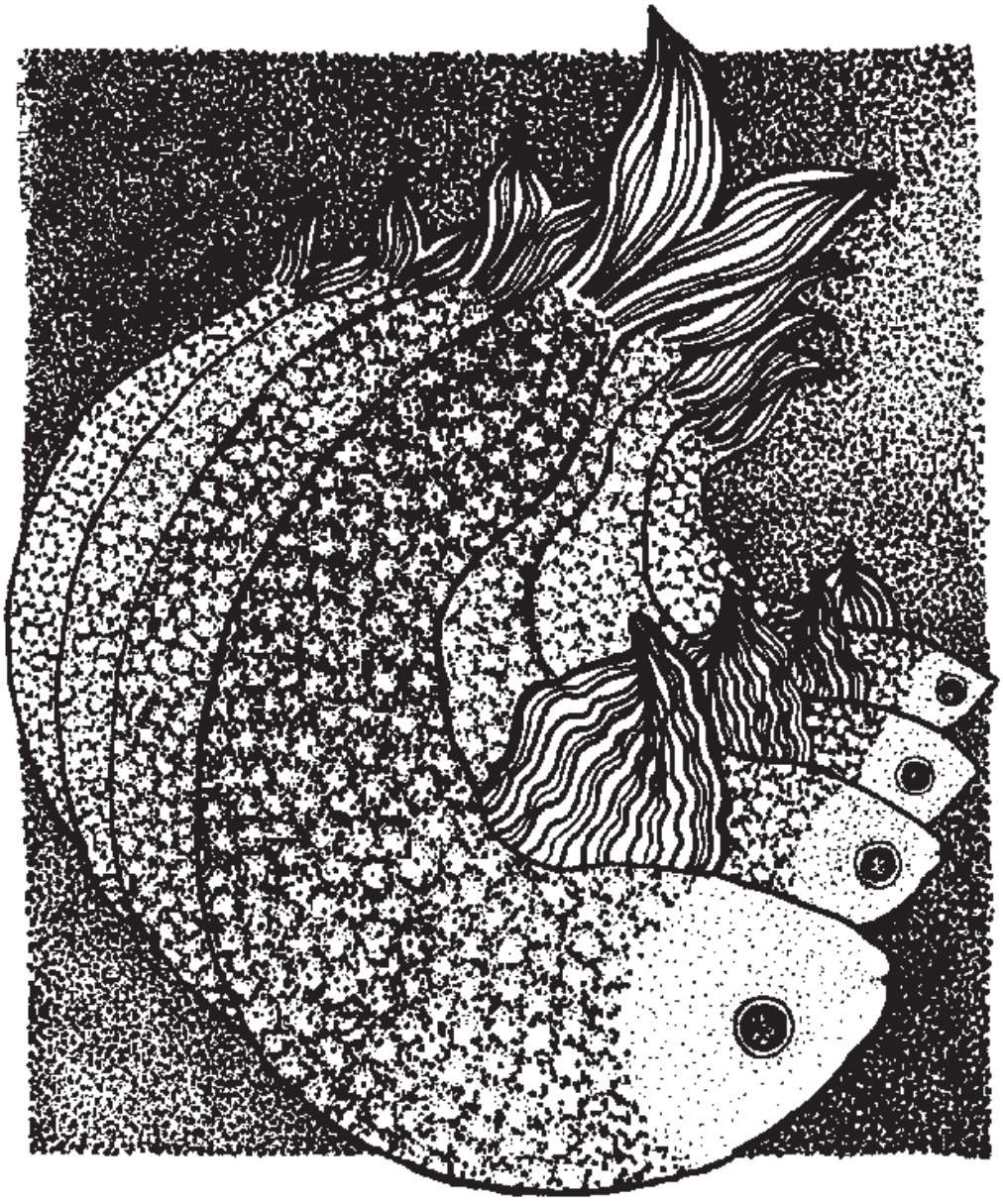
From Famine to Feast



Worship Resources for the Creative Church - Hunger Emphasis 2023

Sacred Seasons, *a series of worship packets with a peace and justice emphasis,*
from Seeds of Hope Publishers: 602 James Avenue; Waco, TX 76706 • 254/755-7745
seedseditor1@gmail.com • www.seedspublishers.org.

art by Kate Thomason

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.

From Famine to Feast

...in this worship packet:

art by Kate Thomason

Editorial Address

The Seeds of Hope ministry is housed by the community of faith at Seventh & James Baptist Church. Contact information: 602 James; Waco, TX 76706; 254/498-4997; seedseditor1@gmail.com; www.seedspublishers.org.

ISSN 0194-4495. Seeds of Hope, Inc., holds the 501(c)3 nonprofit tax status. All contributions above the subscription rate are fully tax-deductible.

A Word about This Packet

When we first discussed the theme for this Hunger Emphasis packet, we wanted to continue with the desert or wilderness theme with which we began this liturgical year. (The 2022 Advent /Christmastide theme was "A Bloom in the Desert," and the 2023 Lent/Eastertide theme was "Making a Way in the Wilderness.")

We also wanted to dedicate this packet to Skip Londos, a beloved founding member of the Seeds Council of Stewards and a crucial support for many years. Skip died earlier this year, leaving us heartbroken but determined to continue diligently working for peace and justice as he did.

Two of Skip's strongest passions were food security and earth care. Our team, at first, tried to make these two themes fit together—because they do. As Karen Turner says on page 22, liberation for the poor and liberation for the earth need to be understood as two sides of the same issue.

The team talked about the word "desert," encompassing food deserts in cities and the US countryside, and also deserts that span entire continents. We felt that we couldn't write about deserts without examining where we all are on this globe.

Meanwhile, our material insisted on diverging into two groups, so we divided the packet into two parts, "Feeding the Masses in the Desert" and "Making Rivers in the Desert."

Both parts include a liturgy, a sermon, communion elements and other resources. Part One starts on page 4, and Part Two starts on page 13.

You will see many offerings from our liturgical team, which includes Chip Wilson, minister of youth, family and community at Grace Lutheran Church in Peoria, AZ (and also a third-grade teacher at Maryvale Preparatory Academy); Guilherme Feitosa de Almeida from the Baylor University Department of Theatre Arts; Erin Conaway, pastor of Seventh & James Baptist Church in Waco, TX (which is houses the Seeds office); Ken Sehested, a founding Seeds editor and writer who lives in Ashville, NC; Scott Turner, youth minister at Seventh & James; and Alec Ylitalo, pastor at Richfield Christian Church in Waco. You will sometimes see their names, but their work is everywhere in this packet.

In addition to our regular team, we are delighted to include materials on creation care from Karen Turner, who serves on the Bishop's Committee on Creation Care in the Anglican Diocese of Toronto, ON; and from David Rensberger, a retired professor from the Interdenominational Theological Seminary in Atlanta, GA, who introduced the Season of Creation to his Mennonite congregation, also in Atlanta. We also include our annual statistics pages (plus a quiz), ably compiled by our summer 2023 intern, Joanna Hardy.

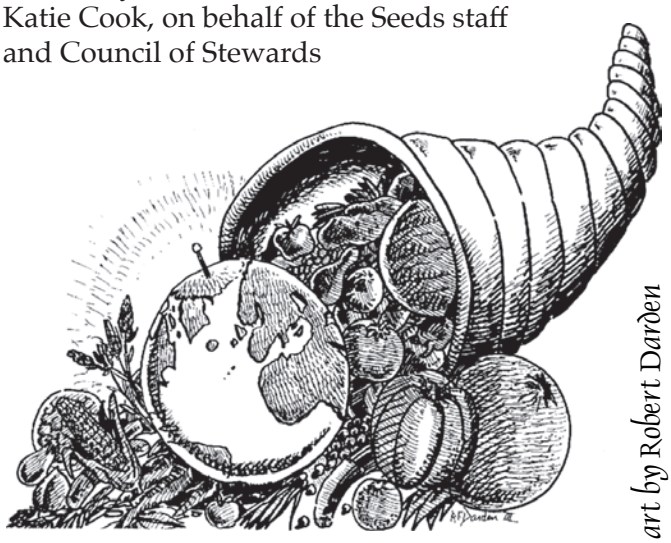
You will find images created by our amazing artists—Sally Lynn Askins (our resident artist), Peter Yuichi Clark, Rebecca Ward, Sharon Rollins, Robert Darden, Jesse Manning, Susan Smith, Audrey Cary Lange (a former intern) and several others. The cover art is by Kate Thomason, who was one of our very first interns in 1992.

We hope this art and these writings will be helpful as you create a meaningful Hunger Emphasis for your community. We also hope you will consider participating in some way in the Season of Creation, which is introduced by Karen and David on pages 22-27.

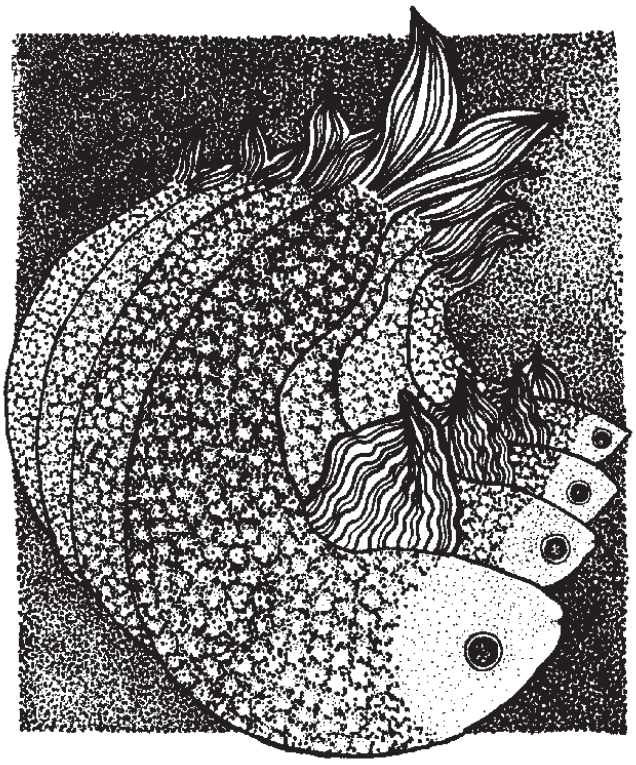
As always, we are deeply grateful for all of you who subscribe to *Sacred Seasons*, and who make use of these gifts in your worship and work. We are counting on you to adapt these contents to your own needs, resources and inclinations. We would love to hear about how you used them.

The contents of this packet are your congregation's to use freely and we want you to share them with others. May you find resources that will help us find a new way to care for creation and for God's hungry children.

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



art by Robert Darden



From Famine to Feast, Part One:

Feeding the Masses in the Desert

art by Kate Thomason

Feeding the Masses in the Desert

A Hunger Emphasis Liturgy

by the Seeds Liturgical Team

Call to Worship

Gracious God,
We come before you this morning with open hands
and open hearts.
We are your people because
you have forgiven us and welcomed us
into a kingdom that – although invisible –
enfolds us now.
We thank you for being **light**
even when we feel darkness will engulf us.
We thank you for being the **bread** that sustains us
as we strive to be your eyes and ears and
hands and feet in this world.
We thank you for being the truth that guides us
through the maze of false voices.
We thank you for being life and the source of
Good News of love for all people.
We thank you that what you require of us this day
is that we seek justice in all our ways,
that we seek to be merciful in every aspect
of our lives,
and that we walk humbly
with you beside us,
through our grief and in our joy.
We offer this prayer of thanksgiving and praise
in the name of Jesus our Lord. Amen.
–written by Viola Osborn

art by Melissa Storey/courtesy of Lake Shore Baptist Church

Hymn of Adoration

"Shadow and Substance"
Words and Music: Dan Damon
TWILIGHT
5.6.10.D.
The New Century Hymnal No. 398

Meditation of Preparation

Any religion that professes to be concerned with the souls of [human beings] and is not concerned with the slums that damn them, the economic conditions that strangle them, and the social condition that cripples them is a dry-as-dust religion.
–Martin Luther King, Jr.

Reading from the Hebrew Scriptures

Deuteronomy 15:7-11

Hymn from the Psalms

"Psalm 145"
Antiphon: Vérne de la Peña
The New Century Hymnal No. 718
As an alternative for the Psalm reading, see also the litany on page 7.

First Reading from the Acts of the Apostles
Acts 2:44-47

Second Reading from the Acts of the Apostles
Acts 4:32-3

Litany of Bread
ONE: Nourishing God, you ate bread with friends and multiplied it for five thousand people. You described your kingdom as yeast. You claimed for yourself the identity of bread. You gave your body to be broken for the world.

MANY: Bread of Life, give us a taste of tender bread from your table.

ONE: Often we eat our meals without smelling the aroma of fresh loaves leaving the oven. We buy flour to make our bread, but seldom walk the land that produced the grain, while many in the world still gather raw grains each day.

MANY: Bread of Life, give us a taste of tender bread from your table

ONE: We pull bread from a shelf, while others plant, pick and grind their harvest and shape the dough with their fingers literally touching their daily bread.

MANY: Bread of Life, give us a taste of tender bread from your table.

ONE: Move the deepest parts of our spirits to compassion for our brothers and sisters throughout this whole, wide earth who are praying for rain for their crops, buying and cooking only what their family needs for today, and waiting for the nourishment that will sustain them.

MANY: We are bound to them in our humanity and in our hunger for you. Bread of Life, give us a taste of tender bread from your table.

–adapted from *Prayers and Litanies for the Christian Seasons* by Sharlande Sledge

Song of Acclamation
"Break Thou the Bread of Life"
Words: Mary A. Lathbury & Alexander Groves
Music: William F. Sherwin
BREAD OF LIFE
6.4.6.4.D.
Celebrating Grace hymnal No. 35

Gospel Reading
Matthew 14:13-21

Children's Sermon
See "Helping People Feed Themselves" on page 8.

Song of Reflection
"A Chance to Earn Their Bread / Huapango del Pan"
Words and Music: Collective Creation
Red Crearte 2012
Hosanna! Ecumenical Songs for Justice & Peace No. 62

Sermon
See "Feeding the Masses in the Desert" on page 9.

Invitation to the Table
We welcome all to this table, the table of our Lord. As we gather at the table, let us remember that the ones with whom we share are the daughters and sons of God, and so, too, are the people outside these walls who need our help.

The Bread
The celebrant lifts the bread and says,
As we share this bread, we thank you, God, for our daily bread, for the food that delights and nourishes us and for the companionship that sustains us.

The celebrant breaks the bread and says,
On the night before his death, Jesus was at supper with his friends. He took bread from the table and blessed it, and gave thanks for it. Then he gave it to his friends, saying, "Take this and eat it, for it is my body." As we take this bread, we remember that he also said, "Whenever you give bread to the least of my brothers and sisters, you have given it to me."

The Cup
The celebrant lifts the cup and says,
We thank, you, God for the cup that quenches our thirst and for the Living Water with which you surprise and enrich and transform our lives.

The celebrant pours the cup and says,
On the night before his death, Jesus also took a cup of wine from the table; and when he had given thanks, he gave it his friends, and said, "Drink this, all of you." In drinking from this cup, we remem-

ber that he also said, "Whenever you give something to my brothers and sisters to drink, you have also quenched my thirst."

Communion

For additional hymns for the table, we suggest these:

"Jesu, Jesu, Fill Us with Your Love"
Words: Tom Colvin
Music: Ghanaian Folk Song, arr. Jane Marshall
CHEREPONI, Irregular Meter with Refrain
The New Century Hymnal
No. 498

"Haitian Kyrie/Feuilles-oh"
Words and Music: Haitian Traditional Hymn, adapt. Andrew Donaldson
Hosanna! Ecumenical Songs for Justice & Peace No. 67

Communion blessing

Giving God, bless all who have gathered around this table. May we know the fullness of your presence at every meal and in all our sharing times. Help us to remember to be the oasis for your children who hunger in the deserts of this world. Amen.

Meditation of Commitment

Christ, instead of being the center of our lives, has become a matter for the Church.... To the nineteenth and twentieth century mind religion plays the part of the so-called "Sunday-room." ...We do not understand it when we allot it merely a province of our mental life.... The religion of Christ is not the tidbit that follows the bread, but it is the bread itself, or it is nothing.
–Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Hymn of Response

"Pray for the Wilderness"
Words: Dan Damon
Music: Lee Yu San
WILDERNESS
10.10.10.10.
The New Century Hymnal No. 557

Benediction

O God of abundance, you feed us every day. Rise in us now, make us into your bread, that we may share your gifts with a hungry world, and join in love with all people, through Jesus Christ our Lord.
—Sara Miles, *Take This Bread*

Heaven's Delight and Earth's Repose

by Ken Sehested

(An alternative reading of the Psalm for the liturgy on page 6, inspired by Psalm 15)

ONE: Worthy, worthy the One who conceived the earth and gave birth to bears and basil and beatitudes alike.

MANY: We extol you, Heaven's Delight and Earth's Repose!

ONE: Oh, children of Christ's embrace, even when trembling abounds, say aloud: God is worth the trouble!

MANY: The Beloved is abundantly good, overflowing with mercy, glacially slow to anger, drawing near to every listening ear.

ONE: So now, every hill and habitation, every honey bee and human heart, rejoice and give thanks. For the Consort of Mary stands ready, eager to satisfy every creaturely desire.

MANY: Worthy, worthy the One that inspires compassion, Who disarms the heart and confuses the tongues of empire. We listen for that Voice!

–Ken Sehested was one of the founding editors of the Seeds ministry in Decatur, GA. He is now a member of the Seeds Board of Advisors and the Sacred Seasons *liturgical team. He was the founding director of the Baptist Peace Fellowship of North America. He is the curator for the online journal Prayer&Politiks.*

Helping People Feed Themselves:

A Children's Sermon

by Katie Cook

This activity should work either in a children's time during worship, or during a church school session. Before the service or session, set up a table and two chairs in the area where you will tell the children's story. You will need a loaf of bread, some twine, and a pair of strong scissors. Before the story, place the loaf where the children can see it, but not on the table.

Also beforehand, choose two volunteers from an older group (perhaps the youth) and enlist them for the activity. You may need them to help guide the children in discussion. When the activity begins, ask them to sit at the table, and tie their hands and arms so that they cannot reach anything on the table. You might choose to get the children to help tie them.

Then say to the group, "Justin and Caitlin are hungry. We want to see that they get something to eat. Now, is there any food for them here?"

Hopefully, the children will see the loaf of bread and suggest that you give it to your volunteers. You may have to gently guide the discussion, or let "Justin" or "Caitlin" mention it. (Try to give the children plenty of opportunity to come up with the answers themselves.) When the children are aware of the loaf and agree that it should be given to the two, ask one of the children to place the loaf on the table. Then say, "We have found something for you to eat, Justin and Caitlin. Now you may eat."

With any luck, someone will point out that they can't eat because their hands are tied. You might instruct your volunteers to wait a moment and then say something to that effect, if the children don't suggest it. Then tear off a piece from the loaf and place some bread in the mouths of your volunteers. You might ask a couple of the children to do the same. (Make sure it's someone you know will be gentle.) "Is that better?" you might ask. "Have we done everything we can do to help them eat?"

Again, hopefully, someone will suggest that they could feed themselves if you untied them. If no one thinks of this, get the scissors out and say, "What if we got them out of this twine? Then they would be able to feed themselves." Then cut them loose.

art by Susan Smith

As Justin and Caitlin proceed to feed themselves, briefly explain to the children that these two are like many of the world's hungry people; they like to be able to feed themselves, and they know how. But many kinds of problems keep them from doing it. Maybe they don't have enough money to buy seeds. Maybe they don't have access to land to grow their own food, or to a market where they can sell it. Maybe they need a well to water their crops. Maybe they need a farm animal to help with plowing or to provide milk or eggs.

Explain to the children that, just like with Justin and Caitlin, the best way to help hungry people is to help in such a way that they can help themselves. You might want to mention some of the ways your congregation already does this. You might suggest that the children give their own money to help someone in this way. Check out the 40-day calendar connected to this packet for ideas.

—The basic idea for this children's story came from a Thanksgiving resource published by the Sharing Way office of Canadian Baptist Ministries in Mississauga, Ontario.

Feeding the Masses in the Desert

A Hunger Emphasis Sermon

by Chip Wilson

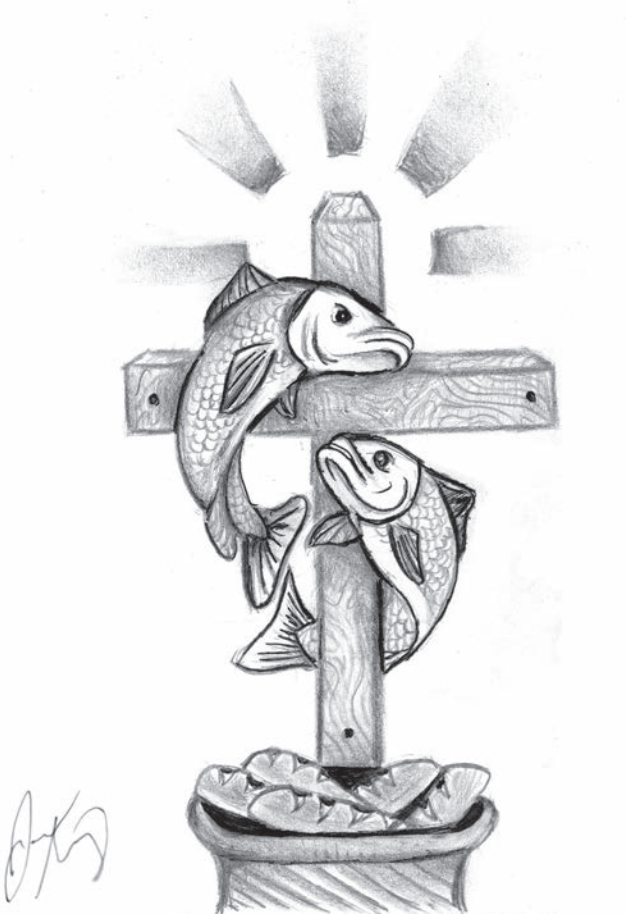
Text: Matthew 14:13-21

Now when Jesus heard this, he withdrew from there in a boat to a deserted place by himself. But when the crowds heard it, they followed him on foot from the towns. When he went ashore, he saw a great crowd, and he had compassion for them and cured their sick. When it was evening, the disciples came to him and said, "This is a deserted place, and the hour is now late; send the crowds away so that they may go into the villages and buy food for themselves." Jesus said to them, "They need not go away; you give them something to eat." They replied, "We have nothing here but five loaves and two fish." And he said, "Bring them here to me." Then he ordered the crowds to sit down on the grass. Taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven and blessed and broke the loaves and gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the crowds. And all ate and were filled, and they took up what was left over of the broken pieces, twelve baskets full. And those who ate were about five thousand men, besides women and children.

> For these places, these moments where abundance is lacking, are opportunities to do God's work in the world.

In the desert, scarcity abounds. One traversing these desolate parts of the world would struggle to find enough sustenance to sustain them for their journey. The only hope for one in need is an oasis with water to quench their thirst and food to nourish them. However, these points of grace are few and far between. There is no promise that the path one travels will lead them to this place of grace, yet those who hunger and thirst must do everything they can to make it to these oases; these points of grace. Without them, they will surely perish. Therefore the only hope for life in a desolate world is the grace of an oasis. This grace is the ultimate thirst quencher, hunger eradicator, and energizer for the journey ahead.

In this gospel, we find Jesus followed by the masses into a deserted place. Soon, this crowd began to hunger in this wilderness. There was no oasis to be found; yet, rather than turn them away, Jesus pushes his disciples to somehow find the sustenance to satisfy this hungry crowd. They scour the surrounding land and only come up with the minuscule two fish and five loaves of bread. We know they pondered how these fish and loaves could ever be enough to fill the masses; yet, they



art by Jesse Manning

place them in Jesus' hands. Somehow the minuscule meal is multiplied. Somehow the many of the multitude are nourished. Somehow after all are fed there are still leftovers. The scarcity of this deserted place was no match for the abundance of God.

Far too often we look at the scarcity in the world and fear what will happen next. We think that these limitations of food and resources should cause us to retreat or hoard rather than to stay and share. We fear that the lack of energy and resources will cause us to fail and leave the masses hungering and thirsting for more.

> In the deserted places we are not called to retreat or send the hungry way. Rather, we are called to act. Jesus pushed his disciples to give the hungry something to eat that day in the wilderness and is pushing us to do the very same.

We forget there is no scarcity in the hands of God. We forget that the one who created the world is faithful to create abundance out of scarcity. The one to whom belongs the earth and the fullness therein is faithful to shower us with blessings from above. The one who formed and shaped humanity is faithful and just to feed us until we want no more. Paul reminds us, in his letter to the church in Philippi, that God will supply all our needs according to his riches in glory.

Therefore, if we know God will supply, why do we fear? If we know God can provide, why do we worry? If we know that in God's hands all things are possible, then why do we want to retreat from the desolate places of the world? Instead, these places, these moments where abundance is lacking, are opportunities to do God's work in the world.

In the deserted places we are not called to retreat or send the hungry away. Rather, we are called to act. Jesus pushed his disciples to give the hungry something to eat that day in the wilderness and is pushing us to do the very same. We are called to act when people around us are in need.

There are far too many who wander the wilderness of life thirsting for water, hungering for food, hoping for some sort of miracle. There are those for whom food is not a commodity they can afford; they scrape by on as little as possible. There are those for whom clean water is inaccessible and they are forced to go through life constantly thirsting for more. There are those who live in our own cities but are unable to get the food and water they need because they lack transportation. For these, God is calling us to act. God is calling us to not send them away. To these, God is calling us to be an oasis of grace in the desert.

God does not want God's children to suffer. God does not intend for God's children to hunger or thirst. Rather, God promised sustenance for the journey. God did this with the Children of Israel through manna from heaven and water from a rock. God did this with the widow of Zarapheth through a never-ending source of oil and meal. God did this for the masses in the wilderness through the multiplying of fish and bread. And God intends the same for God's children today through the sharing of our abundance with those in need. We are the oases of grace in a deserted world. Those who are in need of water must be able to come to us and have their thirsts quenched. Those who are in need of food must be able to come to us and have their hunger eradicated. Those who search for life giving sustenance must be able to come to us and have their needs supplied. Because that is our duty, that is our mission, that is our call. In Jesus' name, amen.

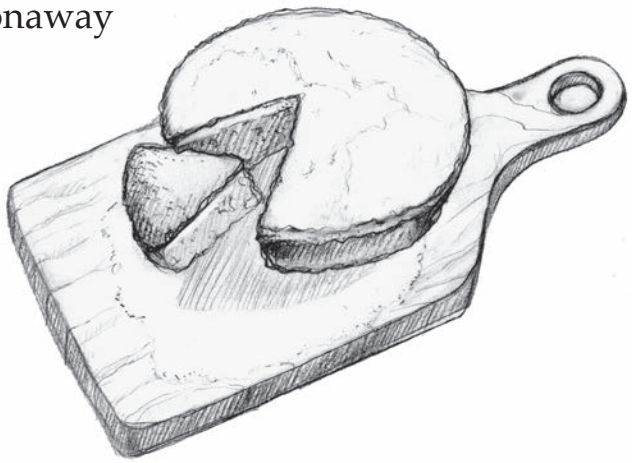
–Chip Wilson, the minister of youth and of family and community at Grace Lutheran Church in Peoria, AZ, also teaches third graders at Maryvale Preparatory Academy there. At this writing, he is a postulant in the Order of Ecumenical Franciscans.

Make us worthy, Lord,
to serve those
throughout the world
who live and die
in poverty or hunger.
Give them,
through our hands,
this day their daily bread;
and by our
understanding love,
give peace and joy.
–Mother Teresa of Calcutta

art by Audrey Cary Lange

Thoughts on Eating Together

by Erin Conaway



art by Sally Lynn Askins

On that mountainside, during that meal, there was no rich or poor. They all ate the same meal. There were no seats of honor or dishonor at this meal. The mountain had room enough for everyone. No one was served the scraps; they all ate from the hand of Jesus. This meal they shared together had to be one they would remember for the rest of their lives. Looking into the eyes of Christ as he handed them bread and fish, and then looking into the eyes of the people around them…that had to stay with them for their entire lives.

What did they talk about over dinner that evening? Where did their conversations go as they shared this meal together? In what ways were they formed and shaped and molded as they put a piece of barley loaf into their mouths and tasted its plain richness? How did they feel as they chewed the fish and listened to the person next to them? They shared a meal together, and I suspect that meal taught them as much as all of the healings they witnessed and the stories they heard.

Sharing meals together forms us. When we eat with one another, it shapes our identities one bit at a time. Every shared piece of bread fashions our character and draws us closer to the person at the other end of the loaf. On the mountainside that day, there were many miraculous occurrences, and one of them we are empowered to repeat all the time: eating together.

Every meal shared with another person is a part of this miracle—they all have the same potential to knead together our hearts and minds and lives and to continue to feed our souls. Every meal, regardless of the contents or the location, can bring about the miracle of this feeding by the grace of God who is present when we break bread together.

–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 Next New Thing

The food pantry has always been communion:
a Great Thanksgiving for a great love.
It's embodied the glorious, disturbing reality
at the very center of our church:
Jesus' Table, where all are welcomed
without exception.
If we stand together at that Table
and receive the next new thing
God is making for us and through us,
what will happen?

—Sara Miles

art by Rebecca S. Ward

Quotes, Poems & Pithy Sayings,

Part One

One night our youth minister shared with us a new perspective on what might have happened in the story of the feeding of the multitude. It is possible, she said, that some of the people watching the boy that day were so moved that they shared their own fish and bread that they had brought. To me, that is no less of a miracle than if the five thousand had been physically fed by the few loaves and fish. Maybe instead of sitting around waiting for the miracle, we should begin the miracle.
–Corley Sims, "Preaching the Gospel without Words," *Sacred Seasons*, Hunger Emphasis 2004

Having seen [glimpses of God], people of varying cultures turn—for reasons unknown, and by a mechanism unimaginable—to aiding and serving the afflicted and poor.
–Annie Dillard, *For the Time Being*

It's audacious work, this taking of communion
bread and drink.
It's audacious work, this praying
"Give us this day our daily bread."
It's audacious work, and blessed work,
that we never do alone.
–M. Douglas Donley, "The Great Hunger,"

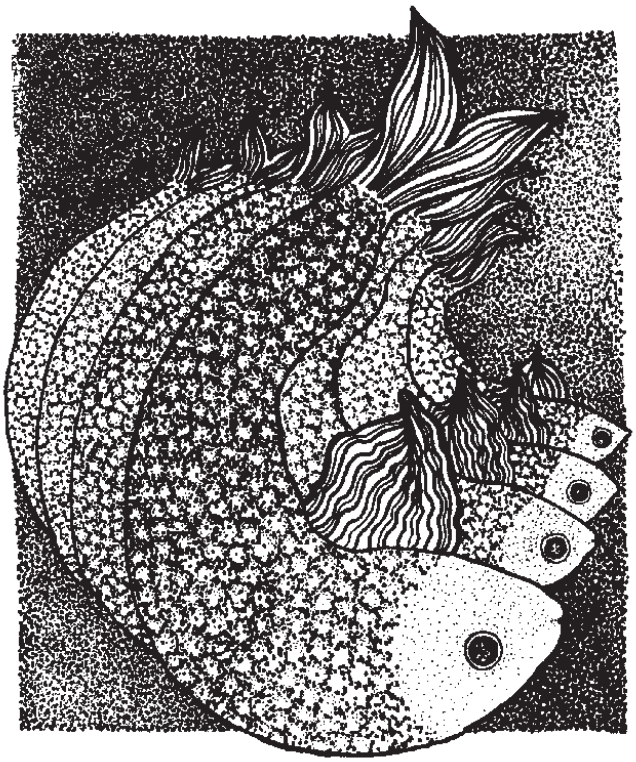
It is not enough to say it, to repeat it, to hear it sing in our hearts, as in the great chorus of the last movement of the Ninth Symphony of Beethoven. It must be translated into act, into flesh and blood, into our eating and drinking and working and loving.
–Dorothy Day

The struggle against hunger is not fought in one cataclysmic battle. There is no "magic bullet" and no hunger monster to slay. Pushing back hunger is more like reclaiming the sea. Just as dikes, pumps and time draw new boundaries between saltwater and farmland, hunger is defeated by a well here, a health clinic there, an agricultural cooperative, a new piece of legislation, a soup kitchen down the block. Like the dikes, all can be lost quickly when we forget simple, recurring, unglamorous tasks. There's a lot of useful work to be done….
–Gary Gunderson, Seeds founding editor

Start by doing what's necessary; then do what's possible; and suddenly you are doing the impossible.
–St. Francis of Assisi

art by Sally Lynn Askins

But this is my belief:
that at the heart of Christianity
is a power that continues to speak to
and transform us.
As I found to my surprise and alarm,
it could speak even to me:
not in the sappy, Jesus-and-cookies tone
of mild-mannered liberal Christianity,
or the blustering, blaming hellfire
of the religious right.
What I heard, and continue to hear,
is a voice that can crack
religious and political convictions open,
that advocates for the least qualified,
least official, least likely;
that upsets the established order
and makes a joke of certainty.
It proclaims against reason
that the hungry will be fed,
that those cast down will be raised up,
and that all things,
including my own failures,
are being made new.
It offers food without exception
to the worthy and unworthy,
the screwed-up and pious,
and then commands everyone to do the same.
–Sara Miles,
Take This Bread



From Famine to Feast, Part Two:
Making Rivers in the Desert

art by Kate Thomason

Making Rivers in the Desert

A Creation Care Liturgy

by the Seeds Liturgical Team

I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert.
–Isaiah 43:19

Call to Worship

ONE: We have faith in One God,
One Source of all life.
MANY: One Ground of the whole earth,
with all its creatures.

ONE: And thus we believe
in the goodness of earth's life,
MANY: In the innate worth of all its dependents,
and in human partnership with nature.

ONE: And thus we believe
that in Christ we have been shown
the special role of the human race:
MANY: To bear God's likeness
in working and caring for the earth,

art by Sally Lynn Askins

ONE: In seeking to understand its mysteries
and powers, in gently working with these powers
MANY: For the well-being of all children of the earth.

ONE: And thus we believe
MANY: That God's spirit will lead us to sensitivity
and communion with earth's life,

ONE: To that meek, unselfish and compassionate
lifestyle by which the earth is inherited in peace,
MANY: By which its life is transformed for all creatures to share justly in its bounty.

ALL: With God's help, let us make it so. Amen.
–adapted from "Caring for the Earth," a responsive reading, Chalice Hymnal *No. 694)*

Meditation of Preparation

Environmental degradation, warfare and poverty are all part of a sinful pathology that sees us as separate beings. Salvation is never just about our own personal, individual salvation; it's about the salvation of us all. It's about saving the world and being a part of the solution.
–Douglas M. Donley, "Children of the Earth"

Hymn

"Mine Are the Hungry"
WORDS: Kenneth I. Morse (1974)
MUSIC: Wilbur E. Brumbaugh (1974)
TUNE: MINE ARE THE HUNGRY 11.11.11.11.
The Brethren Songbook No. 33

Reading from the Hebrew Scriptures

Genesis 1:26-31

Reading from the Psalms

Psalm 19:1-6

Hymn
"God of the Poor"
WORDS and MUSIC: Graham Kendrick (1993)
CCLI Song No. 1236690
Reading from the Revelation
Revelation 21:1-7

Gospel Reading
Luke 12:22-24

Epistle Reading
Romans 8:18-25

Hymn
"Touch the Earth Lightly"
WORDS: Shirley Erena Murray (1992)
MUSIC: Swee Hong Lim (2005)
TUNE: AI HU 10.10.10.10.
*Lift Up Your He*arts No. 18

Sermon
See "Creation is Groaning" on page 18.

Communion
See the communion service on page 16.

Litany of Commitment for Three Readers

Note: The litany below could be used with a ritual of water. If you wish to do this, prepare a bowl of water and a towel to place on the altar or at various stations around the worship area. At this point in the service, ask congregants to come forward and form a line. Each could dip their hand in the water, touching the next person's forehead, saying, "May God send us forth as healers of creation." Musicians could play quiet music, perhaps one of the hymns on these pages, as congregants anoint one another. You could have more than one line if your group is large. If so, you will need a bowl and towel for each line. This could also be used as a sending ritual.

FIRST READER: O God, you made for us an earth full of beauty and wonder and abundance, and we have taken it for granted.

SECOND READER: Let all who thirst, let them come, let them come to the water.

THIRD READER: We've been unfaithful stewards. We have exploited your gift. We have torn apart the Beloved Community of creation.

SECOND READER: Let all who thirst, let them come, let them come to the water.

FIRST READER: We have destroyed or hoarded the resources of the earth. Many of your children don't have clean water or enough food, while many of us have more than we need.

THIRD READER: Many of your children thirst for clean water while many of us thirst for living water. We all thirst for justice.

SECOND READER: Let all who thirst, let them come, let them come to the water.

FIRST READER: Bring us to the living water today, and send us forth as healers of your creation. Show us how to make justice roll down like waters.

THIRD READER: In the name of your Son, who spoke to us of living water.

ALL: Amen.

See also "Litany of Lament" on page 25.

Meditation of Commitment
To dream about painting and not also to work at it doesn't ever bring about a painting. To dream about creating a new world that is not teetering on the edge of total destruction and not to work at it doesn't make a peaceful world. So it is important that we are creative people working daily on the greater picture as well, bringing to it all our skills of imagination and making.
–Corita Kent, *Learning by Heart*

Hymn of Commitment
"Restless Weaver, Ever Spinning"
WORDS: O. I. Cricket Harrison (1988)
MUSIC: B. F. White (1844)
TUNE: BEACH SPRING 8.7.8.7.D.
Chalice Hymnal No. 658

Benediction
God, where your earth is violated, desecrated, destroyed and defamed, give us the strength, the will, the heart to go there, physically, mentally, spiritually and prayerfully to help mend what is broken. Make our hands and feet the bearers of good news, the messengers of beauty, the restorers of peace.
–Claire McKeever Burgett, "Prayer to the Creator"

Note: For music, we recommend Missa Gaia *(Earth Mass) by Paul Winter. This is an album whose music is still used by St. John the Divine Episcopal Church in New York City for the Feast of St. Francis and Blessing of the Animals. The "Kyrie" is especially appropriate for this service.*

A Service of Communion

Editor's note: This service is excerpted and adapted from a liturgy created for the Order of Ecumenical Franciscans, originally written by S. Baldwin and Brendan Shaffer, OEF, and compiled by Louis Cantor, OEF. It has been organized for two celebrants but can be done with any number of leaders or readers.

Greeting of Peace

FIRST CELEBRANT: Lord, make us instruments of your peace.

(To the many) The peace of the Lord be always with you.

MANY: And also with you.

The congregants share the sign of Peace together.

The Great Thanksgiving

FIRST CELEBRANT: All is ready!

MANY: Let us join in the Feast!

SECOND CELEBRANT: God be with you.

MANY: And in you!

FIRST CELEBRANT: Let us give thanks and praise.

MANY: We give our thanks and praise!

FIRST CELEBRANT: Blessed are you, Supreme Artisan and Creator of all that was, that is and is yet to be. Out of your desire to create, all that we know has come to be: the vast expanse of space, spiraling galaxies, supernovas, stars and suns, moons and planets—including Mother Earth, our beloved island home.

SECOND CELEBRANT: We gather to share and celebrate the stories of our origins: ancient stories told by our ancestors, prophets, mystics and teachers. We gather to share exciting new stories from scientists, cosmologists and theologians. We gather to remember our role as caretakers to Mother Earth. As we hear them together, the fire of Sophia, the spirit of Wisdom, is rekindled deep within us, renewing hope and strength for our work of creation care, and for the care of all of the Earth's peoples.

FIRST CELEBRANT: Gifted with voice and vision, we join with the angels and archangels and all cosmic relations, as this, our song, flows through the universe:

ALL: Holy, holy, holy, Creator of power and might. Earth and Sky are glorious. Hosanna in the highest!

FIRST CELEBRANT: We thank you, O God of creation, for all your wondrous gifts. We thank you for the lives and teaching of the children of the Earth, including Jesus of Nazareth and the saints through the ages who taught us to give ourselves as nourishment one for another.

SECOND CELEBRANT: Their voices echo in our remembering, in harmony with those from every tradition and culture—each calling us in their own way to metanoia: the change of heart necessary for us to perceive the awesome power of God incarnate in all the creatures of the universe; the change of ways necessary for us to care for the planet on which we live, and all her creatures.

Sharing of the Elements

Communion elements are brought forth and those helping to serve come to the altar.

FIRST CELEBRANT: One the night before Jesus of Nazareth was to be executed for challenging au-

art by Peter Yuichi Clark

thority and teaching new ways, he gathered with his closest friends: women, men and children, to share a ritual meal.

SECOND CELEBRANT: As a symbolic act of his undying friendship for them, he took bread, as was his cultural custom, gave thanks, broke it, and said: "Take and eat this bread which the Earth has given. Be nourished by it as I have nourished you with my life. Share it always and remember me.

Bread is shared with the greeting, "Be nourished by this bread of life."

FIRST CELEBRANT: At the end of the meal, he took the cup of wine which had been prepared, the usual Cup of Blessing, gave thanks again, and said: "This is the life-blood of the New Creation, which is poured out for you and for the Earth. Whenever you drink it, be refreshed and remember me."

The cup is shared with the greeting, "Be refreshed by the blood of the New Creation."

SECOND CELEBRANT: This simple act of love, of passion and undying friendship, has continued through the ages, connecting the past with the present, and the present with the future. It reminds us of our bond with all our cosmic relations: the friends we know and love, here and now, and with whom we will remain connected into the realm outside time.

FIRST CELEBRANT: May the Sophia, the Spirit of Wisdom who broods over the universe, be present in each of us through this timeless cosmic act—the ritual sharing of food and drink.

ALL: May it be so!

SECOND CELEBRANT: May we proclaim, through this sharing, our willingness to build a community of love with all created beings. May we be the holy people calls us to be.

ALL: May it be so!

FIRST CELEBRANT: May the power of Wisdom free us with fruits of plenty and challenge us to live liberally for all creation.

ALL: May it be so!

SECOND CELEBRANT: Come with us, Spirit of Wisdom, to our streets, to our homes, to our places of labor and leisure, so that whether we are gathered or scattered, we may be the servant community of Jesus of Nazareth, in whose name we rejoice to pray:

ALL: O Birther! Father-Mother of the Cosmos,
focus your light within us; make it useful.
Create your reign of unity now.
Your one desire then acts with ours,
in all light, so in all forms.
Grant what we need each day in bread
and insight.
Loose the cords of the mistakes binding us,
as we release the strands we hold
of others' guilt.
Do not let surface things delude us,
but free us from what holds us back.
From you is born all ruling,
the power and life to do,
The song that beautifies all,
from age to age it renews.
Truly—power to these statements—
may they be the ground
from which all my actions grow.
(from the Aramaic Lord's Prayer by Neil-Douglas Klotz)

FIRST CELEBRANT: Go in peace to live in such a way that healing will abound among the peoples and creatures of this world. ■

art by Rebecca S. Ward

But ask the animals,
and they will teach you;
the birds of the air, and they will tell you;
ask the plants of the earth, and they will teach
you; and the fish of the sea will declare to you.
Who among all these does not know
that the hand of the Lord has done this?
In God's hand is the life of every living thing
and the breath of every human being.
–Job 12:7-10

Creation is Groaning

A Sermon by Erin Conaway

Text: Romans 8:12-25

"Unless…unless someone like you cares a whole awful lot, nothing is going to get better. It's not." Old man Once-ler told that to the little boy who heard his terrible tale of the Lorax.

As you probably know, *The Lorax* is a book by Dr. Seuss, but you might not know it was his personal favorite of all of his books. He once said, "*The Lorax* came out of me being angry. The ecology books I'd read were dull…. In *The Lorax* I was out to attack what I think are evil things and let the chips fall where they might."[1]

The Lorax, the little character who had a big, beautiful "Ted Lasso" mustache—before *Ted Lasso* or even *Magnum P.I.* (and for those keeping score at home that's a double *Lasso* reference). Our little mustached prophet speaks for the trees because as he says, "The trees have no tongue." He also speaks for the Brown Bar-ba-loots, the Swomee-Swans, and the Humming-Fish who all had to leave because their habitat was destroyed by the wonton greed of unchecked, industrial capitalism.

art by Sally Lynn Askins

You see, the Once-lers cut down every single Truffula Tree in the land…because they just had to keep biggering their company and the profits they were reaping. Then there was nothing left, no Truffula trees, no Brown Bar-ba-loots, no Swomee-Swans, no Humming-Fish, no lake, no clean air, just a wasteland, a tombstone of a once Edenic forest. Old man Once-ler lives alone in his dilapidated house—only speaking to people during the month of August, and then only through a Whisper-maphone because he's too humiliated to let anyone see him.

> Sure, we will adapt where we can, and we are inventive, especially under duress, so I'm guessing life will go on. It will just look different than it does today. But why are we talking about this in church?

He's learned his lesson, though; he tells the little boy to take the last Truffula Tree seed and plant it and protect it that the forest might be reborn. The Lorax left only a stack of rocks and one word: *Unless*. Old man Once-ler spent years thinking about this and finally told the boy the rest of the message: "Unless someone like you cares a whole awful lot, nothing is going to get better. It's not."

I can't imagine that you need any more information about the state of our world and the climate crisis than the fact that it feels like it is melting us along with the polar icecaps. NASA said June 2023 was the hottest June on record for our world.[2] July was the same.

Phoenix, AZ, now has a heat officer who has been at his job for three years. He said it's not unlike what people in the North do during the winter when they have months of snow and freezing temperatures. You have to change your routines and lifestyle to match the climate.

He said instead of scraping and shoveling snow off of their cars, people in Phoenix have to cover their steering wheels and take great care not to touch the metal on their seatbelts or anything else metal in their cars until they've had a chance to cool down. In the winter snow, you have to protect your pets with coats and shoes on walks. Pets also need shoes to walk in Phoenix. Not coats, though. He says we just adapt.

I believe one of the things the Holy Spirit does for us as we learn to better hear the voice of the Spirit, is to tune us in to the groaning of Creation and make that groaning important enough in our lives that we act in empathy and compassion for Creation.

I had this vision of our subdivisions starting to look like The Shire in The Lord of the Rings. The Hobbits built mounds over their houses. I assume we will eventually have to do something similar to keep the heat from cooking us inside of our own homes. In the North, they all have basements because the pipes have to be that low to keep from freezing. How long will it be until we in the South also need basements because that's the only part of our homes we will be able to inhabit during the summer months. And we'll need our pipes that deep to keep the water from coming into our homes boiling hot.

Sure, we will adapt where we can, and we are inventive, especially under duress, so I'm guessing life will go on. It will just look different than it does today. But why are we talking about this in church?

Because Creation care ought to be a vital part of our lives of faith. There is some debate among scholars as to whether or not Paul is talking, in our text from the epistles, about Genesis 3 and the fall of humanity and the curse of the land. I tend to think he's not. I read this as a partnership God intended between humanity and the rest of Creation.

Paul writes:

> *I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory about to be revealed to us. For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God, for the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its enslavement to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning together as it suffers together the pains of labor, and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies.*

We are essentially in the same boat…not where or what we were created to be, but on a path to get there through God's love in Christ. Our bodies await. They groan inwardly, longing, aching for their redemption. Creation, too, is groaning to give birth to a greater world—a world where the air and water are clean; where the trees breathe life into the planet from their forest communities; where humanity and Creation live together in peace and prosperity and not at war. I think Paul is saying we are in this together—temporarily struggling with these bodies that decay in a world that is increasingly suffering from our abuse and neglect. Creation is groaning for freedom—just like us—longing to be free from these feeble tents in which we live and move and have our being.

It seems to me, one of the markers of a life of faith is an increasing awareness and compassion towards Creation. As we become more like Christ in this journey of sanctification, we assume one of the things that will start to break through is our willingness to love others sacrificially, as Christ loves us. The longer we are practicing Christians, the more selfless we should be.

In the same way, I think the longer we are practicing Christians, the more environmentally conscious and compassionate we should become. Part of our sanctification includes this movement in the direction of Creation Care. I believe one of the things the Holy Spirit does for us as we learn to better hear the voice of the Spirit, is to tune us in to the groaning of Creation and make that groaning important enough in our lives that we act in empathy and compassion for Creation.

You see this in the lives of so many of our saints. They not only are drawn to the least among us in selfless and sacrificial love; they are also aware and attuned to the cries of Creation. Mother Teresa once said, "I only feel angry when I see waste. When I see people throwing away things we could use."

Fred Rogers talked about Creation in these words: "If you were a fish, you wouldn't want somebody dumping garbage into your home. Every fish is fancy in one way or another. There is something fancy about every creature in the world. Each person, each fish, each animal, each bird, each living creature."[3]

Creation care must be a part of our life of faith. This is an enormous gap in faith for the Church in America. We should be leading the way in caring for the things we believe are a part of God's work and artistry in the world, but instead we are antagonistic to ecological efforts of care and concern. Or worse; we are just silent.

Fancy—such a delightful adjective for all of us and for all of God's critters. Of course, Saint Francis knew this connection and heard the groan of Creation perhaps as well as anyone ever has. He started using terms of siblinghood to talk about Creation: Brother Sun, Sisters Moon and Stars, Brothers Fire and Wind and Air. St. Francis realized we are called to live in harmony, not enmity, with all of Creation. We are all a part of the work of God's hand. We can't treat God's Creation as something to be used and abused and then discarded. We are on a shared journey towards full and complete redemption.

One of the things I think we see well is that eternity in Christ is to begin now. We don't wait until we die to start living like a Christian—we're supposed to do that now. Over and over again, Christ and the prophets and the epistle writers emphasize our actions over our beliefs. Live like you believe in God's love and mercy and grace for everyone.

In the same way, we shouldn't have this attitude that we can do whatever we want to Creation now, since God will fix it in the future. That's the same as saying, "I can sin all I want, God's gonna fix me in the future." We're supposed to be working on that right now—here in this moment and in all of the moments between now and when God calls us home.

Creation care must be a part of our life of faith. This is an enormous gap in faith for the Church in America. We should be leading the way in caring for the things we believe are a part of God's work and artistry in the world, but instead we are antagonistic to ecological efforts of care and concern. Or worse; we are just silent.

Listen, and hear the groaning of Creation just as much as you hear the groaning of your own soul and the souls of your neighbors. Respond in every way you can to care for this beautiful world in which we live. I know you can't fix it by yourself; none of us can. But we must do our part and encourage others to join in and do their part as well. Plant the seeds God has entrusted to you. Tend the vines in your part of the world. Be gentle and frugal with the world when you can. Pray for God to let you hear the groaning of Creation and give you something to do to help.

"Unless someone like you cares a whole awful lot, nothing is going to get better. It's not." 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.*

Endnotes

1. Lisa Lebduska, "Rethinking Human Need: Seuss's *The Lorax*," *Children's Literature Association Quarterly*, vol. 19 no. 4, 1994, p. 170-176.
2. "NASA Finds June 2023 Hottest on Record," National Aeronautics and Space Administration, *Global Climate Change* website (climate.nasa.gov).
3. From Plant with Purpose (plantwithpurpose.org/startcaring).

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

A Creation Caretakers Activity for Youth

by Scott Turner

Editor's note: Scott designed this activity to take place around Earth Day (April 22), but it could be adapted for the Season of Creation, which starts September 1 and ends on October 4, the Feast of St. Francis. (For more information about this growing movement, see page 26.) The best time to plant pothos plants, among others, is spring and fall, so the activity would work well for either time.

We learn in Genesis that we are supposed to be caretakers of God's good creation. Creation nourishes us, houses us and provides endless beauty for us. Surely the least we could do is take care of it, right?

In our modern world, it can probably feel like nature and creation are the farthest things from us. We live in brick houses with synthetic floors and carpets under us. We eat processed foods and entertain ourselves in fantasy worlds on screens. How are we supposed to get back to our roots? And I mean literal roots….

This activity will take some extra time on the part of the youth leader. It took me around eight weeks, but it doesn't have to take that long. The idea for the activity is to give our students some responsibility in caring for creation. It might sound overly simplistic, but the goal is to give the students a plant that they can take home and take care of, and hopefully it can be a daily/weekly reminder to practice caring for God's creation.

I had a pothos plant in my office that I accidentally killed one winter. It wasn't pretty, but I decided to propagate the pieces that seemed to be salvageable. It took six weeks of soaking the stems and nodes in water to get some roots, but after six weeks, these broken vines and leaves were ready for a new life!

I bought small ceramic and clay pots for my youth and, two weeks before Earth Day, we started painting them as an evening activity. On the Sunday closest to Earth Day, we took the fresh pothos plants with their exposed roots and planted them in each student's pot. It was a fun group activity that combined creativity and hands-on caretaking. I periodically check in with the students about how their plants are doing. Some are dead, which was expected, but others are thriving in bedroom windowsills.

You don't have to kill a thriving house plant to do this activity. I only had enough propagations for a few of my students, so I had to get some more plants. I consulted with a local nursery and found some good plant options that were small, could thrive indoors, and were not too difficult for a busy teenager to take care of.

If you want to take it a step further, you could start a few weeks out, get some bigger plastic pots, and start planting some vegetables that the students can take home and grow. I hear that lettuce, green beans, potatoes and tomatoes are super simple and easy to grow. It could be a great way to help your students think about food justice, scarcity, and creation care.

–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 serves as a member of the Seeds Liturgical Team.

art courtesy of World Hunger Relief, Inc.

What if the Church Took Climate Change Seriously?

by Karen Turner

Editor's note: The following is adapted from a workshop led by Karen Turner at the Baptist Peace Fellowship of North America's 2023 summer conference in San Juan, Puerto Rico. A list of practical suggestions suggested by Karen can be found on page 32.

As a Canadian, I'm very aware of the climate disaster that has continued for months across Canada. You may have heard on the news over the past few months that the worst forest wildfires ever recorded have continued unabated across Canada since early May, from coast to coast, in several provinces.

Hundreds of fires—many out of control—continue to burn, with thousands of exhausted people trying, with limited success, to contain them. Firefighters from several other countries are continually being brought in to help.

Well over 13 million hectares of forest have already been destroyed in 2023 alone, as well as countless homes and buildings, even whole communities. For several days at the end of May, toxic smoke from the fires in central and eastern Canada blanketed eastern Canada and the northeastern US, forcing millions of people to stay indoors or wear masks outside. The word that I kept hearing to describe this situation was "apocalyptic."

Just in the past year, we have seen devastating floods, unprecedented heat waves, unrelenting drought and increasingly powerful and destructive hurricanes in all parts of the planet. We hear reports from climate scientists around the world about species loss and negative changes to the oceans, the atmosphere and the land, some already irreversible. Apocalyptic is a good description.

There's a term for the feeling many of us have in the pit of our stomach these days: *ecological grief.* Grief, we all know, is the normal human response to loss, so ecological grief can be defined as the grief felt as a response to hearing of the environmental loss of species, ecosystems and meaningful landscapes due to climate change, the loss of the world as we know it.

Climate change has been called the biggest threat modern humans have ever faced. It has been described as the greatest existential threat of our time, meaning that human-caused climate change threatens the very existence of our species. The term *existential* also refers to big questions about the meaning of life and humanity's place in the cosmos.

Questions about the meaning of life? And humanity's place in the cosmos? Should these not be the concern of the church? So, why are so many churches not talking about climate change, giving it the priority a crisis deserves?

Questions about the meaning of life? And humanity's place in the cosmos? Should these not be the concern of the church? So, why are so many churches not talking about climate change, giving it the priority a crisis deserves?

What if the church took the climate crisis seriously?

The reactions of Christians to the increasingly alarming news mirror the spectrum of reactions in the general population. It goes from outright denial, through various forms of minimization, all the way to deep anxiety and despair. In my experience, many Christians do take climate science seriously, and are deeply concerned about the effects of climate change. But it often doesn't occur to them that church might be the place to talk about it.

So, would it be fair to say that many, or even most, congregations are not dealing with climate change at all? Why is that?

I'm not an historian or an economist, but here's my very brief and simplified thoughts on how we got to this crisis point. Western societies, which produce most of the dangerous levels of greenhouse gases causing climate change, have lived with the illusion of unlimited economic growth

and ever higher standards of living, for nearly two hundred years, without regard for the limits of a finite planet.

The Western church has bought into this illusion, and even sanctified it with ideas about economic prosperity being a sign of God's blessing and approval. This illusion of economic growth, and the constant search for more natural resources to maintain it, for the rich nations in particular, is based on a perverse worldview that has been centuries in the making, both in secular society as well as the church.

> In my experience, many Christians do take climate science seriously, and are deeply concerned about the effects of climate change. But it often doesn't occur to them that church might be the place to talk about it.

Worldviews are largely unconscious and unexamined. They are a culture's definition of the way things are. It seems to me that this Western worldview was formed over centuries of Christendom, when the beliefs and values in European society were rooted in certain culturally and politically influenced readings of the Bible, and in the Christian theology that resulted.

It was refined through the Enlightenment, when man (I use that masculine term on purpose) was seen as the centre of everything, with no limit to his potential knowledge and mastery of the world. In our post-Christian era, many of those unconscious beliefs and values, ones that so deeply influence the way we perceive the world, still continue as part of a distorted Christian legacy.

So, this is my description of the way we have perceived our place in the universe: We have seen ourselves as "put on" the earth as the pinnacle of creation—apart from, higher than, and superior to the natural world. We have understood the earth, and the non-human creation, to exist primarily for our use and convenience, without intrinsic value. We see it as the scenery in the background, the set on the stage, while the real drama, the human story, is played out.

We have believed we were masters, a privileged upper caste, an anthropomorphic perception which we could call "human supremacy." In this self-image, we became consumers, believing that the riches and abundance of the earth belonged to us, to do with as we please. We have believed that SOME of us have the right to own, to buy and sell, to profit from, any and all of the earth's treasures, without regard for the rest of humanity or the well-being of the earth herself.

Added to this is another deeply ingrained perception—that when we die, our spirit leaves this earth and goes to heaven, a better place; and that when Jesus returns, the earth will be destroyed in the final battle with evil, and the children of God will be whisked off to heaven. The earth, in all these versions of the story, is disposable.

This consumer worldview has clearly been disastrous for the life systems of the earth.

But there is a different way to look at our place in the world. Although it is better understood today, an awareness of the consequences of human pride and greed is not new. The notion that human behaviour, human disobedience to the biblical vision of the Kingdom of God, affects the rest of creation, is not foreign to the scriptures at all. Listen to the words of the prophet Hosea.

Hear the word of the LORD, O people of Israel;
for God has an indictment against the
inhabitants of the land.
There is no faithfulness or loyalty,
and no knowledge of God in the land.
There is only cursing, lying and murder,
stealing and infidelity
These things run rampant throughout the land;
bloodshed follows bloodshed.
Therefore the land mourns,
and all who live in it languish;
together with the wild animals
and the birds of the air
even the fish of the sea are perishing.
–Hosea 4: 1-3

Overwhelming evidence—from emerging fields like quantum physics, quantum mathematics, cosmology and molecular biology—indicate that the universe is not a static entity, a mechanical place that operates according to fixed laws with predictable consequences, like many of us were taught in high school. This work—in fields that didn't even exist a century ago—reveal that the universe continues to evolve and expand, a network of interacting energy, an interconnected web of relationship, with a spontaneity and self-organization that could not have been previously understood. Everything comes ultimately from a com-

mon source and is related to, and interacting with, everything else.

So, rather than being placed ON the earth, a kind of special creation added in at the end of a completed universe, human beings belong TO the earth. We emerged FROM the earth and are connected to everything else, animate or inanimate. We are vulnerable and entirely dependent on the earth for our very life and breath.

Resistance to it is almost impossible for an individual. I suggest resistance is only possible in a loving, self-giving community of solidarity, dedicated to following Jesus in this call to care for and love the whole of creation.

In the last few years, public comprehension that climate change is real has increased significantly. It's true that there is more public discussion about the need to make changes in our choices and lifestyle, such as changing our light bulbs, composting, not using plastic water bottles and grocery bags, eating local and organic foods and so on. That is all good, as far as it goes. A lot of people, including many church people, buy into this level of climate awareness, as long as it doesn't inconvenience us too much or threaten that underlying worldview of human supremacy.

However, we've hardly begun, at least on a popular level, to get at the underlying worldview, and the bigger systemic issue, to see that our Western lifestyle is absolutely—and absurdly—not sustainable. And time is running out. Climate scientists tell us we have less than 10 years, at most, to make the major changes required to stop the worst of the consequences to the life systems on which our lives depend.

So, with a crisis on our hands that threatens the survival of human life on the planet, and worsens every year, why isn't the church talking about it? Why do so many congregations, and even denominations, rarely, if ever, mention the climate crisis and its human causes, and instead carry on their usual church business as if everything was normal?

What is the actual calling of the church, the Body of Christ in this area?

Our individualistic, consumption-driven societies almost irresistibly push most of us, including followers of Jesus, into the dominant consumer way of thinking and living that is destroying our ability to live on this exquisite, life-giving planet.

It is practically in the air we breathe. Resistance to it is almost impossible for an individual. I suggest resistance is only possible in a loving, self-giving community of solidarity, dedicated to following Jesus in this call to care for and love the whole of creation. Can the church be that kind of community?

Being followers of Jesus means joining him in the work of bringing about the justice and peace of God's kingdom, in which all creation will ultimately rejoice. Protecting our environment and re-learning respect for the earth and all her inhabitants is a peace and justice issue, as much as working against war, teaching nonviolence, promoting economic justice. Liberation for the poor and liberation for the earth need to be understood as two sides of the same issue.

There can be no peace on an earth that is wounded and bleeding. The poor and oppressed cannot live in a world where they can't breathe the air or drink the water or grow food in barren desert. It's all connected!

–Karen Turner is a retired social worker living in Bobcaygeon, ON. She and her wife Heather moved recently from Toronto to the Kawartha Lakes area of Ontario. They are still connected with the Church of the Redeemer in Toronto. Karen serves on the Bishop's Committee on Creation Care in the Anglican Diocese of Toronto. She has also been engaged in peace and justice work through the Baptist Peace Fellowship of North America, on whose board she served for a number of years.

Resource Suggestions

Here are a few suggestions for additional resources pertaining to creation care.

- *Don't Look Up*, described as a 2021 American apocalyptic political satire black comedy film, available on Netflix.
- "The Beautiful Creatures" by Canadian singer/songwriter Bruce Cockburn
- "Earth Song (What about Us)" by Michael Jackson
- "This Ancient Love (Long before the Night)" by Carolyn McDade

These songs are readily available online.
–Karen Turner

A Litany of Lament

by Karen Turner

Editor's note: This lament was part of an article titled "The Ache in the Spirit We Label Despair," written by Karen Turner for a diocesan newsletter. The title is taken from Bruce Cockburn's Beautiful Creatures.

ONE: Holy God, you created human beings
out of the earth, with material from the stars.
You breathed your spirit, your ancient love,
into us and imprinted us with your image.
We remember Jesus' words that the one
who has dominion must be the servant of all,
And that you have called us to care for
your magnificent earth creation, to serve our kin,
All those who share the earth with us.
Lord in your mercy,

ALL: Save us

ONE: But we have forgotten our place.
We imagined we were masters, not servants.
The more we learned about
your evolving creation masterpiece,
Instead of rejoicing in wonder and gratitude,
The more we took and used, burned
and destroyed,
without care for your beautiful work,
our human siblings
and our non-human kin.
Lord in your mercy,

ALL: Save us

ONE: Because we have abused our calling,
forgotten our place,
desecrated what we did not understand,
now we stand on the precipice of climate disaster.
We, your human children have done this.
Lord in your mercy,

ALL: Save us

ONE: Many of us, especially the powerful, rich
and comfortable among us,
ignore the terrifying evidence of climate disaster
and continue as we always have,
Living with the tattered illusion of an inert earth
with unlimited resources.
And those of us who are beginning to see,
to understand, what we have done,
Ache with anxiety and grief at how we have
wounded the living earth, our Mother
At the climate changes and catastrophes
that are picking up speed,
despairing at times, doing small things
that make small differences,
Knowing it is not enough.
Lord in your mercy,

ALL: Save us

ONE: Creator God, in your mercy, save us!
Spirit of love, help us in our weakness,
intercede for us with your sighs
too deep for words.
We hang on to the promise that even this peril
cannot separate us from you,
And from your ancient love, from your vision
of a beloved earth community.
Holy One, teach us our place once again.
We are listening.

ALL: Amen

–Karen Turner is a retired social worker living in Bobcaygeon, ON. She and her wife Heather moved recently from Toronto to the Kawartha Lakes area of Ontario. They are still connected with the Church of the Redeemer in Toronto. Karen serves on the Bishop's Committee on Creation Care in the Anglican Diocese of Toronto. She has also been engaged in peace and justice work through the Baptist Peace Fellowship of North America, on whose board she served for a number of years.

Editor's note: The following is an excerpt from a sermon David Rensberger preached in 2016, introducing the concept of the Season of Creation to the Atlanta Mennonite Fellowship.

The Earth Is Filled with Your Creativity!

by David Rensberger

Texts: Psalm 104:1, 10-24, 33-34, 35c; Luke 22:22-31

I think it's fair to say that my generation was the first to recognize the emerging ecological crisis on a large scale—taught and warned by earlier sages like Aldo Leopold and Rachel Carson—and to begin taking small steps in response. It's also fair to say that we never expected that we would be seeing such enormous changes in the environment already in our lifetimes. Clearly the danger is real, and much more imminent than we once believed. Every human resource, everything, needs to be brought to bear to address climate change and environmental degradation.

There is nothing more important, not terrorism, not immigration, not economics, not even war. What is needed goes far beyond small fixes. We can start with recycling and with reducing our carbon footprint as individuals and households. But as we do that, we need to begin a much larger and deeper process of rethinking what human life must be within the earthly creation. The Season of Creation can guide us as we enter this process.

The impulse for this new liturgical season came from churches in Australia, spurred on by a Lutheran biblical scholar there named Norman Habel. His Lutheran church first celebrated a four-week season of creation in 2000, and for the following five years the Uniting Church in Australia undertook an initiative to develop it in a formal way.

We can start with recycling and with reducing our carbon footprint as individuals and households. But as we do that, we need to begin a much larger and deeper process of rethinking what human life must be within the earthly creation.

Since 2005, the Season of Creation has been fully available in Australia, and churches elsewhere around the world have begun to take it up, including in the United States. Now it is a global, ecumenical movement with its own website (https://seasonofcreation.org) and annual packets filled with excellent resources.

The Season of Creation begins each year in September and officially ends on the Feast of St. Francis, October 4. It is arranged in a three-year cycle centering on the four Sundays of September. Each year's liturgy has a different series of four focal themes, such as Ocean Sunday, Fauna and Flora Sunday, Storm Sunday and Cosmos Sunday.

How do we begin to celebrate the Season of Creation? As I see it, the Season of Creation is not just about the drastic action needed in our time to rescue the environment. I see it as first and foremost about worship, about celebrating the creation as the expression of the Creator's desires. We need

this celebration to undergird and stimulate our efforts at restoration and preservation.

This season is gospel, not law. It is not a demand that we quit having fun and shape up, but the good news that we are surrounded by marks of our Maker's love and wisdom, and that we can participate in them. We will have to shape up, and we will at least have to learn to have different sorts of fun.

Those who have made a commitment to God, who have decided to give the highest priority in their lives to God and to the justice and righteousness that God offers and desires, find that the resources to live out that commitment will come to them.

But I believe the Season of Creation can be part of the necessary emotional and even spiritual reconnection with the rest of the created world that we must undertake in order to energize ourselves for the changes and sacrifices that we truly must make over the next decades, the next century.

This is one reason why I've turned to poetic parts of the Bible (Psalms and parables) to start this season. What we need is to reimagine our relationship to the rest of creation, to think about it differently—and that kind of creative re-thinking often begins by doing something other than just thinking. It begins by playing with images and tossing metaphors around.

We need to start with the one thing that we need to do in every circumstance, and that is to seek the will of God. For some centuries we have thought, childishly, that the will of God almost magically coincides with our desires to control, to dominate, and to enrich ourselves (or at least to enrich 1 percent of us).

The Bible itself can guide us back toward an outlook that is both more mature and more loving, more sane and more joyous. But we have to be willing to put God's desires, as expressed not only in the holy books of scripture but in the book of nature, ahead of our own. This submission to the will of God should guide us as we reimagine, rethink and reframe our sense of ourselves and our relationship with the rest of the created world.

Part of this reimagining will be that we relearn to love and cherish that created world, as God does. Human beings are present in Psalm 104 as farmers and laborers, but also as the singer of the psalm! If we do not sing and worship within the creation, we do not fulfill our God-given identity and vocation there.

Along with this, we must understand the living world and how it works. Glory to God for the scientists who show us this! But let this understanding lead us to wonder and to love, not to seek new openings to exploit. And we need to be with the other creatures and among them, to get out from behind our screens and spend time in the world that we did not make but which is our true home in this life.

The more we are present to and present among other living things, the more we can commit ourselves to their preservation and restoration. Jesus tells us to strive for the Reign of God, and other things—food and drink and other resources that we need—will be given to us as well. This means that we must commit ourselves to God and to God's ways.

Those who have made a commitment to God, who have decided to give the highest priority in their lives to God and to the justice and righteousness that God offers and desires, find that the resources to live out that commitment will come to them. The coming century is going to be a tough one. There will be political struggles against the fanatically self-blinded refusal to admit what we have done, ratchet back our greed and change what must change.

There will be personal and communal sacrifices as we seek a level of material living that fully supports human well-being and yet is stable and sustainable for the planet. But if we commit ourselves to this, to living lovingly and generously with our fellow creatures, then, Jesus says, God will make it possible. For this is God's desire for us as creatures of the creation and the new creation; this ecological commitment is part of our overall commitment to God's Reign, striving for it, seeking it out.

–David Rensberger is a retired professor of New Testament, having taught for many years at the Interdenominational Theological Seminary in Atlanta. He is an associate of the Order of Ecumenical Franciscans. He and his wife Sharon attend Atlanta Mennonite Fellowship and Oakhurst Baptist Church, where the Seeds ministry was born. For a full copy of the sermon (which is excellent), email seedseditor1@gmail.com.

Quotes, Poems & Pithy Sayings,

Part Two

The test of a first-rate intelligence is the ability to hold two opposed ideas in mind at the same time and still retain the ability to function. One should, for example, be able to see that things are hopeless and yet be determined to make them better.
–F. Scott Fitzgerald

To live, we must daily break the body
and shed the blood of creation.
When we do it knowingly, lovingly,
skillfully, reverently,
it is a sacrament.
When we do it ignorantly,
greedily, destructively,
it is a desecration.
–Wendell Berry, "The Gift of Good Land"

When we meet together to break and share bread, where all kneel side by side and receive—as it were—of the same loaf, then we are acting out in miniature what God desires for his creation. It is, in its own small and local way, a fleeting but true foretaste of the longed-for universality of the Kingdom. Moreover, we are taking the products of the earth and doing with them what is intended; offering them back to their Creator thankfully, and sharing them equally. Each Eucharist, whatever else it may be, is a sign of our desire to redress the balance.
–Michael Mayne, *The Enduring Melody*

Our task is enormous: to co-create with God. To look at all that has gone before us, and to recognize that each one of us, however small, has a unique task in co-creation—a unique contribution to make in the world and to humanity—to recognize that by our very existence, we are related to all things; to the caterpillar, the sod, the animals, the birds, to every man and woman. We are part of an interconnected, interrelated cosmos. We cannot amputate ourselves from the rest of God's unfolding universe. We must come to discover the part we have to play in it.
–Edwina Gateley

Saving our planet, lifting people, out of poverty, advancing economic growth…these are one and the same fight. We must connect the dots between climate change, water sarcity, energy shortages, global health, food security and women's empowerment. Solutions to one problem must be solutions for all.
–UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon

art by Peter Yuichi Clark

The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad,

the desert shall rejoice and blossom;
like the crocus it shall blossom abundantly,
and rejoice with joy and singing.
The glory of Lebanon shall be given to it,
the majesty of Carmel and Sharon.
They shall see the glory of the Lord,
the majesty of our God.
…
Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened,
and the ears of the deaf unstopped;
then the lame shall leap like a deer,
and the tongue of the speechless sing for joy.
For waters shall break forth in the wilderness,
and streams in the desert;
the burning sand shall become a pool,
and the thirsty ground springs of water;
the haunt of jackals shall become a swamp,
the grass shall become reeds and rushes.
—Isaiah 35:1-2; 5-7

Hunger Around the World

compiled by Joanna Hardy

Author's note: There are numerous anti-hunger organizations around the world and many of them have their own unique ways to define and measure food insecurity. These statistics will vary as a result of these differences.

Multiple organizations around the world join together each year to create the *Global Report on Food Crises* (GRFC). The GRFC analyzes data primarily gathered from the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) or the Cadre Harmonisé (CH), which are used to estimate which populations require food assistance or other types of humanitarian aid. The GRFC 2023 contained many details about the severity of hunger in different parts of the world during 2022:

- Around 258 million people in 58 countries and territories were classified as IPC/CH Phase Three, labeled "crisis," or worse, meaning there are food consumption gaps with high or above-normal acute malnutrition and urgent action is needed to prevent loss of livelihoods. This 258 million is an increase from 193 million people (which is a spike of roughly 75 percent) in 53 countries and territories in 2021.

- Five countries/territories housed more than 40 percent of the population in IPC/CH Phase Three or above. These places included Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Afghanistan, Nigeria (21 states and the Federal Capital Territory) and Yemen.

- The GRFC counted 376,400 people in IPC/CH Phase Five, or "catastrophe." This is the worst of the phases and is characterized by an extreme lack of food even after coping strategies are in full use. Urgent, swift action is needed in these afflicted populations to prevent widespread losses of lives and livelihoods.

  Of the 376,400 people in Phase Five, 214,100 were located in Somalia; 87,000 were in South Sudan; 31,000 were in Yemen; 20,300 were in Afghanistan; 19,200 were in Haiti; 3,000 were in Nigeria and 1,800 were in Burkina Faso.

–Food Security Information Network (FSIN)

The World Food Programme (WFP) estimates that more than 345 million people experience high levels of food insecurity out of 79 of the countries the WFP serves in 2023. This is more than twice the number of food-insecure people recorded in 2020. –WFP

At least two billion people worldwide are micronutrient deficient. These deficiencies carry increased risks of diseases, impaired mental or physical development, reduced productivity at work—and even death. Anti-hunger organizations like the WFP address the lack of micronutrients through strategies such as handing out micronutrient powders for use in homecooked meals, fortifying staple foods and encouraging diverse diets via nutrition education. –WFP

One in three people worldwide are malnourished to some degree. –WFP

Two out of every 10,000 people die due to starvation or disease combined with malnutrition. –WFP

Despite what many might believe, obesity rates are rising globally and are connected to undernutrition in that both cause diseases like diabetes. –WFP

Conflict, climate change, COVID-19 and inequality are the main causes of famine and food insecurity. Conflict results in people being driven from their homes or jobs and makes it harder for humanitarian aid to reach them. Climate change causes more droughts and other shocks, leading to fewer crops and farmers having less available labor. Measures to prevent the spread of the coronavirus negatively impacted

economies worldwide and reduced the resources available to address the hungry. Finally, inequalities such as low incomes result in people around the world having less money to spend on meals. –WFP

As previously mentioned, conflict is a major factor in food insecurity. The war in Ukraine deeply affected global food prices and production since both Ukraine and the Russian Federation are responsible for a significant portion of fuel, fertilizers and other food commodities in world trade. Every country and territory included in the GRFC experienced rising food prices in 2022, and 38 out of 58 countries/territories with food crises had food-related inflation that was over 10 percent. –FSIN

> The World Food Programme estimates that more than 345 million people experience high levels of food insecurity out of 79 of the countries the WFP serves in 2023. This is more than twice the number of food-insecure people recorded in 2020.

Displacement is both a cause and a source of food insecurity because people fleeing their homes lose their livelihoods and struggle to access humanitarian aid and other needs like healthcare. The number of displaced people globally was estimated to be 103 million by the middle of 2022, which was roughly 14 million more than at the end of 2021. This number included populations of refugees, asylum seekers, Internally Displaced People (IDPs) and other people who needed international protection. The main causes of displacement were major conflicts, severe economic crises and climate change/weather extremes. –FSIN

Syria relies on foreign aid for nearly all its food because civil war destroyed the majority of its farms. –Bread for the World

Climate change is another major contributor to food insecurity. More than 80 percent of food-insecure people live in areas prone to natural shocks, which include phenomena like floods and droughts. –WFP

Although climate change affects everyone on Earth, impoverished areas can be disproportionately impacted due to their reduced adaptive capabilities. For instance, Africa is among the continents worst affected by climate change. Temperatures are rising faster than anywhere else in the world and countries like Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia are the driest they have been in at least 70 years. Agricultural productivity across Africa is reduced by 34 percent due to climate-related issues. –US Embassy

In South America, land erosion partially caused by deforestation is affecting over 60 percent of the continent's soil. As a result, important staple crops such as maize and beans are damaged. –Earth.org

While hunger is detrimental to every age group, it can have a particularly harmful effect on children. The first 1,000 days—or from conception to two years of age—of a child's life are vital to his or her development. Malnutrition during this stage can cause irreparable damage. –WFP

Poor nutrition can have lifelong consequences. For example, more than 40 percent of children in India have stunted growth caused by malnutrition. –Bread for the World

More than 150 million children around the world do not receive adequate calories or nutrients. –WFP

Around 30 million children in the 15 countries worst affected by food insecurity are classified as "wasted." This means these children are acutely malnourished, which puts them at risk of death. –WFP

Malnutrition is responsible for nearly half the deaths of all children under five years old worldwide. –United Nations Children's Fund, formerly known as United Nation International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF)

– Joanna Hardy is a resident of Aledo, TX and a Professional Writing & Rhetoric major at Baylor University. She serves as the summer 2023 intern at Seeds of Hope.

Hunger in the United States

compiled by Joanna Hardy

Hungry people exist everywhere in the world, including the US. However, in developed nations, food insecurity is mainly caused by poverty rather than a lack of available food. –Bread for the World

The US Department of Agriculture (USDA) defines food security as "access by all people at all times to enough food for an active, healthy life." Therefore, food insecure households are households that struggle to get enough food to feed all their members at some points during the year due to a lack of resources. In households with very low food security, individuals' eating patterns are disrupted at times due to a lack of resources, leading to members cutting their food portions or even skipping entire meals. A recent study titled *Household Food Security in the United States in 2021* identified approximately 10.2 percent of households in the US as being food insecure during the year 2021. –USDA

Feeding America's *Map the Meal Gap 2023* study covered the rates at which the US experienced food insecurity at the local level in 2021. The study revealed that each and every county and congressional district in America is home to someone experiencing food insecurity. However, the data uncovered wide discrepancies between the affected demographics:

- Food insecurity is higher in the South than in any other part of the US. One out of every five Southern counties have high rates of food insecurity. Of the 321 counties in the nation with the lowest food security, 83 percent—or 267 counties—are found in the South.
- Rural counties make up a staggering 89 percent of the US counties in the top 10 percent bracket of food insecurity.
- 9.4 percent of adults aged 50 to 59 years and 7.1 percent of seniors aged 60 years or over are food insecure. This makes for a combined food insecurity rate of 16.5 percent among adults aged 50 years or over.
- Race and ethnicity play a large role in food insecurity. An estimated 6 percent of the Asian population and 6.7 percent of the White population is food insecure. This compares to an estimated 16.6 percent of the Latino, 17 percent of the Pacific Islander, 19.7 percent of the Black and 20 percent of the Indigenous populations that are food insecure. The rate of food insecurity among each group can vary greatly between different counties; for example, approximately 42 percent of Latino individuals in Jackson County, AR, are food insecure, whereas 3 percent of Latino individuals are food insecure in Calvert County, MD. –Feeding America

Food banks and other private charitable organizations are invaluable parts of the fight against hunger. However, they cannot match the amount

of assistance federal programs like SNAP provide. Food-insecure individuals can receive nearly ten times as much assistance from public nutrition programs as they can from private churches or charities. –Bread for the World

In addition to not having access to the same amount of assistance they might receive from a federal program, individuals who solely rely on private charities for food assistance might not be able to obtain adequate types of food to meet specific needs, such as allergen-free meals. –Center for American Progress

Around 56 percent of food-insecure households and 55.1 percent of households with very low food security reported participating in at least one of the three major federal nutrition programs during the month prior to a December 2021 study on food insecurity. –USDA

Federal nutrition programs are not open to every food-insecure person despite their essential role in providing food assistance to millions of Americans. Roughly one third of individuals facing hunger might not qualify for SNAP, the largest federal program. –Feeding America

Estimates of how much food is lost or wasted at any point in the food supply chain process in the US range from 73 to 152 million metric tons, or 161 to 335 billion pounds per year. In other words, more than one third of the food produced in the US every year is never eaten. This would otherwise be enough food to feed more than 150 million people. –US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)

This wasted food goes on to become roughly 22 percent of combusted municipal solid waste and 24 percent of the material dumped in landfills. It contributes to environmental damage in a variety of ways, including producing greenhouse gas emissions, reducing the amount and quality of freshwater resources and worsening air quality. –EPA

–Joanna Hardy is a resident of Aledo, TX and a Professional Writing & Rhetoric major at Baylor University. She serves as the summer 2023 intern at Seeds of Hope.

What Churches Can Do about Climage Change

by Karen Turner

1. We can infuse our worship with the love of God and love of Creation, in music, prayers and preaching in these ways:

   a. Including repentance and lament, an aspect of worship I suggest the Western church has lost.
   b. If your church is a little more liturgical, considering an annual observance of the Season of Creation. *[See David Rensberger's story on page 26 for information.]*
   c. Recognizing that the way the earth sustains and supports us can be seen as an ancient, self-giving love that never stops, in spite of how we have wounded her; recognizing that we are called to return that self-giving love to protect and serve the earth community, so that all can flourish together.
   d. Worshiping outdoors frequently.

2. We can read the Bible through an ecological, creation-centred lens. (For example, we need to re-examine the creation stories in Genesis and look at the word that is most often translated "dominion." I suggest that a better translation would suggest a caretaker role.)

3. We can teach creation care as a discipleship issue, and as a peace and justice issue.

4. We can model "green" behaviour for our communies and denominations in these ways:

   a. Having an energy audit done on our church buildings, and making the changes needed to reduce our carbon footprints; looking at all maintenance decisions through the lens of creation care.
   b. Using our churches' land for community gardens and pollinator gardens, instead of mono-culture lawns.
   c. Examining any investments the church (or denomination) has and eliminating investments in oil and gas or destructive kinds of mining.

–Editor's note: See "What If the Church Took Climate Change Seriously?" on page 22.

Test Your Hunger IQ

a quiz by Joanna Hardy

1. **How does the USDA define food security?**
   a) Access to enough healthy foods to thrive
   b) Access to adequate amounts of food at all times of the year
   c) Access by all people at all times to enough food for an active, healthy life
   d) Access by all people at all times to enough calories for a healthy life
2. **What are some major contributors to global food insecurity?**
   a) Conflict, climate change and COVID-19
   b) Government corruption
   c) Inequality and displacement
   d) A & C
   e) A, B & C
3. **What is the primary cause of food insecurity in developed nations like the US?**
   a) Poverty
   b) COVID-19
   c) Lack of food
   d) Climate change
4. **What does the acronym "GRFC" stand for?**
   a) Generations Rooting for Christ
   b) Global Report on Food Crises
   c) Global Response to Food Control
   d) General Report on Food in China
5. **What region of the US has the highest rate of food insecurity?**
   a) North
   b) West
   c) South
   d) East
6. **One in ____ people worldwide are malnourished to some degree.**
   a) Two
   b) Three
   c) Four
   d) Five
7. **In the US, private charitable organizations like food banks can provide just as much food assistance as federal programs like SNAP.**
   a) True
   b) False
8. **Climate-related issues have caused agricultural productivity across Africa to be reduced by ____.**
   a) 78 percent
   b) 24 percent
   c) 34 percent
   d) 12 percent
9. **Obesity rates are rising all over the world.**
   a) True
   b) False
10. **According to a 2023 report, which country contains the most amount of people in IPC/CH Phase Five (the most severe level of food insecurity)?**
    a) South Sudan
    b) Afghanistan
    c) Yemen
    d) Somalia
    e) Haiti

–Joanna Hardy is a resident of Aledo, TX and a Professional Writing & Rhetoric major at Baylor University. She serves as the summer 2023 intern at Seeds of Hope.

ANSWER KEY: 1. C, 2. D, 3. A, 4. B, 5. C, 6. B, 7. B, 8. C, 9. A, 10. D

Benediction

Let us go now from this place,
remembering that our Creator God
called us to nurture this planet.
Let us go now from this place,
remembering that Jesus Christ
called us to care for our neighbors.
Let us go now from this place,
clothing ourselves with love
for all creation,
for all people
and for the tasks set before us.
Let us go and be tenders of the Earth
healers of the nations,
sowers of new seeds
and harvesters of new abundance.
Let us build up the ancient ruins,
repair the ruined cities
and bring comfort to those who mourn.
May God's will be done here, where we live;
may impossible things come to pass.
May we find strength in the journey
and joy in the struggle,
through the grace of God,
Amen.
–Katie Cook

art by Robert Darden