What Does the Lord Require?

Worship Resources for the Creative Church - Hunger Emphasis 2022

Sacred Seasons, *a series of worship packets with a peace and justice emphasis,*
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art by Sally Lynn Askins

Sacred Seasons

Worship Tools for the Creative Church

These unique resource packets are available for the liturgical year, three packets a year for $100 ($125 for non-US subscriptions), one packet for $50 ($65 outside of the US).

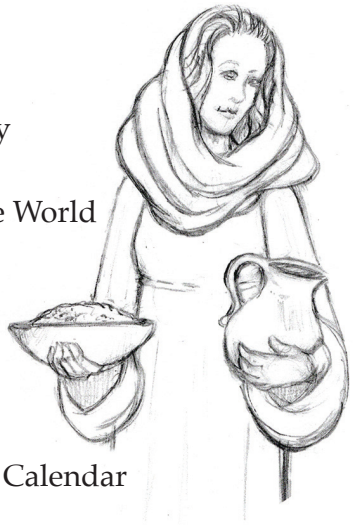
Statement of Purpose

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

What Does the Lord Require?

...in this worship packet:

art by Sally Lynn Askins



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.

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A Word about This Packet

This year's Hunger Emphasis theme is the completion of a trilogy for this liturgical year that led us from waiting during Advent to inner preparation during Lent—and now to action. (See the Theme Interpretation on page 4.)

As always, we are indebted to many people for their generous contributions. I am grateful for our liturgical team—Guilherme Feitosa de Almeida, Erin Conaway, Ken Sehested, Scott Turner and Alec Ylitalo—for the direction and theme, for most of the elements of the liturgy and many of the pieces you will find here.

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.

Scott is a student at George W. Truett Theological Seminary in Waco. He created an activity for children and youth (see page 17) and contributed a pastoral prayer. Ken Sehested, a founding Seeds editor, recently joined the team from Asheville, NC, and contributed a number of pieces to the packet. You will probably be familiar with Ken's name, because we have included his work for years.

You will find a sermon by Alec and a communion meditation by one of our favorite contributors, Brett Younger, pastor of the historic Plymouth Church in Brooklyn, NY.

Sally Lynn Askins is a member of the Seeds Council of Stewards and our resident artist. We continually challenge her with our themes, but she always comes up with something profound. Her cover drawing resonates with the speakers in the Call to the Table on page 8, although she had no idea that one of the speakers would be Navajo.

In addition to Sally's art, we have used some of our favorite pieces created over the years by Sharon Rollins, the executive director of Waco Family Counseling and Children's Services.

We have also included some new verses for the familiar Zacchaeus song, written by our friend Stan Dotson. (See page 18.)

We are blessed during this season with the presence of Mitch Martina, our professional writing intern, who has worked diligently on what we call "the statistics pages." He also created a hunger quiz. (See pages 19-22.) Also, the *Hunger News & Hope* editorial team recently updated and amended the Seeds Hunger Glossary. That is included on pages 24-25.

With the liturgy, the communion service, the sermon, the youth activity, the reflections and prayers, and the facts about hunger, we are trying to learn together the best ways to work for justice in a variety of ways. As you will read in Mitch's pages, we are facing one of the worst global food crises in living memory. The coronavirus pandemic, climate disaster and global conflict (particularly the war in Ukraine) have combined to bring us to this point.

Although the 40-Day Hunger Calendar in this packet is the 25th of its kind, we hope you won't just glance at it and think, "Oh, it's like all the others." We have added some very recent developments and ideas in its squares. We want to direct your attention to it, because we believe that authentic work towards healing hunger comes from an inner strength, which comes from spiritual disciplines.

We also believe that a concerted effort, even by a small number of people, to observe a time of prayer together can make a huge difference in how we all face the problems of hunger and poverty. This calendar is designed to help you prepare spiritually for the work ahead of us. We know you can't do all of the things suggested for all of the days (not even most of them), but we challenge you to find what resonates with you—and to use the scriptures to make these 40 days a holy season.

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. 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 world where we all seek justice, love mercy and walk humbly with our Lord.

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

art by Sharon R. Rollins

Theme Interpretation

by Alec Ylitalo

This packet brings us to a third and final step in our liturgical theme for this year. We began in the Advent season by *Waiting for the Light*. The season of Advent is filled with anticipation, but it almost seems as if we sit on our hands and just watch as the season unfolds and culminates in the Light of God in flesh and blood to be a beacon that leads us.

We may bring gifts alongside the Magi, we may pay homage alongside the shepherds, we may even just watch in näivete of what is actually happening like the animals, but the whole season seems as if we're waiting for God to show up and for God to do something. It's easy to become a spectator during Advent. After all, the story is one that we don't participate in all that much.

But once Christ enters the world, we learn that there's a lot more to following Jesus than just sitting, watching and waiting. It makes sense to move into a different state of mind for the season of Lent, which we did, by *Preparing for the Dawn*.

art by Sally Lynn Askins

There's a lot of inward focus during the weeks of Lent: working on yourself, putting on sackcloth and ashes, repenting and turning towards betterment. The season allows us to prepare ourselves spiritually for one of the most powerful moments in history as we glimpse the love of God in action as the sun rises after the longest night and pierces the empty tomb, reassuring us that God can even conquer death.

Notice something different than just waiting and preparing? There's a lot less watching God do things in the world and a lot more of us doing things in the world.

But I still feel as if we have only played a passive part in the world as a whole. Sure, it's important to work on yourself but that's not where the calling stops.

We've done our waiting for God to intervene in the fallen world. We've done our inward preparing to witness God's power in redemptive love, but now it's time for us to become a part of "on earth as it is in heaven." These are words that go beyond just a prayer that Jesus taught us, and into something substantive.

Now it's time for us to transform from passive to active, because we've heard God call out for us to be a part of the incarnation of love in the world; we've heard Jesus urge us to be a part of the solution; we've felt the Holy Spirit leading us to be a part of the sustainment of the world.

So we find ourselves asking the question during this season of Hunger Emphasis, "What does the Lord require?" It's a phrase we've all heard from Micah for a long time, but probably a part of the text that we pass over in order to get to the meat of the answer. "To do justice, and to love mercy and to walk humbly with our God."

Notice something different than just waiting and preparing? There's a lot less watching God do things in the world and a lot more of us doing things in the world. Again though, this isn't just an urge; it isn't

just a suggestion. It's what the Lord *requires* of us, according to the prophet.

Thus, we find ourselves having witnessed incarnational love, having listened to and watched that incarnational love act in the world. And now we are left to enact that very same incarnational love in the world. Another of our scriptures for this packet speaks this transfer of responsibility into action, as 1 John 3:16-22 speaks of us knowing love through the actions of God, and commands our knowledge of that love to lead us to become that love—not just in word or speech, but in truth and action.

We've seen God's works through Advent and Christmastide, then Lent and Eastertide. Now it's time for us to carry on those works as the hands and feet of that very same God of love.

Now that we know where we're being led, maybe all we need to hear this Hunger Emphasis theme as just three simple words of Jesus from Matthew 14: "You feed them."

That's what doing justice, loving mercy and walking humbly with God means. Whatever it takes, even if it doesn't seem like we have enough to feed even one, even if it doesn't seem like our actions have an effect on a large enough population, even if the task ahead of us seems more mountain than molehill, we have an opportunity to bring the smallest bit of heaven to this world. All it takes now, is action.

Whatever it takes, even if it doesn't seem like we have enough to feed even one, even if it doesn't seem like our actions have an effect on a large enough population, even if the task ahead of us seems more mountain than molehill, we have an opportunity to bring the smallest bit of heaven to this world.

I'll close with one of my favorite quotes of all time from R. Buckminster Fuller, "For God, to me, it seems is a verb…is loving… is knowledge dynamic…. Yes, God is a verb, the most active, connoting the vast harmonic reordering of the universe from unleashed chaos of energy." If we are to live into our image of God, then, that means that we too must become verbs, must become the most active, must listen to Jesus and simply "feed them."

–Alec Ylitalo, Senior Minister at Richfield Christian Church in Waco, TX, is a member of the Sacred Seasons *liturgical team. He is active in supporting local social assistance programs and in interfaith efforts.*

Remind Us Again

A Litany Inspired by Psalm 82

by Ken Sehested

ONE: As people of faith gather for prayer and praise, the first act is that of interrogation.
MANY: How long, oh Beloved, will you permit envy and enmity to choke the soil of our land and souls?

ONE: Why are the righteous silenced, the truth-tellers scorned?
MANY: Speak, oh Confidence of the Ages.

ONE: Train your eyes on our brittle bones and hungry hearts.
MANY: Draw near, You from whose womb earth was birthed and bathed in mercy.

ONE: Our land shakes and shatters under the weight of its discord; the sky wails and the sea churns.
MANY: Remind us again, oh maker of peace, oh drier of tear and calmer of storm, that lion and lamb share a common destiny.

ONE: Remind us again, that all is Yours and Love secures.
MANY: And now prepare, prepare, prepare ye the Way of the Lord!

–Ken Sehested was one of the founding editors of the Seeds ministry in Decatur, GA, and is now a member of the Seeds Board of Advisors and the Seeds liturgical team. He was the founding director of the Baptist Peace Fellowship of North America. This litany was printed in his book, In the Land of the Living: Prayers Personal and Public *(Wipf and Stock) and is used with permission. For more about the book, go to prayerandpolitiks.org.*

What Does the Lord Require?

A Hunger Emphasis Liturgy

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

My heart shall sing of the day you bring. Let the fires of your justice burn.
Wipe away all tears, for the dawn draws near and the world is about to turn!
–from "Canticle of Turning"

Call to Worship and Repentance

Note: This is a reading for two people, designed to set the stage for the Hebrew scripture readings later. This will work better if both passages are read. The first reader represents the people. The second reader represents God. This could be quite effective with a physical interpretation of dance or pantomime.

FIRST READER: With what shall we come before the Lord? What shall we bring when we bow before God on high?

art by Sally Lynn Askins

SECOND READER: See, their ears are closed; they cannot listen. The word of the Lord is to them an object of scorn.

FIRST READER: Shall we come to God with burnt offerings? Shall we bring extravagant gifts before the throne?

SECOND READER: From the least to the greatest of them, every one is greedy for unjust gain; and from prophet to priest, everyone deals falsely.

FIRST READER: Will the Lord be pleased if we bring thousands of rams?

SECOND READER: They have treated the wound of my people carelessly, saying "Peace, peace," but there is no peace.

FIRST READER: Will the Lord be pleased if I sacrifice my own child?

SECOND READER: I said to them, "Stand at the crossroads and look, look where the good way lies. If you walk in it, you will find rest for your souls."

FIRST READER: But they said, "We will not walk that way."
–excerpts adapted from Jeremiah 6:9-16 and Micah 6:1-8

Processional Hymn

"The Love of God"
Baptist Hymnal (2008) #111
WORDS and MUSIC: Frederick M. Lehmann
LOVE OF GOD, Irregular Meter

Meditation of Preparation

The work of doing justice and loving mercy are intimately tied to the humble walk with God. God's stride is not a separate category of existence, as if Sunday was the day of striding with God while Monday-Saturday is when we dabble in a few good deeds. Rather, Sunday's humble walk is what spurs, animates, informs and directs the enactment of justice and mercy.
–Ken Sehested

First Reading from the Hebrew Scriptures

Jeremiah 6:9-16

Second Reading from the Hebrew Scriptures

Micah 6:1-8

Reading from the Psalms

Psalm 82
See also the litany based on Psalm 82 on page 5.

Litany

See "A Litany of Love in Deeds" on page 15.

Epistle Reading

1 John 3:16-22

Hymn

"Let Us Talents and Tongues Employ"
Glory to God #526
WORDS: Fred Kaan
MUSIC: Jamaican Folk Melody
LINSTEAD, Long Meter with Refrain

Gospel Reading

Matthew 14:13-21

Pastoral Prayer

See the pastoral prayer on page 12

Offertory

Sermon

For a sermon that goes with the Micah passage, see page 10. For a sermon that goes with the Gospel passage, see page 13.

Communion

See the Call to the Table on page 8.

Meditation of Commitment

The hardest spiritual work in the world is to love the neighbor as the self—to encounter another human being not as someone you can use, change, fix, help, save, enroll, convince or control, but simply as someone who can spring you from the prison of yourself, if you will allow it.
–Barbara Brown Taylor, *An Altar in the World*

Hymn of Commitment

"Canticle of Turning"
("My Soul Cries Out with a Joyful Sound")
Glory to God #100
WORDS: Rory Cooney
MUSIC: Traditional Irish Melody
STAR OF THE COUNTY DOWN, Irregular Meter

Benediction

O God of mercy and love, we pray that having eaten this meal of spiritual food, we would affirm our kinship with those who are hungry. We pray that we would be empowered to rise from this table, walk out into the world, transforming our worship here into worshipful deeds of mercy and compassion today and everyday. Grant us grace that it might be so. Amen.

And now, go from this place, continuing to worship God in spirit and in truth, through Jesus Christ our Lord.
–Ashlee Wiest-Laird

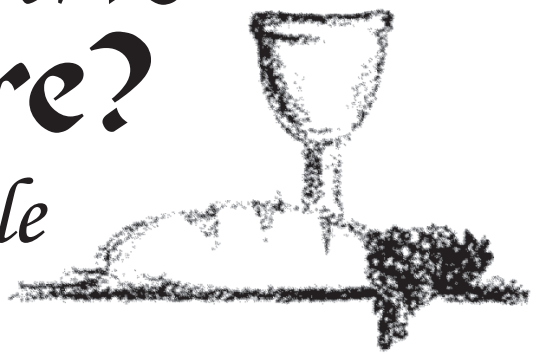
Micah declares that God asks of us three things: to do justice, love mercy and walk humbly with God. This is an all-three injunction; so many of us tend to get hung up or stuck on one of the three. Does our theological dialogue lead us to do justice? Are we merciful in all things and toward all—including those whom we judge to be unjust? Do we walk humbly with our God in such a way that eliminates us from the role of judge of what and who is ultimately just?

–James Schwarzlose, OEF,
a retired minister in Atlanta, Georgia

What Does the Lord Require?

A Call to the Table

by Katie Cook



art by Rebecca S. Ward

Note: For this service, you need six speakers and a celebrant. The speakers represent people from Ukraine, Afghanistan, Tigray, Puerto Rico, Mississippi and Arizona. (You might want to include your youth as the speakers.) At the beginning of the service, the altar table is covered with cloth representing each of these areas.[1] We also recommend that the chalice and wine or juice already be on the table. The speakers are standing three on each side of the table. Each is holding bread that is appropriate to their region.

Call to the Table

CELEBRANT: Just as God is worshiped when the hungry are fed and the thirsty given something to drink, so is God praised and glorified in this meal for which we gather as the Body of Christ. For it is in this meal that we proclaim, through the simplicity of bread and wine, that Christ is among us, filling us not only with food, but with hope and peace and joy. Therefore, let us draw near to the table of our Lord and to one another.[2]

FIRST SPEAKER: I am from Ukraine. In February of this year, Russian troops invaded my country. More than 7.4 million refugees fled the violence and destruction to other countries, and another 8 million Ukrainians were displaced within our country. The largest group of refugees are in Poland, where I am. We weren't able to bring anything with us, so we are dependent on people here for almost everything. As you come to the table, please remember my people.

SECOND SPEAKER: I live in Afghanistan. As you know, my people have lived with war for more than 20 years. We have also lived through decades of drought and loss of crops and livestock. Millions of people have been displaced because of these things, and many more are fleeing the country. The International Rescue Committee recently stated that starvation could now kill more Afghans than were killed the last 20 years of war. When you come to the table, please remember my people.

THIRD SPEAKER: I live in the Tigray region of Ethiopia. My country is in the midst of a famine, mostly caused by a war that broke out in 2020, made worse by locust swarms eating our crops. The Ethiopian government allowed the World Food Programme to bring food to us in 2021, but our people were in camps that were very hard to reach. A truce last spring has helped, but the spring also brought drought, so we don't know if there will be food for us. When you come to the table, please remember my people.

FOURTH SPEAKER: I live in Puerto Rico. In September of this year, we were almost at the five-year anniversary of Hurricane Maria, which killed thousands of people and left us without power, food or clean water for months on end. Then, just before we reached that anniversary, our island was battered by Hurricane Fiona. The power was restored in part of the island more quickly, but flood waters—even more than we saw with Hurricane Maria—washed out bridges and destroyed many homes. We think our infrastructure is stronger than it was five years ago, but it is still very frightening. When you come to the table, please remember my people.

FIFTH SPEAKER: I live in rural Mississippi. Someone said recently that, if there were ever a developing country within the United States, it would be Mississippi. Nearly 20 percent of the people here live below the poverty line. Our state ranks among the very lowest in education, economic performance and healthcare—and among the highest in food insecurity. This is especially true

among people of color. There is also widespread fraud in our poverty assistance system. An executive just went to prison for cheating the impoverished people he was supposed to be helping for years on end. When you come to the table, please remember my people.

SIXTH SPEAKER: I live within the Navajo Nation. Our reservation covers 25,000 square miles in four states, but I live near Window Rock, Arizona. About 43 percent of my people, the Diné, live under the poverty line. One in four experiences food insecurity. Many of our people are simple sheep herders, spread out across what we call "empty country." The coronavirus pandemic hit our people hard, but it caused the American people to see the lack of healthcare and the poor conditions that we were living in. When you come to the table, please remember my people.

After they say, "When you come to the table, please remember my people," they lay their bread on the altar and go to their seats. As they do this, the CELEBRANT says: God of provision, come into our midst and open our hearts to your gifts. Speak to us through these voices, and open our ears to your word. Open our hands, that we may share out of our abundance.

The Bread

CELEBRANT: On the night before his death, Jesus was with his followers at supper. He took the bread that was on the table and gave thanks for it. When he had done this, he broke it and gave it to them, and said, "Take and eat." After his death, and after he appeared to various of his followers, Jesus appeared to them one last time in Galilee. He caused them to catch many fish in the sea of Tiberius, and when he had made breakfast for them on the beach, he said, "Come and eat."
The bread is distributed and eaten.

The Cup

CELEBRANT: After his last supper with his disciples, Jesus took a cup of wine; and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, and said, "Drink this, all of you." He took what was on the table and gave it to them to drink. In drinking from this cup, we bind ourselves together in a common hope that we will be healed in our deepest hearts, and that we will be the instruments of healing in the world.
The cup is distributed and drunk.

CELEBRANT: Behold, the fragments of our feast. In this meal, we celebrate the generosity of our God, who opens the windows of heaven, and rains down bread upon us. O God, we give thanks to you, for the goodness and love we know in the provision you have made. Bless this bread to be the manna that sustains us. Bless this cup to be the drink of new life. Bless these elements to be a sacred covenant that nothing can sever. Help us to faithfully receive this food and drink. May it strengthen us to follow Christ and to become your manna for a hungry world.

Note: If this service is part of the liturgy beginning on page 6, you may want to end after the first line of the following.

CELEBRANT: Our meal is ended, but God's banquet continues as we go from this place.
MANY: Let us take the banquet into the world and never give up until all people are fed.
CELEBRANT: May the peace of Christ be upon you, and may you be channels of peace and justice.
ALL: Amen.

Endnotes

1. Here are some ideas for the different cloths. Ukraine is known for its weaving and embroidery, and its cloth often has a distinct, intricate print. Ukrainians eat a hearth-baked wheat loaf called *palyanitsa*. Afghanis use colorful, intricately patterned cloth and eat a type of flatbread called *naan*. People in the Ethiopian region of Tigray wear white cotton garments with bands of elaborate embroidery and eat a spongy, sour flatbread. In Puerto Rico, you can find almost any kind of cloth, from white lace tablecloths to some that depict Puerto Rican flags or frogs. Many Puerto Ricans eat bread that resembles baguettes or Italian bread. For Mississipians, a buffalo plaid cloth could represent a rural tablecloth, and the bread could be cornbread. For the Navajo speaker, a cloth or blanket with a southwest pattern and fry bread would be appropriate.

If you want to make it seem more authentic, the speakers could be dressed in clothing typical of their areas. However, we don't think it's necessary to do an enormous amount of research for this. It can be as creative or streamlined as you choose. A variety of styles of cloth arranged on the table would suffice, and the speakers could dress all in black (or another color) and carry a bread that resembles the bread eaten in those areas.

2. This prayer was written by Ashlee Wiest-Laird.

Offering Justice, Kindness & Humility

by Alec Ylitalo

Text: Micah 6:1-8

We all probably know the last verse of this text by heart. It was even one of my favorite call-and-response songs to sing at camp growing up. In fact, I don't usually recite it according to a specific translation, but here's how it goes, according to that song:

> *He has shown you, O man, what is good and what the Lord requires of you,*
> *But to do justice, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God.*

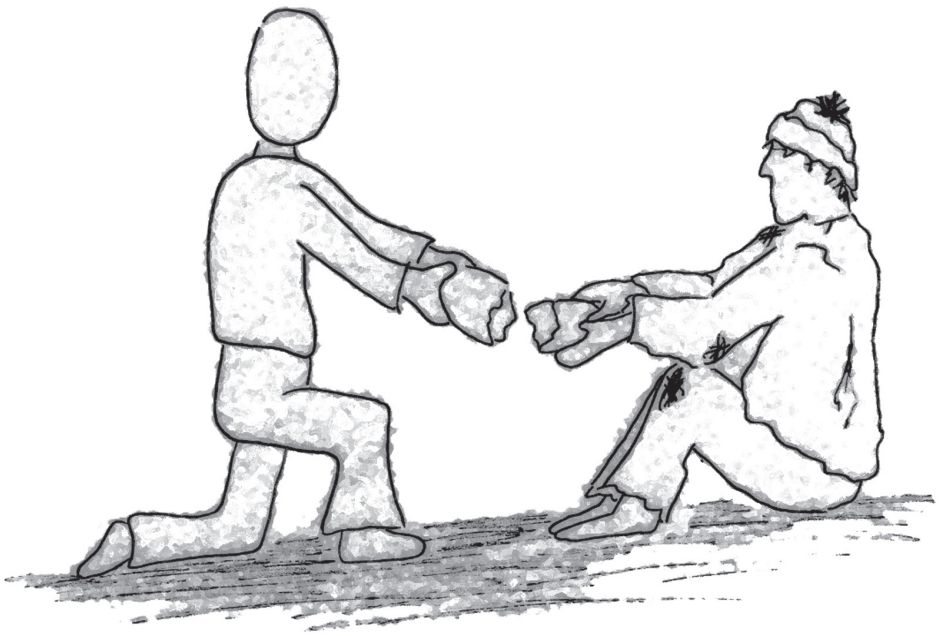
There is a lot in that one verse, but there's also a reason that it is the final verse of the pericope that is before us this morning. It is the culmination of a back and forth between the people and God through the prophet Micah.

It starts off—apparently; we don't really know the specifics—with the people having expressed exasperation, weariness, a victimhood mentality, or maybe just a lack of seeing God moving in their lives at that particular time. They have brought those accusations before God, and this has led us to the text and the words shared by God to start.

"Make your case, before all of creation, that I may hear what is on your heart, testify what you think is wrong with the God of Israel." I can almost picture God saying this, leaning back to wait and listen, saying, "Yeah, this'll be good, I can't wait to hear this."

Before we get to hear the case of the people, though, God's word jumps directly into the history of the salvation of the Israelites over and over again. Reminders of the great things that God has done for their people, for their ancestors; reminders that God is not a God far away but a God near to the people; reminders that, just because there's a "what have you done for me lately" mentality, that doesn't mean that God has simply left them to rot. *Know the saving acts of God, remember the grace that got you through to this point over generations, through leaders like Moses, Aaron, and Miriam, and see God moving through the whole thread of the story—not just last week, but yesterday, and today.*

Almost guilt-ridden, the people respond to this declaration of saving acts with a question of what to offer in return. How do we repay you for all of these things; we're sorry we forgot; we're sorry we shrugged our shoulders and asked what about us lately. And they slowly build and build in the amount they're thinking of offering, from singular burnt offerings to thousands, even to the point of



art by Sharon R. Rollins

their firstborn being offered up. Constantly trying to figure out what to bring to God to show their gratefulness. Items, offerings, things. What do we owe God to make up for all of this?

And then everything changes with God's reply. It's not about what you bring to the temple, what you bring into worship to offer to God. Instead, it's about who you are as you come and who you are as you go back out to the witnesses of creation that started the case at the beginning of our scripture. God doesn't want a specific type of offering; God wants a specific type of people.

And then everything changes with God's reply. It's not about what you bring to the temple, what you bring into worship to offer to God.

It's boiled down simply into three quips. Three small phrases that show the path of faith that the Torah, that the other prophets, that the wisdom literature—and even, for us, that the gospels—bring to light. It is a path of faith shared that there really aren't many quibbles about, especially when it comes to translation. A lot of scholars disagree on translations in many places, but this one seems pretty resounding. The words are a simple, yet powerful, commissioning of what to offer God as thanks for saving acts of the past, present and future. Not things, but to *do* justice, to *love* kindness, and to *walk* humbly with God.

Here are two outer expressions of the third inner dimension of the self. God doesn't just want our one-hour Sunday worship; God doesn't just want our tithes and offerings. No matter whether it's one yearling or ten thousand rivers of oil, no matter how small or big, God doesn't just want us to give things.

God says it's not about what you bring into this room, into this temple, to put in the offering baskets or to lay down at the altar. It's about what you take from this worship out into the world; it's about what you learn here and implement there; it's about how you connect here and how that inspires you to connect with the rest of the world.

So, ask yourself if you've had these same conversations with God at times in your life. Prayers of "What have you done for me lately, God?" prayers of "Are you even there, God?" and prayers of "Why should I care?" But then I want you to look at God's response, not in the here and now, not through the words of a prophet like Micah, but through saving acts throughout your whole life and throughout all of history.

They might be hard to find, like in Job's life, they might be seemingly insignificant changes of hearts, they might be moments where it took 10 years later to understand God's imprint, or they might be Saul on the road to Damascus in your face. Whatever they are, I assure you that you can see those saving acts if you look hard enough, you can see God's grace and forgiveness shining through history and even your life even, in times when it felt deep and dark.

And then I hope that you will realize the distance you have come, thanks to a God of compassion and love who embraces you, who walks with you, and you want to turn around and give thanks. But, of course, we're not talking about a normal offering during the course of worship, we're talking about a living offering, an offering of doing, of loving, and of walking.

We're talking about an action that is simply carrying out the path of faith that has gone before us in the laws and the prophets, in the stories of Israel, in the gospels and the epistles, in the story of Jesus and the disciples. It's all there, how God wants you to respond to saving grace, in the words of Micah, with "what is good."

Offer yourself in these ways: Embody justice in the world by standing up for the least of these, by feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, welcoming the refugee, finding shelter for the homeless, visiting the sick and imprisoned. Become justice for those who don't have a voice, or whose voice has been squashed by the empire, by the powerful, by the wealthy, by the privileged.

Love kindness. Don't just act kind every so often, but love kindness itself, desire with all of your heart to live life as a dance with kindness as your partner, every step directed to the tune of mercy, every meter expressing a story of becoming the love of God for another.

And finally, walk humbly. Recognize your humanity and walk hand in hand with the divine. Realize your faults and your struggles, but also see that God is right there on that journey to give you a boost when you stumble, to lend a hand when you trip and fall. You can't do it without that walking partner, and that realization is part of the offering of the self.

It really is a simple life to live when you think about it, that walk of faith. It'd be quite an extraordinary life to live though if you were to

accomplish all three of these things every moment of your life, like Jesus did, wouldn't it?

> *It's about what you take from this worship out into the world; it's about what you learn here and implement there; it's about how you connect here and how that inspires you to connect with the rest of the world.*

God has walked with you just like God walked with the Israelites, has delivered you just like the saving acts of the Hebrew Bible too, has brought you to this place of worship today.

But it isn't what you come to lay down here that matters, that's only part of it. The rest is the doing, the loving, and the walking *from* here. Let's go together, vying to become a church that doesn't just stop by one hour a week, but that we offer ourselves as gifts of justice, kindness, and humility before our God every moment.

After all, isn't this the very same message we hear from Jesus as the greatest commandment? Love God, Love neighbor, the rest is just details. Amen.

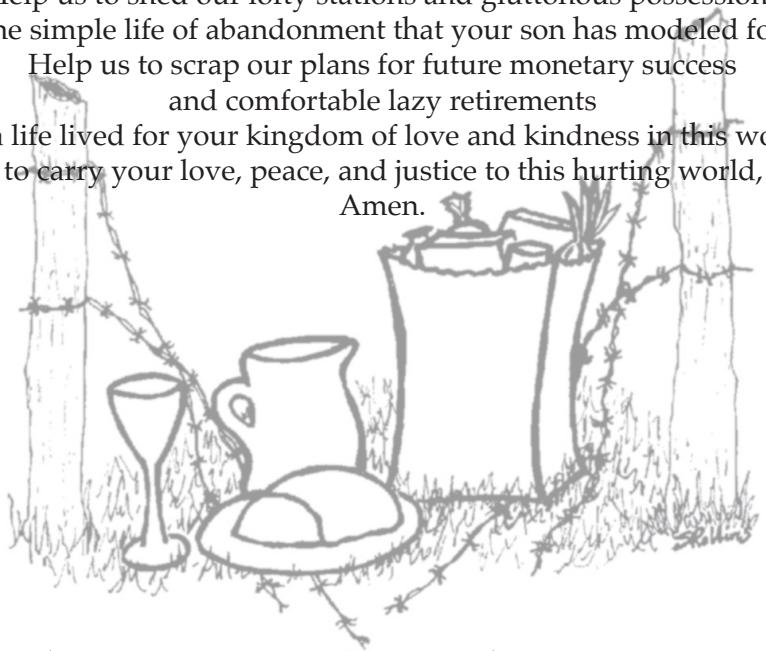
–Alec Ylitalo, Senior Minister at Richfield Christian Church in Waco, TX, is a member of the Sacred Seasons *liturgical team. He is active in supporting local social assistance programs and in interfaith efforts.*

Pastoral Prayer

by Scott Turner

Lord, We must admit today that we often find our security in the things
of this world, when we should be solely relying on you.
It is easy for us to look to our relationships, positions, and achievements
as the measure of our worth, but we know
that you have called us to a different standard.
Help us, O Lord, to abandon our naive standards of success and value
for the weight of the cross that you have called us to.
Help us to shed our lofty stations and gluttonous possessions
for the simple life of abandonment that your son has modeled for us.
Help us to scrap our plans for future monetary success
and comfortable lazy retirements
for a life lived for your kingdom of love and kindness in this world.
Help us to carry your love, peace, and justice to this hurting world, O Lord.
Amen.

art by Sharon R. Rollins



–Scott Turner holds a degree in youth ministry from Howard Payne University. At this writing, he is a student at George W. Truett Theological Seminary and minister to youth at Seventh & James Baptist Church, where the Seeds offices are housed. He also serves as a member of the Seeds Liturgical Team.

All You Need

A Communion Meditation

by Brett Younger

Text: Matthew 14:13-21

Each morning, Monday through Friday, about 125 people lined up on the west side of our church building in Fort Worth, TX. At 9:00, Scott Davis started handing out sack lunches—Vienna sausages, chips, a granola bar, sometimes a fruit cup, and a Bible verse. We call it a sack lunch, but, at 9:15, people were sitting on the sidewalk, eating their lunch for breakfast—because they were hungry.

About 120 families a month came to our urban ministry center for groceries. Marion Antley smiled as she handed out sacks filled with crackers, tuna, beans, corn, peas, soup, rice and cereal. Our neighbors often looked embarrassed to be asking for food—but they were hungry. Sometimes they opened the corn flakes on the way home.

On Thursday nights, the line started forming long before we opened the doors. At 6:00, about 200 guests came inside for a good meal.[1] After dinner, there was a worship service, but not everyone stayed. That was fine. They came because they were hungry.

> *It could not be more obvious that we were all hungry for something beyond the food we shared.*

art by Sally Lynn Askins

Since the fellowship hall was being redone, we met one Thursday in the Good Shepherd Room, but we didn't all fit, so some of us ended up in the Adult 2 room. I was late and ended up in Adult 2. I sat next to a man whose first name was King. He served a nearby church. We talked about how lucky we were to get to work at a church. Another guest told me he walked six miles to get there.

As we finished the meal, a guest named Cliff, asked, "Could I play your piano?"

I said, "Only if you're good."

He smiled and said, "I'm not any good."

He was wrong. He opened with "Crying" by Roy Orbison. Then "Alone Again Naturally" by Gilbert O'Sullivan, then a Righteous Brothers song. Everybody at our table was playing Name That Tune, but we couldn't come up with the name of "Unchained Melody." Then "Heartbreak Hotel."

Every song was about a heart breaking, but Cliff played with such joy, you didn't know whether to cry or laugh. He not only played all the notes; he played notes between the notes. A church member walked through and said, "I wish I'd gotten to eat in the jazz room."

What do you think the piano in Adult 2 was thinking? I'm sure that piano loves playing "The

Old Rugged Cross" on Sunday mornings, but Elvis is good for the soul, too.

That Thursday was my wedding anniversary, so my wife Carol wondered out loud, "Do you think Cliff plays requests?" I handed her a dollar. Carol asked for "You Don't Know Me" by Ray Charles and gets a Ray Charles medley—"Georgia on My Mind," "What I Say," "I Can't Stop Loving You." It's the best dollar I had spent in a long time.

The church told and retold this story. They believed we need to hear this story. For this miracle that happened once in "a lonely place" became a story that happens again and again in a million places.

Then I made a mistake. I should have asked my wife to dance. I didn't because I can't dance, but there's no way we'd have been the only ones. Everyone was having so much fun. Cliff finished. We applauded. He started to leave, but Eddie, who came in late, shouts, "You can't quit yet. I haven't finished eating."

Cliff went back to the piano for an encore and played a version of "In the Mood" that would have made Glenn Miller green with envy. It could not be more obvious that we were all hungry for something beyond the food we shared.

Ten thousand people were following Jesus. His compassion was the magnet that drew this huge crowd of hurting people to this lonely beach. There on the hillside, Jesus healed and taught them, but as it got on toward evening, the disciples said, "It's great that you helped all these people, but it's after 5:00. It's quitting time. You need to send them on their way."

Jesus surprised them. "They don't need to leave," he said. "You can feed them. What have you got?"

The disciples were incredulous, "Look at how many people are here. All we have are five lousy pieces of bread and two fish. What good is that going to do?"

Jesus took the loaves and fish, blessed, broke, and gave it to the disciples to give to the congregation.

It wasn't enough. It was more than enough. The crackers and tuna become Babette's Feast,[2] Thanksgiving at Plymouth Rock, Christmas at the Cratchits', dinner at Joe T. Garcia's, all you can eat at Del Frisco's, the feast after Ramadan, a Moravian love feast, a Hawaiian luau.

This is more than a story of free fast food. Even the people who were there weren't sure exactly what happened.

Every once in a while, at a church picnic, you'll hear, "We're almost out of bread. What are we going to do?" Someone who's not as funny as he thinks he is responds, "The pastor's here. Give him a couple of loaves and let him take it from there."

That's about all we do with this story. We see it as a magic trick, laugh it off, or try to come up with a rational explanation. One theory is that the crowd was motivated by the generosity of the disciples to share food they had tucked away for themselves. Then the point of the story is the importance of sharing.

But this story isn't about magic or a sweet little lesson. The story of the good Samaritan, the prodigal son, the water into wine, the woman at the well, Mary and Martha, and the raising of Lazarus—all of those stories only made it into one gospel. This story about Jesus feeding the crowd is recorded in all four gospels, and there is a second story of Jesus feeding the multitude in both Matthew and Mark.

The church told and retold this story. They believed we need to hear this story. This miracle that happened once in "a lonely place" became a story that happens again and again in a million places.

Notice the words Matthew used. Jesus took the loaves, blessed, broke, and gave them to the disciples. The verbs "take," "bless," "break" and "give" are the same ones in the same order as at the Last Supper.

This is communion, the Eucharist. Jesus offers hungry people more than food. He invites us to the Lord's Table.

Though most of us look well-fed, every one of us has a hunger, a sense that something is missing. We don't have the words to describe it, but we try to fill that hunger with houses, spouses, careers and cars. If we weren't hungry, then not only would drive-through restaurants be out of business, but so would the writers of self-help books, plastic surgeons, Lexus dealers, computer dating services and the Lottery Commission.

Most of us know the feeling of a midlife crisis that shows up early and stays late. It's like standing in front of the refrigerator, knowing you want something, but not sure what it is.

We're Jacob wrestling with a stranger whose name we don't know. We feel empty even when we

have everything we thought we needed. We are, at the deepest level of our being, longing for more. This desire that never completely goes away is a gift of God.

We're at church today because we're hungry. If you turn to the person next to you and ask, "Are you here because you hunger for God?" they may smile nervously and say, "No, it's just too hot to play golf." Ask a visitor, "Are you hungry for the grace of God?" They'll say, "We were just passing by, and we had always seen this church, and we figured, well, we have nothing better to do on a Sunday morning." It's difficult to admit that we long for something we can't identify.

Is it faith we're hungry for? Is it hope? Is it love? Is it a sense of belonging? Is it God?

At the heart of it, we come to church because we've heard a rumor of a God who feeds the hungry and fills the soul. We're looking for that for which we long. Our hunger leads us to this table, the promise of home, the heavenly banquet.

Far more than 5,000 will come to the table today. All around the world hungry people share this gift. In this bread and cup, God gives strength, because we get discouraged. God gives grace, because we don't always feel accepted. God gives generosity, because we get used to thinking only of ourselves. God gives love, because we desperately want to be loved.

We'll be hungry, even after this meal, but we'll have tasted the goodness of a day when there will be no more longing. At this table, God takes our hunger, blesses it, and gives us hope.

–Brett Younger is a generous and frequent contributor to Sacred Seasons. *At this writing, he was pastor of Broadway Baptist Church in Fort Worth, TX. He has pastored a number of churches in Indiana and Texas, and now serves as pastor of the historic Plymouth Church in Brooklyn, NY. Before moving to Brooklyn, he taught homiletics at McAfee School of Theology at Mercer University in Atlanta, GA.*

Endnotes

1. The meal described here, the Agape Meal at Broadway Baptist Church in Fort Worth, has been described in Seeds publications a number of times. Designed to create an elegant, family-style meal for guests, it has served as a model for other church ministries over the years. For more information, see "Postcards from the Agape Meal" and "Liturgy from the Agape Meal" on page 12 and 15 of the 2001 *Sacred Seasons* Hunger Emphasis (HE) packet, and "Loving in Truth & Action" on page 14 of the 2019 HE packet.
2. *Babette's Feast* is a 1987 Danish drama film directed by Gabriel Axel.

Litany of Love in Deeds

by Erin Conaway

ONE: The hour was late. The place was desolate and remote and the disciples asked you to send the crowd away so they could go to the villages and buy food for themselves. Their request was reasonable, logical and eminently practical.

MANY: Your love, O Christ, is beyond reasonable; it defies logic, but so often shows up in tangible, practical ways as you dole it out through the hands of our neighbors.

ONE: We too often find ourselves saying directly or with our actions, "Peace, peace," when there is no peace for those who don't know how they will find their next meal. There is no peace for parents who have to lie to their children to comfort them in their agonizing hunger. There is no peace for children who go home from school on the weekends worried about how they will survive until Monday.

MANY: In our cities and around the world; hunger spits in the face of our too comfortable lives…give us courage O God to do better.

ONE: "Little children, let us love, in deed and truth…." God forgive us where our words and good intentions haven't resulted in actions of truth and deeds of justice. Convict us of the gap and guide our steps as we seek to do better.

MANY: For you love us all, the sated and the thirsty, and, like any parent, you want your children to care well for each other. Help us to love deeper, in deed and in truth.

– 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.*

Quotes, Poems & Pithy Sayings

In recent years, God has given me new eyes to see the millions of poor and powerless people near and far, most of whom are hungry. Now, with increasing urgency, I hear God calling me—and all Christians, I think, not only to give to the poor, but to take up a cross and follow Him into the economic and political arenas to change structures and policies which keep people poor and powerless. He is calling us to claim the "new heaven and new earth" of Jesus Christ.
–H. Eugene McLeod, *Roots of Hope, Volume I* (a 1979 Seeds publication).

Out of gratitude comes the great yes to life in its wondrous diversity. Gratitude inspires us to bring beauty to our relationships, local and global. Our yes to life joins us with others. Let us, like Mary of Nazareth when she was confronted by the angel Gabriel, say yes to God's invitation to do greater things than we imagine and pass our gifts on to others with every breath and action. Our yes inspires us to move from gratitude to justice and compassion. Our privilege becomes the catalyst to shared experiences with the vulnerable and the willingness to let go of our wealth for the well-being of those around us.
–Bruce Epperly, *Walking with Francis of Assisi: From Privilege to Activism*

When we begin to take the Scriptures seriously, "You cannot serve God and Money" (Matt.6:24 NEB) becomes a personal address. One would expect God to applaud our small efforts at faithfulness; instead, a Spirit comes and takes us where we are not yet prepared to go. As we become exposed to the poor and their needs, the rich young ruler and the widow and her mite lose the storybook quality of our childhood faith, and become figures in the counter-culture literature of a revolutionary leader—the very one whom we call Saviour. The First Commandment and all the Scriptures on the worship of idols begin to lay bare our own primitive selves. Some of us have looked into the face of our idols and found that one of them is money.
–Elizabeth O'Connor, *Call to Commitment*

Let us not forget: we are a pilgrim church, subject to misunderstanding, to persecution, but a church that walks serene because it bears the force of love…. The Christian religion does not have a merely horizontal meaning, or a merely spiritualized meaning that overlooks the wretchedness that surrounds it. It is a looking at God, and from God at one's neighbor as a brother or sister, and an awareness that "whatever you did to one of these, you did to me."
–Archbishop Oscar Romero, *The Violence of Love*

We operate in an economy that blesses greed: that is to say, an economy that claims the common good will best be served if each pursues their personal interests. The only way to resist the rule of greed is to foster a transcendent vision which upholds a radically different way of envisioning and constructing our common life.
–Ken Sehested

Jesus Christ hung out with known sinners, worked on the Sabbath, threw a fit in church and generally offended the honchos of status quo religion. One day, while talking about the down-and-outers of his day, the hungry, the thirsty, the illegal immigrants, the naked, the sick and the prisoners, he told his followers, "To the extent that you served one of these brothers of mine, even the least of them, you did it to me."
—Marv Knox

O God, lead us from death to life, from falsehood to truth. Lead us from despair to hope, from fear to trust. Lead us from hate to love, from war to peace. Let peace fill our hearts, our world, our universe. Amen.

–From the Community of St. Francis Prayer Book

art by Peter Yuichi Clark

Prayer Stations for Hunger

An Activity for Youth & Children

by Scott Turner

As a youth minister, one of the most meaningful and impactful activities on my semester calendar is the night we do prayer stations. It takes students out of the weekly monotony of our regular events; it's easy to plan and set up; but, most importantly, it gives students a whole evening to forget about their busy lives and connect with the God of the universe who loves them and wants to be present with them.

The event is great by itself, but the nights we focus on a theme seem to be even better, and "hunger" is a great theme. Micah 6 reminds us to walk humbly with God and this might help.

The activity is simple. Create stations that will emphasize a specific aspect of hunger globally or locally, and offer suggestions for ways your students can pray for that issue or organization. Then have your students rotate around the stations praying for each one. The activity can be as long or as short as you'd like; just adjust the number of stations, planning for two to four minutes per station. I usually dim the lights and play instrumental worship music to help create a prayerful ambience.

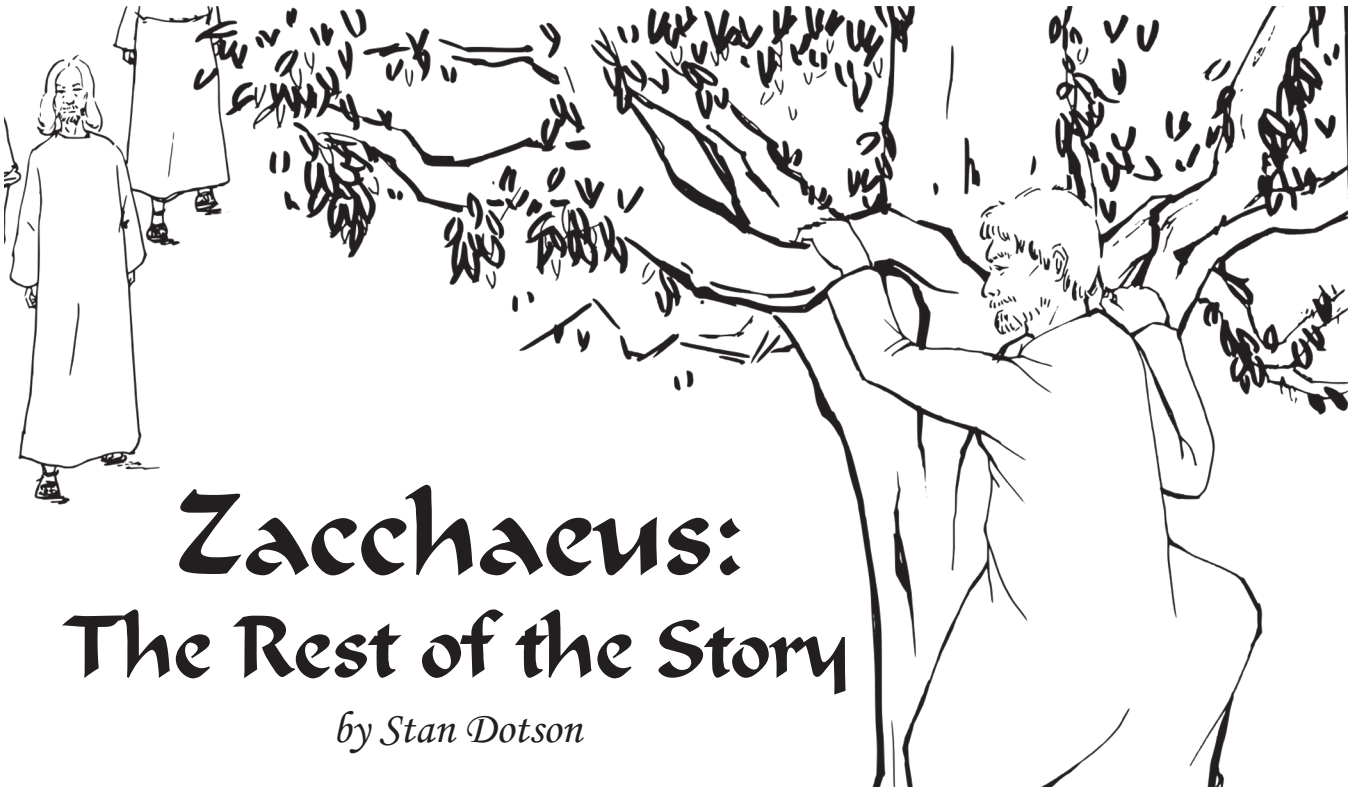
Here are some ideas for stations you can make:

- Hunger statistics: Pray for the hungry. Use two stations—one for global statistics, and one for local statistics. *[See pages 19-21 of this packet for ideas.]*
- Scripture stations: Use a passage of scripture to help remind the students that God cares for the hungry. [You could use Micah 6:8 or any of the 40 passages on the Hunger Calendar in this packet.]
- Organizations: Print out mission statements or information cards about local or global hunger organizations. You can make separate stations for local ones. List names of people who work there or local partners to be lifted up in prayer.
- Object lessons: go to a grocery store and buy a day's worth of meals for as much money as the average person lives on in one day, or ask a local food bank how much food they give to families and break that up into weekly meals. Set the food at a station and ask students to think about their daily consumption versus what others might have.
- Card writing: Get a list of the staff at a local food pantry or soup kitchen and ask the students to pick someone to pray for and write a gratitude card to.
- Visio-Divina: Print pictures of a local community garden, or organization that's fighting hunger.
- Offering plate stations: give students the opportunity to give financially to an organization of your choosing that's trying to fight hunger. Give them notice beforehand that you will have this available, or invite them to come back next week with money.

I'm sure you can come up with your own wonderful and creative ideas as well, but try to emphasize somewhere during the activity that praying for hunger is great, but these are real tangible problems that need to be addressed in the world. Encourage the students to think about ways that they can give back, volunteer, or fight hunger in their own communities. Encourage them to think of something they can do individually and as a group.

–Scott Turner was raised in Georgetown, TX, and graduated with a degree in youth ministry from Howard Payne University. At this writing, he is an MDiv student at Truett Theological Seminary and minister to youth at Seventh & James Baptist Church, where the Seeds offices are housed. He's passionate about congregational ministry and art (specifically illustration and printmaking) and loves to explore how they intersect. He also serves as a member of the Seeds Liturgical Team.

art by Curtis Cannon



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Zacchaeus:
The Rest of the Story

by Stan Dotson

Editor's note: A number of years ago, Stan Dotson's church—Circle of Mercy in Asheville, NC—was planning a special service to mark the congregation's decision to invest in microcredit and community development programs. As the creative music coordinator, Stan wrote two additional verses to the popular children's song about Zacchaeus. Founding Seeds editor Ken Sehested shared them with us for this packet.

Zacchaeus was a wee little man, a wee little man was he
He climbed up in a sycamore tree for the Lord he wanted to see
And as the Savior passed that way he looked up in the tree
And he said, *(spoken)* Zacchaeus, you come down
For I'm going to your house today, I'm going to your house today

And as Zacchaeus climbed back down the crowd began to groan
They did not think the Savior should be seen in a such a home
They did not know the wee little man was soon to be transformed
(spoken) Til he said, Look, Lord, I'll give to the poor,
and re-pay all my victims fourfold
For today I've been re-born, today I've been re-born

And when the wealth was freely shared and scamming was re-paid
The Savior boldly told the crowd a miracle occurred that day
The heart of the wee little man had grown four sizes from the call
(spoken) And he who once was short on love was suddenly walking tall
He was suddenly walking tall, he was suddenly walking tall

–Stan Dotson formerly worked with students at Mars Hill College in Mars Hill, NC, taking them on re-creations of the 1960s Freedom Ride and visiting sites in the southern United States that were important to the Civil Rights movement. These days, he is still involved in church and community work in the Asheville area and is in a band called Con Fe Mezcla'o, which mixes the music of Silvio Rodriguez and the Beatles. For quite a few years, he and his wife, Kim Christman, have spent much of their time in Cuba, doing the same kind of work.

Hunger in the US & Around the World

compiled by Mitch Martina

In 2019, the United States celebrated its lowest rate of food insecurity in 20 years as low unemployment rates and unhindered food supply chains endowed many Americans with affordable, consistent access to food. After two decades of gradual, non-linear progress, things were headed in the right direction and there was reason to rejoice.

The US—and the world—had little choice but to watch, however, as COVID-19's onset in 2020 instigated economic recessions that brought years of consistent progress to an abrupt, devastating halt. Today, the nations are still adapting to the fight against food insecurity in a post-pandemic world as economies slowly recover from unemployment shocks and widespread supply chain disruptions, significantly hindering reliable access to affordable food resources.

Prospects dimmed even further on February 24, 2022, as Russia invaded Ukraine and the two nations—together comprising nearly a third of the world's cereal exports and 12 percent of the world's calorie supply—found themselves in the throes of war, resulting in bottlenecked exports and the significantly hindered production of essential foods in one of the world's most vital breadbasket regions.

Our victories ought to be celebrated, both large and small—but these past three years have demonstrated that we cannot afford to become complacent in the fight against hunger.

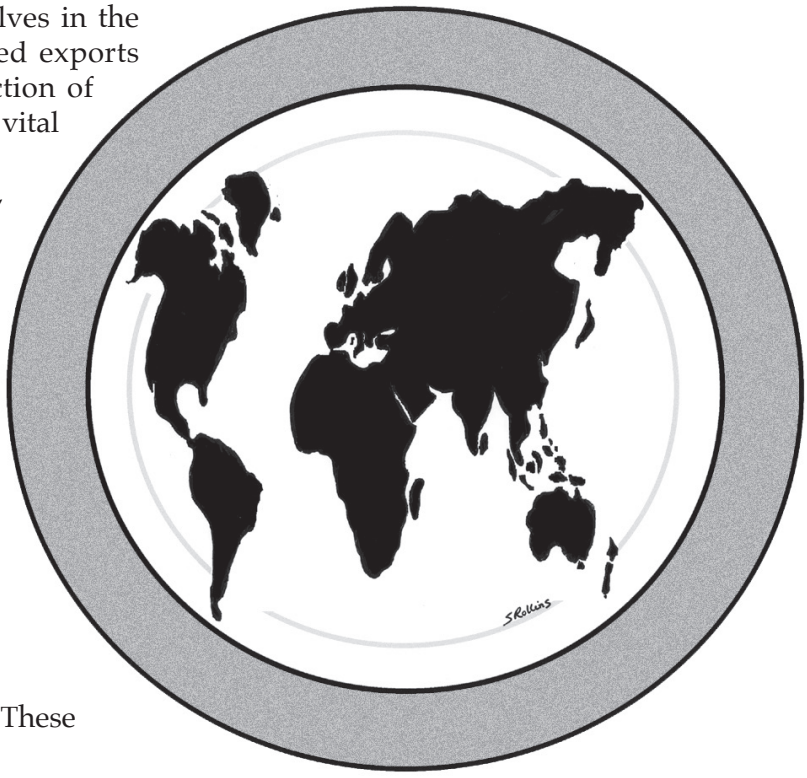
The Three Cs of Food Insecurity

Although food insecurity is unrelentingly complex and multifaceted, there are a handful of interrelated causes that have recently served to exacerbate hunger and limit reliable access to food on a global scale. These are conflict, COVID-19, and climate, colloquially referred to as the "three Cs" of food insecurity. Taking the time to understand these three causes and how they interact is necessary if we want to develop an informed, effective series of responses to hunger on the local and global level.

Global Hunger

In March of 2022—almost immediately following Russia's invasion of Ukraine—the global food price index reached its highest level since 1990 at 159.7 points, indicating the highest global price-per-basket of food commodities in thirty years. The index was nearly 60 points lower in 2020, averaging at 98.1 points throughout the year. (Devex Newswire)

The surge of world food prices experienced globally in March is the fastest one ever recorded, clocking in at a record-breaking 13 percent jump. This surge will be particularly devastating for low-income nations



art by Sharon R. Rollins

that primarily depend on imports for essential food resources. (Reuters, US Global Leadership Coalition)

Prior to the conflict in Russia and Ukraine, tens of millions were already approaching famine status "due to existing local conflicts, rising costs of commodities, climate change and the pandemic." The elevation of the Russo-Ukrainian war has caused the world to encroach on the boundaries of a bona-fide food crisis. (Devex Newswire)

Economies in Africa are especially susceptible to the crippling effects of the Russo-Ukrainian War, as approximately 25 African economies "import at least one-third of their wheat from those two countries; for 15 of them the proportion is greater than 50 pecent." (World Bank)

As such, significant disparities for particular regions exist on the global stage; 20.2 percent of the African population experienced hunger in 2021 "compared to 9.1 percent in Asia, 8.6 percent in Latin America and the Caribbean, 5.8 percent in Oceania, and less than 2.5 percent in Northern America and Europe." In total, the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) estimated that between 702 and 828 million people were affected by hunger globally in the past year. (FAO)

Not only has hunger increased in a *quantitative* manner, it has also increased in terms of *intensity*—that is, the severity of global hunger has increased. This is due in large part to COVID-19's universal disruption of supply chains in tandem with gradually increasing demand for food resources on behalf of consumers. (US Global Leadership Coalition)

Due to the demands of COVID-19 on the global supply chain, commodity prices were indirectly driven up as national financial policies sought to mitigate the immediate effects of the coronavirus on local economies, with actions such as the reduction of cereal exports. (McKinsey & Company)

The disproportionate loss of income for poorer households compared to their wealthier counterparts as a result of COVID-19 means that the poor are especially hindered from acquiring consistent access to food resources. Likewise, because poorer populations tend to be composed of physical laborers, these populations were disproportionately affected at the outset of the pandemic in terms of unemployment and, therefore, access to food. (International Food Policy Research Institute)

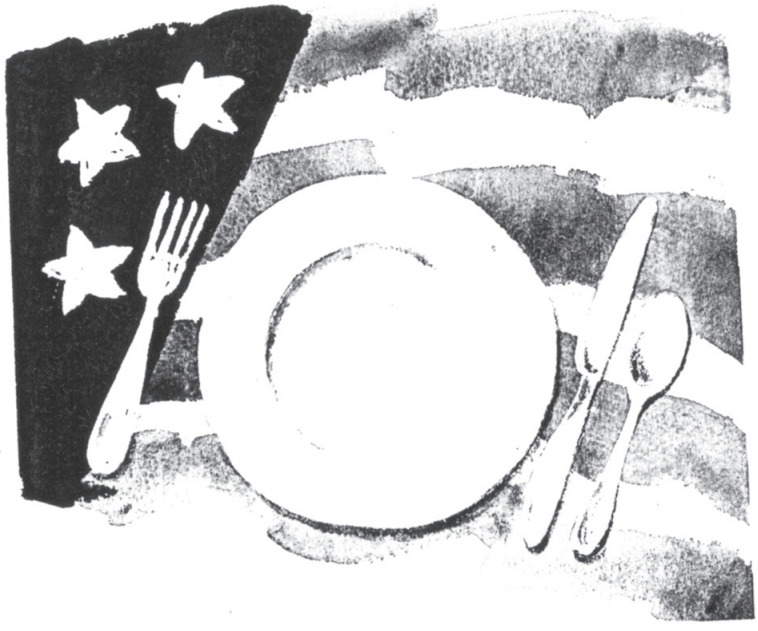
Coronavirus-induced "border restrictions and lockdowns" have obstructed harvesting efforts globally and left massive quantities of seasonal workers unemployed. Furthermore, "meat processing plants and food markets" as well as transport services have been interrupted by the threat of COVID-19 as external stressors inhibit each function of the supply chain. (United Nations Sustainable Development Group)

According to Arif Husain at the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP), "This [global food] crisis is about affordability, meaning there is food available, but the prices are really high." The UN predicts that, by 2027, an 8.5 percent raise in food prices is possible. (CNBC, FAO)

Rural populations are the most vulnerable to hunger, despite the fact that they produce the bulk of the global food supply. (Action Against Hunger)

US Hunger

In comparison to 11 percent of households prior to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, approximately 15 percent of US households shifted towards food



insecurity after COVID-19's onset, with that number increasing to 18 percent if the households included children. (New York University)

As many as 34 million people—among which are 9 million children—are currently experiencing food insecurity in the United States. Food insecurity disproportionately affects child and minority populations among US residents. (Feeding America)

In the United States, food insecurity differs by state according to both "the characteristics of their populations and to state-level policies and economic conditions." From 2019-2021, New Hampshire had the lowest prevalence of food insecurity (5.4 percent) while Mississippi had the highest prevalence (15.3 percent). (United States Department of Agriculture-USDA)

In the fiscal year 2018, 44 percent of SNAP's (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) demographic was revealed to be children. (USDA)

5.2 million American seniors were identified as food insecure in 2020, some of the causes for which are racial and economic inequality or disability. 1 in 15 American senior citizens experiences consistent conditions of hunger. (Feeding America)

On the bright side, "SNAP and school meals lifted 3.2 million people out of poverty" in the year of 2021 and offered them more consistent access to food. (Food Research and Action Center-FRAC)

"Food is often one of the first expenses to be cut when households are faced with financial hardship," according to FRAC. Cutting food expenses often initiates a cyclical process wherein performance at work is hindered or chronic disease enters the picture, further disabling the individual/family from the level of performance at work that's necessary for one to support themselves. (FRAC)

According to *No Kid Hungry*, the federal poverty level was $26,500 for a family of four—in 2021, 37 million Americans lived on the poverty line, 12 million of whom were children. (No Kid Hungry)

For most Americans, hunger is not caused by the physical absence of food or a lack of supply. Rather, it is a problem of affordability due to unemployment or insufficient wages. As such, reform within the United States must occur via economic levelling—or, in other words, enabling consumers to earn sufficient wages to purchase food. (Bread For The World)

While men and women living alone in the United States experienced severe food insecurity on an almost identical level, single women with children experienced severe conditions of hunger *twice* as much as single men with children in 2021. (USDA)

–Mitch Martina, a native of Houston, TX, is a senior Professional Writing and Great Texts major at Baylor University. He is the Seeds intern for the fall of 2022.

Trouble and weeping and fear and ruin come when people forget the promises of God that bind us to each other—the hungry to the overfed, the innocent to the cynical, the triumphant to the brokenhearted.

All over God's round earth, trouble comes when the people forget the promise. And God is far away.

So we try to help each other remember the promises which are our way and our truth and our life.
We try to help each other stop expecting faith to be soothing.
We stop trying to mostly entertain each other in church and instead help each other find faith that will deepen into sacrificial love.

–Martha Sterne

Test Your Hunger Knowledge

by Mitch Martina

1. In March of 2022, world food prices spiked at a record-breaking rate of _____, making for the fastest surge ever recorded.

A. 5 percent
B. 13 percent
C. 16 percent
D. 9 percent

2. How many African economies are dependent upon Russian and Ukrainian exports for more than one-third of their wheat supply?

A. 20
B. 22
C. 25
D. 19

3. For most Americans, what is the primary cause of hunger?

A. Unaffordability due to unemployment or insufficient wages
B. Proximity to consistent, convenient food suppliers
C. Food supply shortages
D. Supply chain interruptions

4. What demographic experiences a disproportionate amount of severe food insecurity, at a rate of *twice* the amount of their counterparts of the opposite sex?

A. Men who live alone
B. Women who live alone
C. Single men with children
D. Single women with children

5. Among the 37 million Americans living on the poverty line in the year of 2021, how many were children?

A. 6 million
B. 17 million
C. 12 million
D. 9.4 million

6. What are the "three Cs" of food insecurity?

A. Crisis, conflict, capitalism
B. Climate, COVID-19, conflict
C. Calcium, climate, COVID-19
D. Cafeterias, COVID-19, cable television

7. What populations are the most susceptible to hunger and food insecurity, generally speaking?

A. Rural
B. Urban
C. Nautical
D. Non-urban

8. In what year did America celebrate its lowest rate of food insecurity over a span of 20 years?

A. 2019
B. 2020
C. 2017
D. 2022

9. Put together, what percentage of the global calorie supply do Russia and Ukraine constitute?

A. 9 percent
B. 10 percent
C. 12 percent
D. 16 percent

10. In which US state was food insecurity the most prevalent from 2019-2021?

A. Louisiana
B. Arkansas
C. Mississippi
D. Texas

Answers: 1. B; 2. C; 3. A; 4. D; 5. C; 6. B; 7. A; 8. A; 9. C; 10. C

A Hunger Glossary

from the Hunger News & Hope Editorial Team

• **FAMINE:** According to the Food and Agriculture Organisation's (FAO) Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC), a famine is "the absolute inaccessibility of food to an entire population or subgroup of a population, potentially causing death in the short term."

• **FEEDING PROGRAM:** A federal, school or private program or agency that serves prepared food to hungry people. Examples include soup kitchens and school meal programs.

• **FOOD DESERT:** a district, usually a low-income area, where healthy, nutritious food is difficult to obtain. The Economic Research Service of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) defines a food desert as a low-income census tract where a substantial number of residents has low access to a supermarket or large grocery store.

In the 2008 Food, Conservation and Energy Act (the 2008 Farm Act), Congress directed the USDA to assess the extent of food deserts in the United States. These regions of the country often feature large proportions of households with low incomes, inadequate access to transportation, and a limited number of food retailers providing fresh produce and healthy groceries for affordable prices. In response to this directive, USDA published *Access to Affordable and Nutritious Food: Measuring and Understanding Food Deserts and Their Consequences* (USDA, 2009).

Recently, some food justice activists have been calling for the term to change to "food apartheid," to call attention to the effect of systemic racism that causes this disparity.

• **FOOD RESCUE:** The practice of obtaining prepared food from restaurants, packaging it according to health codes, and making it available to feeding programs.

• **FOOD SECURITY:** Having enough food to be healthy and productive. The World Food Summit of 1996 defined food security as existing "when *all people at all times* have access to sufficient, safe, nutritious food to maintain a healthy and active life." According to the UN World Health Organisation, food security is built on three pillars: food availability, food access and appropriate food use.

Census workers in the US use the terms "high food security," "marginal food security," "low food security" and "very low food security." According to the USDA, a household has very low food security if the food intake of one or more household members is reduced or disrupted at times during the year because the household lacks the money or other resources for food.

• **FOOD SOVEREIGNTY:** A movement that seeks to establish the rights of those who grow food to determine what foods to grow, how food is grown, and how and by whom foods are produced, processed and distributed. It also seeks to provide fair compensation for those involved in bringing food to our tables.

The movement was launched at the 1996 World Food Summit by La Via Campesina. The 2007 Nyéléni Forum for Food Sovereignty in Mali, with 700 delegates from five continents, clarified the economic, social, ecological, and political implications of the movement and created an international process to achieve recognition of the right to food sovereignty. The forum issued the following declaration:

> *Food sovereignty is the right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods, and their right to define their own food and agriculture systems. It puts the aspirations and needs of those who produce, distribute and consume food at the heart of food systems and policies rather than the demands of markets and corporations.*

For those who eat (which is everybody), it is the right to know where your food comes from, how the food was produced, how safe and healthy it is, and who benefits from the food's production and distribution.

–See pages 3-9 of the summer 2012 issue of Hunger News & Hope *for more about Food Sovereignty.*

• **HUNGER:** The body's way of signaling that it is running short of food and needs to eat something. It is described as an uncomfortable or painful physical

sensation caused by insufficient consumption of dietary energy. It becomes chronic when the person does not consume a sufficient number of calories (dietary energy) on a regular basis to lead a normal, active and healthy life. The Food and Agriculture Organisation estimates that almost 690 million people are going hungry chronically. According to the UN's World Food Programme (WFP), the average person needs 1,200 calories a day to lead a healthy life.

• **MALNUTRITION:** According to the World Health Organisation, "malnutrition" refers to deficiencies or excesses in nutrient intake, imbalance of essential nutrients or impaired nutrient utilization. This includes undernutrition, obesity and diet-related noncommunicable diseases. There are four types of malnutrition:

1. **ACUTE MALNUTRITION** is defined by Save the Children as "recent, severe weight loss as a result of acute food deprivation with or without illness; it refers to wasting and/or nutritional oedema."

2. **CHRONIC MALNUTRITION** is defined by the FAO as "an abnormal physiological condition caused by chronic deficiencies or imbalances in one or more nutrients. This condition may result in impaired physical and/or mental development and can possibly result in *kwashiorkor* and/or *marasmus*."

3. **OBESITY** is now recognized as a form of malnutrition. It leads to its own set of diet-related noncommunicable diseases. High numbers of obesity cases often occur in low-income neighborhoods and food deserts.

4. The FAO describes **UNDERNUTRITION** as "an abnormal physiological condition whereby individuals do not consume sufficient food to meet dietary energy and nutrient requirements over a prolonged period of time." According to the WHO, it manifests in four broad forms: wasting, stunting, underweight, and micronutrient deficiencies:

a. **WASTING** is defined by the WHO as a person having low weight for their height. It often indicates recent and severe weight loss, although it can also persist for a long time. It is usually associated with starvation and/or disease. It occurs when a person has not had food of adequate quality and quantity and/or they have had frequent or prolonged illnesses. It is calculated by comparing weight-for-height of a child with a reference population of well-nourished and healthy children. Wasting in children is associated with a higher risk of death if not treated properly.

This measurement is often used to assess the severity of emergencies because it is so strongly related to mortality.

b. **STUNTING** is defined as low height-for-age. It is the result of chronic or recurrent undernutrition, usually associated with poverty, poor maternal health and nutrition, frequent illness and/or inappropriate feeding and care in early life. Stunting prevents children from reaching their physical and cognitive potential. It is calculated by comparing the height-for-age of a child with a reference population of well-nourished and healthy children

c. **UNDERWEIGHT** is a state measured by comparing the weight-for-age of a child with a reference population of well-nourished and healthy children. It is estimated that the deaths of almost 4 million children aged less than 5 are associated with the underweight status of the children themselves or their mothers. A child who is underweight may be stunted, wasted or both. (WHO)

d. **MICRONUTRIENT DEFICIENCIES** are a lack of vitamins and minerals that are essential for body functions such as producing enzymes, hormones and other substances needed for growth and development. (WHO)

• **SNAP:** The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (formerly the Food Stamp Program) is a federal program in the US administered by the USDA.

• **UNDERNOURISHMENT:** the status of people whose food intake does not include enough calories to meet minimum physiological needs. The term is a measure of a country's ability to gain access to food and is normally derived from Food Balance Sheets prepared by the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO).

• **WIC:** The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children, a federal program in the US administered by the USDA. The WIC program has been shown to save $5 in future social services for every $1 it spends. ■

Benediction

Not because we have made peace this day,
Not because we have treated the other as self,
Not because we have walked the earth with reverence today,
But because there is mercy,
Because there is grace,
Because your spirit has not been taken from us,
We come,
Still thirsting for peace,
Still longing for love,
Still hoping for wholeness.
–from a Franciscan Agape Feast,
Order of Ecumenical Franciscans

art by Sharon R. Rollins