Control

At this writing, Paul Vanderbroek is a Professional Writing student at Baylor University in Waco, TX, and a Seeds of Hope intern. At press time, he is preparing to graduate, after which he will work in the publishing industry or as a librarian. Paul is originally from Southern California.

Benediction



And now my friends,

my sisters and brothers,
go out from this place,

into the wide and wild places of our world and do good.

Work tirelessly to make our world
more just for every single inhabitant.

Be kind

in all that you do and say and hear,
so much so that you fall in love
with a kind outlook to life
and all of its characters.

And keep walking.

Even though you have fallen down
a hundred times,
keep walking in humble awe of God,
who knows you
and loves you completely.

Amen.

—Erin Conaway

Art by Erin Kennedy Mayer