

Hunger News & Hope

A Seeds of Hope Publication

We Can't Give Up Now: *Responding to the Demolition of Humanitarian Aid in the World*

At this writing, the current US President has been in the White House for 100 days of confusing and capricious cuts to humanitarian aid, as well as many other services that make the lives of human beings better—in the US and around the world. The news about some new restriction or budget cut comes out every day. People who have worked for decades in food security and public health find themselves suddenly shut down.

As you will read in Michael Williamson's article on page 2, even non-profits who thought this administration would support them are desperately trying to scrape together enough resources to continue their ministries. For instance, Catholic Relief Services, one of the world's largest charities, is being forced to cut its ministries in half. In February, Church World Service had to furlough more than half of its US staff and to slash refugee services.

You have seen the kaleidoscope of news stories. You have watched—most of you in stunned disbelief—as this assault on hungry and impoverished people all over the world has unfolded. In a world where unprec-

edented food crises have rapidly followed one another in the last few years, we are now facing devastating cuts and the demolition of highly successful, decades-old aid programs. These programs not only served vulnerable populations

"When someone dies from poverty and lack of healthcare, we cannot lie and say, 'God called them home.' We have to tell the truth. They died because we live in a society that has chosen not to care for them."

—Rev. William Barber

around the world since World War II, but they also enhanced US national security by doing so.

As Bread for the World CEO Eugene Cho wrote (see "One of the Best Things We Can Do" on page 4), even if all of these development programs were able to resume their work now, today, this minute, the impact of this

Please see "Humanitarian Aid" on page 13.

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An Unprecedented Assault on Humanitarian Aid

by Michael Williamson

In March, US President Donald Trump's senior aides held a closed-door meeting with faith-based charities at the US State Department, where they touted the administration's success in "zeroing out" foreign aid and forecast a future where church groups and billionaires would replace the government in caring for the world's most vulnerable.

Most of the aid groups in attendance—affiliated with evangelical Christianity—had viewed the Trump administration as a political ally.

But the leaders of the groups relayed painful effects on their organizations stemming from Trump's cancellation of 90 percent of all foreign aid contracts at the US Agency for International Development (USAID), the termination of more than 1,600 positions, and the placement of almost all of USAID's 10,000-strong workforce on administrative leave.

The vice president of World Vision, Edward Brown, said his Christian charity would have to lay off a few thousand workers if the administration's policies weren't reversed.

Other leaders of charities said the Trump administration never paid them for providing lifesaving assistance that was supposed to be exempt from the freeze under a waiver issued by Secretary of State Marco Rubio. Some had secured exemptions for their aid pro-

grams only to be informed the week prior that Rubio had canceled the programs altogether. This was a major source of frustration.¹

The March gathering, including about 35 people, represented a who's who of faith-based groups including World Relief, Samaritan's Purse, Christian Aid, Food for the Hungry, Compassion International, and the National Association of Evangelicals. It also included the Muslim charity Islamic Relief.

The US officials, led by USAID deputy administrator Pete Marocco, said they could not explain the rationale behind the terminations of any given program but insisted the cuts had been a success.

In an astonishingly short amount of time, Trump has radically transformed America's foreign assistance apparatus in ways even his staunchest critics never imagined.

The effects of the cuts on Christian aid groups, which receive millions of dollars from the US government every year, have been stark. Catholic Relief Services (arguably the world's largest charity) anticipates layoffs and reductions to programs of up to 50 percent, according to a February report in the *National Catholic Reporter*. The same month, the US Conference of Catholic Bishops laid off 50 staffers in its migration and refugee services office, attributing it to a delay in reimbursements from the government.²

World Vision declined to comment on future staffing changes. A person familiar with the matter said the organization "is continuing to assess the full extent of the impact based on a fluid situation." If grants for lifesaving aid are not reinstated soon and the or-



*Left: The Trump administration's cuts to USAID and other agencies will make it almost impossible for doctors like this one in Haiti to continue their work.
Photo by Rawpixel.*

ganization doesn't receive pending payments, it will be "forced to furlough or terminate many staff across more than 40 countries," the person said. The group's expected layoffs were first reported by Devex.³

Lawmakers on Capitol Hill are also awaiting a notice from the Trump administration that it intends to collapse USAID under the auspices of the State Department, which has already taken over some of its functions, including public affairs communications. Only a few hundred people remain active in their jobs at USAID and not on administrative leave.

Nicholas Enrich, USAID's acting assistant administrator for global health, estimated that ending programs to fight Ebola, polio, malaria and drug-resistant tuberculosis would result in the deaths of millions of children and cost the United States billions of dollars....

Career officials say those bureaucratic adjustments are much less important than the impact on the world's most vulnerable.

A draft memo written by Nicholas Enrich, USAID's acting assistant administrator for global health, estimated that ending programs to fight Ebola, polio, malaria and drug-resistant tuberculosis would result in the deaths of millions of children and cost the United States billions of dollars for the treatment of citizens infected with diseases that had been at bay in foreign countries.⁴

The youngest would suffer most. Around 1 million children would not be treated for severe acute malnutrition, when the lack of food becomes so severe the body starts digesting its own tissues. And 2 million to 3 million children would die from completely preventable diseases because they would not receive vaccines, the memo said.⁵

Ultimately, there seems to be no good news stemming from these changes. Suffering around the world (and in the United States) will need-

lessly increase. And almost no money will be saved, as USAID comprises less than 1 percent of the US annual federal budget.

—Michael Williamson, an ordained minister and hospital chaplain, is a former Seeds intern and wrote, for Seeds, *A Guide to World Hunger Organizations, Volume II* (Jones Press, 1994). He has served in cross-cultural urban ministry with Latino immigrants in Los Angeles, a cross-cultural mission in the Mississippi Delta, and economic development/public health mission projects in the Balkans and Mexico. He lives in Clinton, MS, with his wife Amy (also a former Seeds intern) and their daughter Rosemary.

Endnotes:

1. Bekah McNeel, "Faith Aid Groups Say Trump and Musk Have Permanently Damaged USAID," *Sojourners*, February 27, 2025.
2. Brian Roewe and Brian Fraga, "Catholic Relief Services Lays Off Staff, Cuts Programs after USAID Shakeup," *National Catholic Reporter*, February 6, 2025.
3. Nathaniel Weixel, "USAID Cuts Could Send Global Health into Chaos," *Yahoo! News*, Nexstar Media, March 2, 2025. (See also Rhian Lubin, "Nearly 15,000 Will Have Died Already Because of Trump and Musk's Cuts to USAID, Advocacy Program Claims," *The Independent*, March 4, 2025.)
4. Ann Maria Barry-Jester and Brett Murphy, "The Trump Administration Said These Aid Programs Saved Lives. It Canceled Them Anyway," *ProPublica*, March 1, 2025.
5. Julie Cerullo and Owen Hayes, "Accelerating US-AID Cuts Devastate Lifesaving Programs, Aid Groups Warn," *NBC News*, February 28, 2025.



*Right: Workers on the ground say that the US government's cuts in aid spending will hurt children the most.
Photo by Rawpixel.*

'One of the Best Things We Can Do'

The 2025 Bread for the World Offering of Letters

In February, Rev. Eugene Cho, President and CEO of Bread for the World, sent out a broken-hearted but reasoned response to the devastating cuts in humanitarian aid that had just begun in Washington. He wrote of the long-term impact of the restructuring of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the pause and work stop orders that accompanied that action:

I fear that much of the progress that Bread and our partners have made—which had already been halted by COVID, climate, conflict and costs—may be impacted for generations to come.

Cho then cited examples:

Maternal and child nutrition programs, therapeutic feeding centers, and programs for pregnant and breastfeeding mothers that are not covered under the waiver are being closed. The impacts of this are dire for, as an example, the 4.5 million children under the

age of five who are facing acute malnutrition in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

"You could open the funding floodgates again tomorrow and you will still have children dying months from now because of this pause."

—a President's Malaria Initiative staff member

He went on to say,

When two-thirds of the staff for the President's Malaria Initiative were laid off, one said: "You could open the funding floodgates again tomorrow and you will still have children dying months from now because of this pause."

Bread for the World is a non-partisan organization and has been lauded over the years for being able to work "on both sides of the aisle." The legislation Bread has supported always has bipartisan sponsors. However, Cho says that being nonpartisan does not mean that we should remain silent "when we believe certain actions are antithetical to our faith and our mission."

He described the ways Bread is working now to respond "with reason, strength and moral conviction." When asked what people can do to in the light of these new realities, he said that continuing with the annual advocacy campaign, known as the Offering of Letters, is "one of the best things we can do." The 2025 campaign, *Nourish Our Future*, focuses on WIC (the Women, Infants & Children Program), the Child Tax Credit and global nutrition.

Nourish Our Future: ***The 2025 Offering of Letters***

Since the early 1980s, Bread for the World has been working to increase the political will among US

Left: The Bread for the World Offering of Letters supports important nutrition programs for children, such as WIC (the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children.)

Photo courtesy of Caritas of Waco.



Americans necessary to bring about real change for food-insecure people in the US and the world.

Each year, Bread for the World asks people of faith to contact US Congress members, urging them to support bipartisan anti-hunger legislation that is carefully researched and chosen by staff policy teams.

These lay-led, clergy-supported efforts take many forms. Sometimes church groups write letters together at regular meeting times, such as Wednesday evenings. Sometimes people write letters on their own and then bring them to a special service for a prayer of blessing. Children's groups have written letters, sometimes drawing pictures on small paper plates.

Years ago, US Senator Paul Simon, brother of Bread for the World founder Art Simon, said that writing a letter to Congress on behalf of hungry people is almost certainly saving someone's life.

This year, Bread is urging faith communities to write letters to US legislators and urge them "to protect and strengthen nutrition programs that help children reach their full potential." *See the sidebar on page 5 for the sample letter.*

Regional organizers say that handwritten letters are the most effective, hand-delivered to the legislator's district office. Participants could also mail them to their regional organizer, who could then deliver them in person. Interested congregational leaders can find information about their regional organizers on the Offering of Letters site.

—Katie Cook. Source: Bread for the World. For more information and resources for the 2025 Offering of Letters, go to www.bread.org/offering-letters. The Bread website (www.bread.org) makes it easy to find and contact your elected officials.

Offering of Letters 2025: Sample Letter

[Date]

Rep. --
US House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Sen. --
US Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator/Representative --,

I urge you to protect and strengthen nutrition programs that help children reach their full potential.

Specifically, I ask you to:

- Protect, restore and secure robust funding for global nutrition programs, so that we can reach millions of children with lifesaving assistance.
- Fully fund and strengthen the domestic Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) so that more eligible families in the US are able to enroll and stay enrolled.
- For just a small percentage of the federal budget (well under 1 percent), lifesaving aid has an outsized global impact. These strategic investments not only save and improve the lives of tens of millions of children every year,



they secure America's standing as a global leader and trusted partner; open new markets to American goods, and reduce national security threats like terrorism and infectious disease.

In 2023, in the US (the last year for which there is data), the WIC program served nearly 7 million participants per month. Participation in WIC is associated with reduced risk of premature birth, low birth-weight and infant mortality.

Genesis 1:27 reminds us that every person is created in God's image, and we honor God when we love our neighbors, especially the most vulnerable among us. In the Gospels, Jesus opens his arms and welcomes children, saying "the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these." (Matthew 19:14).

Again, I urge you to protect, restore, and secure robust funding for global child nutrition programs and to fully fund and strengthen WIC in the US.

Whether from a fiscal, moral or faith-based standpoint, the investment in children is more than worth it.

[Add a sentence or two about why you care.]

Sincerely,
[Your name]
[Your address]

The Cuban Food Crisis

by Jacob Bailes & Katie Cook

The Cuban people are suffering an extreme hunger crisis. As Giselle Coleman-Martinez, Economic Office in the US State Department's Office of the Coordinator for Cuban Affairs states it, "The truth is that people are starving. People are begging and going through trash [to find food]. I've never seen this before."

Rev. Coralia Blanco (Corita), a Cuban pastor, said that Cuban women and children are most at risk, and that Afro-Cuban women and people with disabilities are especially at risk. The situation, she said, is bleak for young Cuban people.

"Our youth can no longer dream about their future," she said, adding that there is an unprecedented migration out of Cuba in recent years. So many young people are leaving that Cuba has the oldest average age in Central America. "The government has repeatedly raised the retirement age," she said, "so that people are wondering if they will still be working at the age of 90."

In addition to the lack of food, there is no medical care to speak of. The Cuban people don't even have access to over-the-counter medicine.

All of this is exacerbated by the unreliability of electricity. Craig Henry and D. H. Clark, whose Baptist church in Louisiana has a sister relationship with a church in Cuba, have traveled many times to Cuba over the past 30 years to visit their sister congregation. Clark said, "We've seen ups and downs, but we've never seen downs like this. It is a normal thing now to

have only three hours of electricity a day. This affects communication, not to mention everyday needs and activities."

According to Santiago Delgado, executive secretary for Fraternidad de Iglesias Bautistas de Cuba (FI-BAC), the lack of electricity also affects manufacturing, as does the lack of raw materials, mostly because of the US embargo.

The situation in Cuba is multifaceted, with a combination of unproductive domestic policies, climate change and US sanction—all contributing and compounding the tragedy.

According to Latin American specialist Dr. William LeoGrande of American University, the island imports 70 percent of its food and has seen a 50 percent decline in foreign exchange since 2019. This has led to a major decrease in the buying power of Cuba and has resulted in an increasing lack of essential goods such as food, medicine and fuel.

How We Got Here

According to LeoGrande, Cuban agricultural productivity has declined by 35 percent since 2019 because of governmental policy failures to incentivize farmers to produce more. And repeated climate-related disasters such as droughts and hurricanes have only made the food situation worse.

US sanctions have also exacerbated the issue. "The blockade is harming the people," Pastor Blanco said.

"Food is scarce and expensive, and the people don't have the ability to pay for it. A dozen eggs is equal to a month's salary for a retiree. The children can't go to school. There are no supplies and no teachers."

"The biggest concern now is for the people to have food and access to medicine," Coleman-Martinez said. "To do this, Cuba has to have imports."

The "maximum pressure" policy of the current US administration has cut off Cuba's three main sources of foreign exchange:

Cubans wait in a long line for access to a meat and dairy store. Cuban spiritual leaders say that women, particularly Afro-Cuban women, people with disabilities and children are most at risk in this current food crisis.

Photo by Adam Cohn.



1. Tourism took a hit because of a restriction of US travel, worsened by the coronavirus pandemic, which shut down the industry for two years. Additionally, traveling to Cuba had been infamously difficult in the years following the Cuban Missile Crisis (in 1962) and had only just been eased in 2009 during the Obama Administration and renewed under the Trump Administration in 2017.

2. Remittances, which consist of money or goods sent by migrants to their families and communities, have gone down by two-thirds from 2020 to 2021 after the US halted wire transfers to Cuba from the US. Although recovery is in process, much of it does not make its way to the Cuban government's funding for food imports. Instead, the money that is coming into Cuba is through private sectors doing business within the country.

3. The exportation of Cuban medical services has been declining for eight years because countries such as Brazil, Venezuela and Chile have been pressured by the US to end contracts with Cuba. To make matters worse, the Trump Administration recently reinstated Cuba on the US list of state sponsors of terrorism, despite the lack of real evidence. Being on that list makes international transactions extremely difficult.

The Cuban pastors and leaders said that the charge of terrorism was preposterous. Clark said, "Our church members have been there often over the past 30 years, and we've never seen a terrorist." Pastor Blanco said, "There are countries that cause the world far more concern, yet Cuba is called terrorist."

"Cuba was once one of the biggest producers of medical supplies," Delgado said. "Cuba has produced doctors and teachers who work all over the world. Is that terrorism?"

A related issue brought up by the US State Department has to do with religious liberty. The thinking seems to be that the US should not support a country where there is no religious liberty. According to Delgado, that is no longer the case in Cuba. "In 1992, the fourth session of the Cuban legislature changed the country's designation from 'atheist' to 'secular.' Since

then, the churches have been open and free to do their activities.

Carol Blythe, whose church in Washington, DC, has a partnership with a Cuban church, has devoted many years to advocating for the Cuban people. She said that the report of the churches is very different from the State Department's report. "These churches have never had a problem with the government. They are able to go about their work and often use public buildings for special events." (See Carol's article, "Two Things You Can Do for Hungry Cubans," on page 9.)

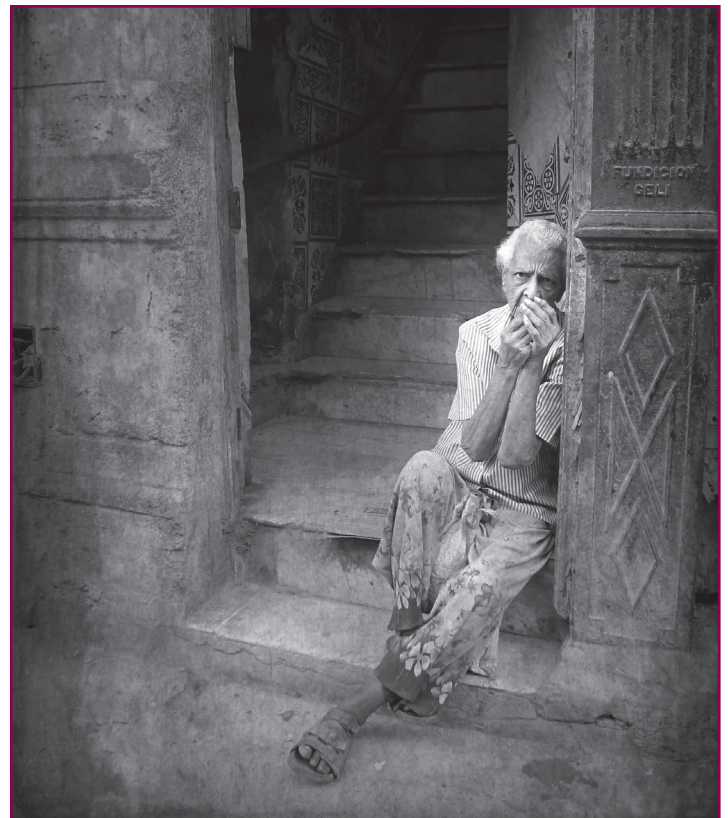
Widening Inequality

All of these factors have intensified the economic inequality of the country. Private enterprises sell imported goods at international prices. International prices are only affordable for those with remittances or private sector earnings. Government-rationed supplies are not enough to feed the hungry.

Clark noted that the church group from Louisiana had, in the past, been hosted in the homes of the sister congregation on their visits, "but now they have no food to serve us. We decided to reciprocate and host a meal for the whole church. It was the first time most of them had had meat in months."

The Cuban people are outraged by the internal mismanagement of funds by their own government.

Please see "Cuban Food Crisis" on page 8.



The Cuban people are experiencing an unprecedented level of food insecurity. The sight of people panhandling, sleeping on the street and going through trash bins is a new phenomenon.

Photo by Nick Kenrick (Blanksy).

Cuban Food Crisis

continued from page 9

According to Dr. Paul Johnson of the US Agriculture Coalition for Cuba, this has caused a mass exodus of young and educated people as Pastor Blanco mentioned above, which has further stunted the growth of Cuban agriculture. The government's focus on tourism rather than agriculture and its dependence on a centralized economy have stifled the nation's growth.

"My relationship with Cuba is one of love and hate," Giselle Coleman-Martinez said. "The story doesn't begin with the revolution;¹ it begins with the war of independence from Spain.² The government is not saintly, nor is it a paradise. It has made mistakes. The current US policies are giving the government an excuse to behave the way it has."

Pastor Blanco added, "The government of Cuba will never cave in to the US government. The US policies aren't hurting the government; they're hurting the people, the children."

Potential Solutions

Some experts believe that if Cuba were to offer better agricultural incentives such as development loans and create stronger ties between state-run, private and cooperative enterprises, the issue would be at least partially remedied. Through diplomatic efforts, the US could drop their sanctions against Cuba and support its agricultural sector. Critics of US policy argue that the active part the US has played in starving the Cuban government of resources is directly causing the Cuban people to starve. Without policy change, domestic and foreign alike, the crisis will likely only worsen, leaving millions desperately in need.

—At this writing, Jacob Bailes, a Houston, TX, native, is a Professional Writing student at Baylor University and a Seeds of Hope editorial intern. Katie Cook is the Seeds of Hope editor.

Endnotes

1. The Cuban revolution, which ended in 1959, overthrew the dictatorship of Fulgencio Batista, and Fidel Castro became the country's leader.
2. The Cuban war of independence from Spain was a protracted series of uprisings that began in 1868 and finally ended in 1898. One result of the war was that Cuba was occupied by the US until its independence in 1903.

Sources: Much of the information for this article came from an October 2024 webinar, sponsored by the Alliance of Baptists and the Baptist Peace Fellowship of North America (BPFNA~Bautistas por la Paz). Featured speakers were Dr. William LeoGrande, professor of government at American University and a specialist in US foreign policy in Latin America; and Paul Johnson, a consultant and chair of the US Agricultural Coalition for Cuba; and pastors from the *Fraternidad de Iglesias Bautistas de Cuba* (Fraternity of Baptist Churches in Cuba, or FIBAC). Some of the personal accounts are from a meeting of representatives from Cuban churches and US churches who enjoy special partnerships. Rev. Coralia Blanco is a pastor and serves as president of FIBAC, and Santiago Delgado is the FIBAC executive secretary. The meeting, held in Washington, DC, and sponsored by the Alliance of Baptists, also included Giselle Coleman-Martinez from the Office of the Coordinator for Cuban Affairs at the US State Department. See also "U.S.-Cuba Relations," issued by the Council on Foreign Relations, (www.cfr.org).

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Two Things You Can Do for Hungry Cubans

by Carol Blythe

As you have read elsewhere in this issue (see “*The Cuban Food Crisis*” beginning on page 6), Cuba and the people of Cuba are suffering from the lack of food, medicine, spare parts for medical and agricultural equipment and many other items necessary for daily living. Many of the problems Cuba is facing are due to policies of the United States.¹

1. Advocacy to End the US Embargo

The US embargo against Cuba has included food and medicine since 1962. The severity of the sanctions due to the embargo has led to yearly United Nations resolutions calling for the US to end its embargo against Cuba. Most recently, on October 30, 2024, 187 countries voted in favor of this resolution. Two countries—the US and Israel—voted against it and one country (the Republic of Moldova) abstained.²

The embargo was put into place by legislation from the US Congress, and this brings us to the first advocacy action that is needed. If you agree that this embargo is immoral since it means children go to school without breakfast, patients cannot receive medical care, farmers cannot get spare parts for their agricultural equipment

and the people of Cuba suffer from shortages of power, food, medicine and much more—then please write to your members of Congress and encourage them to end the embargo.

You can find your Member of the House of Representatives by going to www.house.gov and entering your zip code. You can find your Senators by going to www.senate.gov and selecting “Senators” from the menu bar.

Write to them and tell them: (1) that you are a person of faith; (2) that the immoral embargo of Cuba must be ended; and (3) that engagement between our countries’ two governments is a better path.

2. Advocacy to Remove Cuba from the State Sponsors of Terrorism

The second action relates to Cuba’s inclusion on the list of State Sponsors of Terrorism. Very recently, even harsher sanctions than those of the embargo were added when US President Donald Trump added Cuba to the State Sponsors of Terrorism (SSoT) list. The SSoT designation makes it even more difficult for Cuba to make and receive payments—and even receive humanitarian aid. While humanitarian aid may be listed as an exception, banks, shipping companies and various other companies (such as medical equipment companies, pharmaceutical companies) “over-comply” to these rules because they fear penalties from the US government for violating the regulations under the SSoT listing.

Sadly, US President Joseph Biden did not remove Cuba from that listing despite advocacy by faith groups and others during most of his administration. These groups pointed out that the basis for the listing was flawed as well as the reasons set forth above. The fact that Cuba remained on this list during the four years of Biden’s administration meant that the situation in Cuba deteriorated even more.

The Biden administration finally removed Cuba from the SSoT list on January 14, 2025—just six days before inauguration



Please see “Two Things” on page 12.

resource review

Stan Dotson's *Where Are They Going?*

reviewed by Katie Cook

Stan Dotson, *Where Are They Going? Stories and Backstories of Five Cubans*; Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers (Resource Publications); 2023, 116 pages.

This unusual book is just what the title states; it's the stories of five Cubans whom Stan Dotson has befriended over the years. Stan and his wife Kim Cristman have divided their time between Fairview, NC, and Matanzas, Cuba, since 1999.

Stan has taught in the Evangelical Seminary of Matanzas. He has preached, played guitar, translated for visiting groups and led many workshops and retreats across the island for the Fraternity of Baptists and the Cuban Council of Churches. At the writing of this book, he had been to Cuba 25 times.

When many people think of Cubans, they picture Fidel Castro in his fatigues, smoking a cigar. Others might conjure Cuba before the 1950s revolution: wealthy Cubans and US Americans basking in a profitable economic relationship. Others might think of a peasant—ignorant, hungry, possibly ripe for radicalization.

They would all be wrong.

Cubans are much more culturally and ethnically

diverse than most of the world thinks. *Where Are They Going?* covers the history of five distinct peoples in Cuba. In each chapter, Dotson introduces a friend and then delves into an imagined history of that friend's ancestors.

The book not only describes the daily lives of these five friends, including the daily privations that Cubans increasingly endure ("that was a day when there was no water," he writes in passing), but also how they navigate their way through hardship by drawing from the richness of their cultures.

This journey through centuries, even millennia, is fascinating for anyone who is interested in Cuba, anyone who is interested in history or anthropology—and anyone who is interested in how people cope with their own realities.

We are first introduced to Sila Reyna Cervantes, a community leader who lives in a small village that is a bumpy nine-hour ride from Matanzas. Sila's ancestry is indigenous. After we meet her, we are introduced to a woman who could have been her ancestor. We follow her people's journey to the island, a little-known people who predated the Tainos, who were the first people met by Christopher Columbus.

We next meet Orestes Roca Santana, a Baptist pastor and professor at the seminary in Matanzas—one who loves rock music and knows more about it than most US Americans. And then we meet his Spanish ancestors. We hear Orestes' voice in the description of people in the Iberian Peninsula during Roman times and following.

After that, Dotson introduces us to Alexis Morales O'Farrill. "Who could have predicted that a white Baptist hillbilly from the Blue Ridge Mountains would be enjoying home cooked meals prepared by a Santería priest and Abakuá member whose African roots run deep into the plains of Yoruba Land?"

*Far left: Stan Dotson and Kim Cristman singing.
Photo by Richard Myers.*



resource review

he writes. And then we learn that the first Africans on the Cuban island predate the first slave ships to North America.

Dotson weaves the ancient stories and anthropological tidbits between present-day stories. The acclaimed writer Joyce Hollyday describes his treatment

*"To say that Stan Dotson's book provides compelling bio sketches of five current, unsung Cuban citizens is like saying Hemingway wrote about whales and bells and loved Cuban rum."
—Ken Sehested*

of these stories in this way, "With ancestral history as warp and current Cuban reality as weft, he has woven a unique and compelling lyrical tapestry."

When we meet the fourth friend, Dotson has taken some liberties by assuming Dutch ancestry in his friend Lázaro Ceballos, an artist. He writes that he chose Lázaro to be the protagonist of this "particular ingredient in the mix of Cuban culture" because of Lázaro's fascination with medieval Flemish mysticism, and also for Vincent Van Gogh. After meeting Lázaro, we are taken to Fourteenth Century Flanders to meet a Flemish monk who inspired St. John of the Cross. (See what I mean about tidbits?)

The fifth person we meet is Luis Perez Martinto, who, in Dotson's words, "more than anyone I know embodies the French aspects of the Cuban culture." Once we meet Luis, we are taken back to Languedoc, France in 1248 CE and the Seventh Crusade, where we meet Louis IX and Luis' imaginary ancestor, Adrien. As in the other four chapters, we are caught up in the story of Adrien, who is swept up in the Crusade and returns to France blind and wounded, but is later befriended by the soon-to-be sainted King Louis. The story is bookended by Luis' own struggle with being openly gay in Castro's Cuba.

Ken Sehested, another renowned writer, said, "To say that Stan Dotson's book provides compelling bio sketches of five current, unsung Cuban citizens is like saying Hemingway wrote about whales and bells and loved Cuban rum." It might take several readings to catch all of the tidbits, and perhaps a glimpse of the larger picture, but each reading would be an adventure.

—Katie Cook is the Seeds of Hope editor.

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and what's being done
about it.

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art by Sally Lynn Askins

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—From the Seeds of Hope
staff & Council of Stewards



Two Things, *continued from page 9*

day. However, President Trump reinstated Cuba on the SSoT list immediately after his inauguration. The reason given for this listing is the claim that Cuban doctors are sent to other countries under forced labor—an accusation for which there is no evidence.

Since the SSoT listing is action taken by the Executive branch of the US government, please write to the White House (1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW; Washington, DC 20500) and to the Secretary of State (2201 C Street NW; Washington, DC 20520).³

While it might seem futile to advocate with the current president and Secretary of State, we must take as our inspiration our friends and partners in Cuba who continue to actively work for justice and love—and the widow in Jesus' parable who continued to push the "unjust judge" for justice.⁴ Our friends in Cuba cherish our friendships, but they also deserve our advocacy for justice on their behalf. So please write to Congress and the Administration. Visit your Congressional local offices and get to know the staff. Share stories of how these actions hurt the people of Cuba—and keep pushing for justice for Cuba.

—Carol Blythe has been involved for many years in advocacy for Cuba. She is a member of the Cuba Working Group of the Washington Interfaith Staffing Community, a cooperative group of 18 denominations and faith communities based in the Washington, DC, area. This group put together a letter containing much more information about the accusation of state-sponsored terrorism in Cuba and sent it in late 2024 to President Biden. For a copy of the letter, email seedseditor1@gmail.com.

Endnotes

1. Dean Dettloff, "Embargo Is a Polite Word; for Cubans, It's 'Crucifixion,'" *Sojourners*, January 19, 2024 (www.sojournal.net).
2. United Nations, "General Assembly Overwhelmingly Adopts Resolution Calling on United States to End Economic, Commercial, Financial Embargo against Cuba." From the 79th Session of the UN Assembly, October 30, 2024 (www.press.un.org).
3. For other ways to contact them, go to www.whitehouse.gov or www.state.gov.
4. Editor's note: Carol Blythe, when she wrote this admonition, did not know that we were including a meditation on this parable. See "The Persistent Widow" on page 18.

We Can't Give Up,

continued from page 1

loss will continue for months, perhaps years. In other words, no matter what your elected officials have told you, people are dying, and they will continue to die.

Rev. William Barber, founder of the Center for Public Theology and Public Policy at Yale Divinity School, where he also teaches, recently began organizing weekly prayer meetings outside of the US Capitol. He and some other clergy leaders recently moved their prayer into the Capitol Rotunda and prayed for what they termed “a moral budget.”

Three of them, including Barber, who has serious health issues, were arrested. After his release, Barber

“We are gathered here...to stand up and speak out about a federal budget that seems to have emerged like a phoenix from the very pit of hell.”

—Rev. Leslie Copeland-Tune

wrote, “When someone dies from poverty and lack of healthcare, we cannot lie and say, ‘God called them home.’ We have to tell the truth. They died because we live in a society that has chosen not to care for them.”

Soon afterwards, another group, led by Shane Claiborne, a longtime activist and co-director of Red Letter Christians, a social justice group that began in Philadelphia, held a prayer meeting in the Rotunda. “Let justice rise up on these very steps,” he prayed. “Let truth trouble the chambers of the Capitol.” They also were arrested.

During one of these demonstrations, Rev. Leslie Copeland-Tune of the National Council of Churches said, “We are gathered here...to stand up and speak out about a federal budget that seems to have emerged like a phoenix from the very pit of hell.”

Normally you wouldn’t read statements this blunt in Seeds publications, but this is the reality we face. Our editorial team has been struggling to figure out what we can include here that will make a difference for our readers and, through you, for marginalized people everywhere. You will read in these pages, besides Michael’s overview about budget cuts, several pieces about the worsening food crisis in Cuba, and ways to respond to all of these issues with advocacy. But you will also find a meditation about the Parable of the Persistent Widow, a parable that we believe is

particularly important right now. We don’t want these pages to paralyze you; we want them to inspire you.

So, you may ask, what do we do now? For one thing, we can NOT throw up our hands. We must keep doing, as John Wesley once wrote, what we can, where we can, when we can. We must continue to serve the people we can with the resources we can find, and we must continue to advocate for them with our nation’s leaders—even if we suspect that they might not listen. Each of us must decide which group of people God is calling us to help, which issue God is calling us to address. And we must never give up.

In the words of the newly inaugurated Pope Leo XIV, “God loves us, God loves all of us, and evil will not prevail. We are all in the hands of God. Therefore, without fear, united, hand in hand with God and among ourselves, let us go forward.”

—Katie Cook

Author’s note: Quotes from William Barber and Shane Claiborne are from Word & Way, Repairers of the Breach and the Poor People’s Campaign. The quote from Pope Leo is from Devex.

Looking for ways to introduce your congregation to hunger issues?

Hunger in God’s World

Email seedseditor1@gmail.com for a pdf of this four-session workshop from Seeds of Hope. If you are in the Central Texas area, a Seeds representative will lead the workshop for you in return for gas money.



Syria's Fragile Economic Recovery Faces Hurdles Amid Sanctions and Inflation

Syria's new interim government, led by Ahmed al-Sharaa, is grappling with a devastated economy marked by hyperinflation and widespread poverty. Despite promises of economic liberalization and wage increases, tangible improvements remain elusive.

The *Christian Science Monitor* reports that while the government has pledged reforms, such as easing import-export controls and reopening banks, these measures have yet to yield significant relief for the population. The Syrian pound has seen some appreciation, but the cost of living remains prohibitively high for many citizens.

International sanctions continue to impede Syria's economic recovery. Although the European Union has begun easing restrictions on energy, transport, and banking sectors to support the country's reconstruction efforts, the United States maintains stringent sanctions.

These sanctions limit Syria's access to global markets and financial systems, hindering the interim government's ability to stabilize the economy and attract foreign investment. As the nation strives to rebuild after years of conflict, the interplay between domestic

reforms and international policies will be critical in determining Syria's path forward.

—*Christian Science Monitor*

Hurricane Helene Recovery Efforts Face Challenges and Rising Costs

Recovery efforts following Hurricane Helene continue to encounter financial and bureaucratic challenges across North Carolina and military installations.

The US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) recently rejected Asheville, North Carolina's recovery plan because of provisions supporting minority-owned businesses. The decision has sparked concerns about balancing federal requirements with local initiatives.

At Fort Eisenhower, GA, post-storm reconstruction costs have exceeded \$91 million, highlighting the financial strain on military housing projects. The base continues to grapple with funding shortfalls as it works to restore damaged infrastructure.

Meanwhile, North Carolina's ambitious \$1.4 billion housing recovery plan faces uncertainty as Governor Josh Stein seeks substantial federal block grants. The viability of the plan remains in question due to funding challenges and federal approval processes.

HUD has announced \$2.5 million in grants across three states to support long-term rebuilding efforts. In North Carolina, the agency is focusing on combating homelessness exacerbated by the hurricane, aiming to provide housing solutions for displaced residents.

In a broader effort, HUD has allocated nearly \$12 billion for disaster recovery across 24 states, targeting long-term housing and infrastructure redevelopment. However, potential cuts to HUD's disaster recovery office could impact the department's ability to distribute funds effectively.

Despite these efforts, North Carolina homeowners affected by the storm may face difficulties accessing federal buyout programs. Many are skeptical of the programs due to their complexity and limited relocation options. The housing market in storm-affected regions has also been disrupted, with significant declines in new home listings and pending sales in both North Carolina and Florida, further illustrating the economic toll of recent hurricanes.

As North Carolina announces new recovery initiatives in collaboration with HUD, officials remain focused on expediting housing reconstruction and

infrastructure repairs. However, financial constraints and policy disputes may continue to slow progress in restoring communities.

—HousingWire (a newswire about the US housing market, designed for real estate professionals), *Augusta Chronicle*



Global Aid Flows to Myanmar Following Devastating Earthquake

A powerful 7.7 magnitude earthquake struck Myanmar's Sagaing region in March, killing hundreds and displacing thousands. In the wake of the disaster, an outpouring of international aid and humanitarian support has arrived, with countries and NGOs responding swiftly to the crisis. Relief workers are currently focused on providing shelter, medical care, and access to clean water.

The generosity reflects not just global concern, but also a recognition of Myanmar's long-standing culture of community support. Despite political instability and ongoing conflict, many within Myanmar have been at the forefront of mutual aid efforts. The crisis has reminded the world that even in fractured nations, moments of profound solidarity can emerge—both from within and abroad.

—*Christian Science Monitor*

Food Insecurity in Hawaii

Hawaii has been experiencing setbacks in food security because of recent USDA funding cuts, hindering ongoing recovery efforts in Maui after the 2023 wildfires.

The USDA recently eliminated funding for key programs that supported local food purchases for schools and emergency feeding organizations. The loss of the Local Food Purchase Assistance Cooperative Agreement and Local Food for Schools programs could result in a \$3 million shortfall for Hawaii's food systems, impacting students and families struggling with food insecurity.

With one in three households in Hawaii experiencing food insecurity last year, local food advocates are urging state legislators to establish alternative programs to address the funding gap.

Meanwhile, Maui continues to recover from the wildfires that left thousands displaced. The economic impact has been severe, with poverty rates in Lahaina (where the 2023 wildfires hit hardest) doubling and unemployment reaching 14 percent. Many residents face financial hardship, increasing the need for food assistance.

Housing issues were already a reality in Maui before the fires. Some 61 percent of Maui families were already struggling to find affordable housing. The 2023 wildfires only exacerbated that problem.

The Maui Emergency Feeding Task Force and local organizations are working to restore food security by promoting sustainable agriculture and regenerative farming. New facilities are being developed to enhance Maui's long-term resilience, integrating lessons learned from the wildfire disaster. Programs such as the Maui Wildfire Recovery Program focus on constructing fire-resistant, off-grid homesteads for displaced families and promoting local food production.

Although the loss of federal aid poses a serious threat to ongoing efforts to build a sustainable food system in Hawaii, community-driven initiatives are determined to make a difference. Mary Leong Saunders of the Hawaii Community Foundation writes that she saw a great resilience and a profound sense of hope in Maui. Her report for the foundation describes 241 new homes in Ka La'i Ola (with more on the way). At Ka Hale A Ke Ola, much of the devastation from the fire remains, but she reports that plans are underway to return onsite case management services for rebuilding the neighborhoods.

Saunders emphasized the fact that "multi-generational families remain in close proximity, neighbors

Newsfront is continued on page 16.

look after one another, and gardens are already growing” in Ka La’i Ola.

Still, development experts around the world insist that philanthropy, although it is often an answer to prayer, cannot replace government aid. Advocates for rebuilding Maui and Hawaii have emphasized the importance of state intervention and long-term agricultural investment to reduce dependence on imported food and strengthen food security in disaster-prone regions.

—*Hawaii Business Magazine, Honolulu Civil Beat, Hawai’i Community Foundation*

In His Final Act, Pope Francis Leaves All His Money for the Care of Prisoners

The late Pope Francis exhibited, from the beginning of his pontificate, an extraordinary dedication to all of the people mentioned in Matthew 25:31-41: hungry people, thirsty people, sick people, people without adequate clothing, prisoners and strangers. In fact, he championed all marginalized peoples.

He was especially concerned with prisoners. One of his first acts was to wash the feet of inmates on Holy Thursday, an act that he repeated every year. The pope described incarcerated people as the most forgotten members of society and appealed to institutions to show more compassion to them.

According to Bishop Benoni Ambarus, auxiliary

Bishop of Rome and director of the Vatican’s Office for Prison Pastoral Care, the pope’s appeals for sentence reductions and more humane conditions within the facilities “largely fell on deaf ears.”

However, this did not deter Francis from his mission. He donated funds from his personal savings. Before his death, he donated the entire content of his personal account for the needs of incarcerated people. *National Catholic Reporter* recently revealed that he had not withheld enough for his own burial (which he had stipulated should be modest and not within the Cathedral of St. Peter) so a benefactor paid for it.

On April 17, Holy Thursday, four days before the pope’s death, Bishop Ambarus said that Francis “dragged his body to Regina Coelli [a historic prison in Rome]” and washed the feet of the inmates there one last time.

—*National Catholic Reporter*

Half a million Gazans Face Outright Famine; Controversy Surrounds New US-backed Aid Group

Experts on food insecurity have been saying for months that the 2.1 million people in Gaza are in dire need of medical help, and they are on the brink of famine. An Israeli blockade kept food from being delivered inside Gaza for almost three months while supplies steadily dwindled—and while most of the world did nothing to ease the situation.

The poet Alice Oswald commented during a recent webinar that “Gaza reveals what we will allow to take place.”

At the 78th World Health Assembly (the decision-making body of the World Health Organisation, or WHO) held in Geneva in late May, sparks flew as numerous states accused Israel of war crimes against the Gazan people. The Israeli representative said that available humanitarian aid in Gaza was “misappropriated by



Left: Pope Francis greets a child.
Photo courtesy of Shutterstock.

Hamas time after time.” He argued that Hamas had turned it into “a thriving industry, siphoning resources meant for civilians to fund its terrorist infrastructure and prolong the war.”

But Mike Ryan of WHO repudiated that statement, saying that there has been no diversion of WHO aid in Gaza. He said that truckloads of medical supplies are ready to deploy, but aren’t being allowed in. He added that hundreds of thousands of Palestinians face the highest risk category in the United Nations’ Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC), which indicates that famine is imminent.

“Do you know what IPC5 means?” he said. “They will die immediately unless they receive food and assistance.” The World Food Programme and the IPC reported that this involves half a million people.

Some aid workers surmise that it may already be too late for many Gazan people.

Into this dire situation, a new aid distribution group called the Gaza Humanitarian Foundation (GHF) recently began work in the southern city of Rafah and three other sites. The group uses armed US security contractors and is backed by the US and Israeli governments. The United Nations and many aid groups are refusing to cooperate with GHF, saying that it “contradicts humanitarian principles and appears to weaponize aid.”

Israel’s response is that the group is in place to keep Hamas from stealing aid, a claim that most aid groups refute.

The British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), which has been keeping a close eye on the new operations, reported that hundreds of Palestinians were seen in line at Tal al-Sultan, a neighborhood in Rafah, and that Palestinians were distributing the food. US security personnel were on-site, but apparently no Israelis were involved.

For many Gazans, help is help, so they do not ask too many questions. Others, however, report that they are afraid to cross Israeli military lines to reach the distribution sites.

When asked to comment on the GHF’s work by reporters in Geneva, Jens Laerke, a spokesman for the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) called the operation “a distraction from what is actually needed, which is the reopening of all the crossings into Gaza, a secure environment within Gaza, and

faster facilitation of permissions and final approvals of all the emergency supplies that we have just outside the border.”

Just before press time, Jake Wood, the executive director of GHF, resigned, saying that this aid distribution system is not in keeping with the principles of “humanity, neutrality, impartiality, and independence.”

—*British Broadcasting Corporation; Devex; Nancy Menning, OEF. Note: At press time, reports were coming out of Gaza that artillery had been fired at the GHF sites.*

New Book Equips Educators to Support Students Facing Homelessness and Instability

Ruby K. Payne is an American educator and author best known for her book, *A Framework for Poverty*. She writes and conducts trainings about how poverty and education intersect. She recently released a new book from her own company, Aha! Process, Inc., titled *Educating Students Experiencing Homelessness, Instability, and Disengagement: The Impact of the Autonomic Nervous System*.

The book offers practical strategies for educators working with students under chronic stress. Drawing on neuroscience, Payne explains how instability and trauma disrupt the autonomic nervous system, limiting students’ ability to focus, plan, and engage in learning. The book emphasizes the role of safety, connection, and predictability in restoring students’ capacity to thrive academically.

With concise chapters and real-world tools, Payne guides teachers on how to calm dysregulated students, address behavioral challenges, and foster abstract thinking amid chaotic life circumstances. Released in both print and audiobook formats, the book is being praised for balancing empathy with accountability and is already being used in professional development workshops across the country.

Payne’s work is not without its critics, but the new book is a practical way to join the national conversation about the relationship between homelessness and education.

—*Aha! Process, Inc., Teaching Tolerance, Tampa Bay Times, Journal of Educational Controversy*

Newsfront was compiled by Jacob Bailes and Katie Cook.

The Persistent Widow

A Parable for Us, for This Time

by John Michael Longworth, OEF

Text: Luke 18:1-8

The so-called Parable of the Unjust Judge invites us into the challenging consideration of “pray always, but don’t get discouraged.” Insofar as we think of prayer primarily as an activity that we do, there are almost unlimited opportunities for discouragement:

- The illness that did not get better;
- The broken relationship that could not be mended;
- The callings and leading of the Spirit that were stymied, denied, obstructed, and even torn down by institutions, leaders and even our own failure of nerve;
- The loved one who died before we made it to their side;

- The fire, flood or storm that did make its way to our front door; and
- The arrival of wars, rumors of war and other signs of tumult.

All of these echo with the deep grief of “I prayed so hard, so long, so much, and now this. Was anyone even listening?”

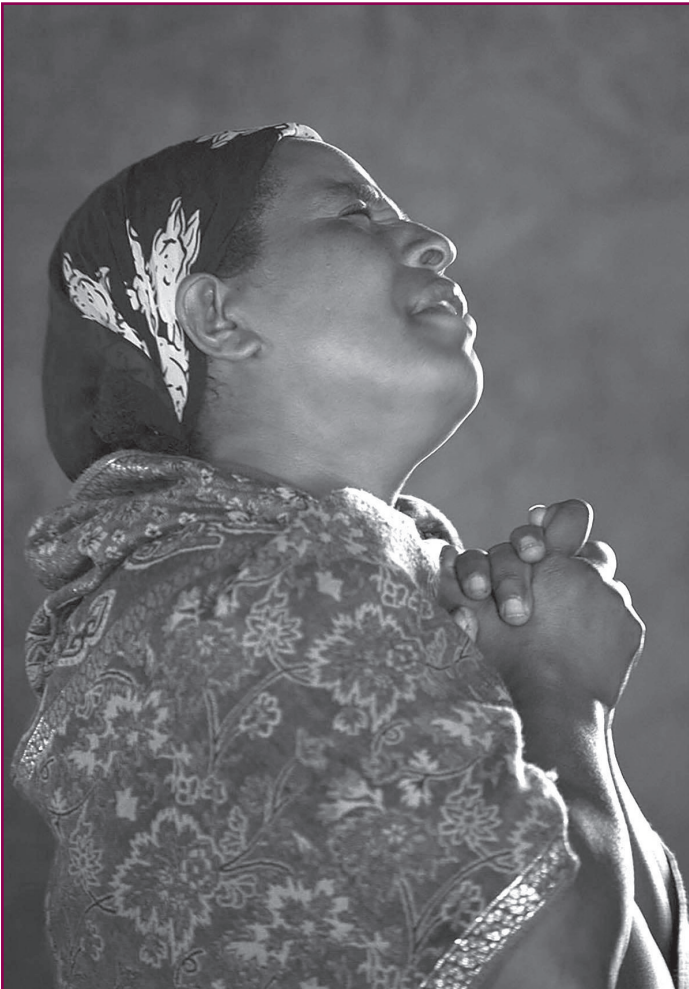
For many of us, as we journeyed through Lent this year, we went from hearing the dusty truth of our mortality on Ash Wednesday, to seeing Jesus wrestle with the cost of being human and also the beloved Son of God. In the temptation story from Luke, we saw Jesus wrestle with the very things that turn us away from each other each day:

- To satisfy OUR hunger first;
- To worship earthly power and to desire the worship and acclaim of others; and
- To seek fame and renown by turning our faith in God into a spectacular and dramatic performance.

How are such fragile and fallible creatures as we are supposed to pray always? How can we keep from losing heart? We know how quickly we crumble, distracted by our appetites, longing for power we don’t have, loving what privilege we do have, and desiring to be seen as truly holy. Pray? Always? Don’t lose heart? It would seem that this parable is indeed for us at this time.

It’s probably not hard to imagine the villain of the parable, a judge who neither fears God, nor respects people. He’s called to deliver justice and wisdom and would appear to be entirely unfamiliar with either. Our imaginations can swiftly paste his image on our own least favorite public servant.

At the same time, like in all of the parables, our attention is drawn instead to an unlikely and easy to overlook figure, a certain widow. She summons both the judge’s attention and ours with her perseverance. Her commitment to demanding justice reminds me of the movement called “Mothers of the Disappeared,” who challenged the military junta in Argentina dur-



Left: “Ethiopian Woman” by Steve Evans.

ing the “Dirty War” in 1974. Gathering repeatedly in the Plaza del Mayo in Buenos Aires, they chanted and banged pots with spoons demanding to know where the government had taken their children. Day by day they pushed against great power and danger.

What wisdom can we gain from the widow and those like her? She brings us gifts of clarity, humility and persistence.

We see her clarity in the way she seeks justice. Warmed-over positive sentiments are not enough if the

What wisdom can we gain from the widow and those like her? She brings us gifts of clarity, humility and persistence.

right thing isn’t done. We see it in her acknowledgment that she has an opponent. Pretending that everything is okay and holding a vague notion of neighborliness will not suffice. We see her clarity in the conviction that, while she is not whole at the moment, there is a change that will make it right. It’s not enough to simply shrug and say, “I guess this latest humiliation is as good as it gets.”

Her clarity reminds me of Harriet Tubman, who escaped slavery and became a conductor on the underground railroad in the United States. Each day she prayed for the captain of the slave patrol that was pursuing her by name, using these words “O Lord, you know him. Either change his heart, or stop it.”

We see her humility in her own recognition that she had no formal power, no real social influence; and yet she bravely stood up squarely to the one who held the power to make the change she needed. She was not timid in standing up for herself.

We see her persistence in the spiritual practice of coming to the judge “one more time,” knowing that the soul force of standing up for justice has a cumulative effect. She has no choice. There will be no justice if she stops.

Even so, she recognizes the humanity of the judge, even if the effort isn’t reciprocated. Her action succeeds—not for its moral appeal, or by pricking the conscience of the other, or changing his heart—but rather he is moved by annoyance, embarrassment and exhaustion. His indifference gives out to her persistence.

Friends, it might be helpful for us today to consider prayer less as something we do, and more as a way that we are. Let us acknowledge humbly that it is not any of the things we sometimes catch ourselves doing:

- Compulsively thinking about God;
- Trying to bathe in spiritual sweetness and constant positivity;
- Pretending all is well when it is not;
- Tearing ourselves down to build God up; or
- Knowing all the right words to bend God’s will.

Prayer is the loving dwelling in the presence of God that cultivates a profound and holy appreciation of what actually is. It is God within us responding to God around us. It is this mode of being that makes room for us to be a channel of what the Holy One is doing, as the prayer attributed to St. Francis requests.

This way of BEING prayer gives us gifts of clarity, humility and persistence. We learn to trust that the wholeness we have glimpsed is being made real through the unfolding healing, justice, reconciliation,—and yes, even in the relenting of the unjust and the indifferent.

As we continue through the weeks of Eastertide, let us acknowledge that we ARE contending with forces both around and within us that are barriers to wholeness, justice and peace.

Let us acknowledge our powerlessness in so many ways, and also the power we cling to that is ultimately an illusion. Let us stand squarely with our faces fixed on the one who can deliver us.

Let us pray always, by choosing one day, one hour, one minute, one second at a time to do the next right thing and ask God to transform our very breath, our sighs, our silence into a prayer of “one more time.” May this be a season where we are reshaped to BE prayer—the living, breathing embodiment of abiding in God.

Let us rejoice, that as we press for the lives of our neighbors even to the very ones who seek to trample them, that our appeal is also to a divine parent who is ready to draw near to cries for justice wherever they arise. God will not be slow; let us make haste to cry out. We will bear witness to God moving us to BE prayer, enlivening us to embody prayer, enabling us to be the answer to the prayers of our neighbors.

During these weeks, may the Human One come among us, dwelling in the struggle and temptation we face, sustaining us with a faithfulness that is unmatched in clarity, humility and persistence, even to the sacrifice of love that he endured at the Cross, which has become for us a sign of life, forever abiding in God.

—John Michael Longworth is a Lutheran minister and a professed member of the Order of Ecumenical Franciscans (OEF). This sermon was originally written for the 2025 international OEF Lenten service.

Hunger News & Hope

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

- Alliance of Baptists
- Cooperative Baptist Fellowship

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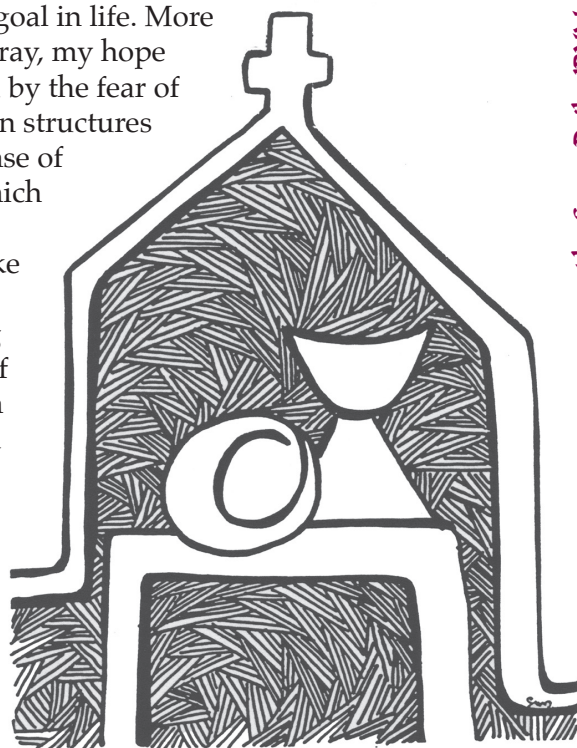
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Quotes, Poems & Pithy Sayings

Pope Francis wrote, "I prefer a Church which is bruised, hurting and dirty because it has been out on the streets, rather than a Church which is unhealthy from being confined and from clinging to its own security. I do not want a Church concerned with being at the center and which then ends by being caught up in a web of obsessions and procedures. If something should rightly disturb us and trouble our consciences, it is the fact that so many of our brothers and sisters are living without the strength, light and consolation born of friendship with Jesus Christ, without a community of faith to support them, without meaning and a goal in life. More than by fear of going astray, my hope is that we will be moved by the fear of remaining shut up within structures which give us a false sense of security, within rules which make us harsh judges, within habits which make us feel safe, while at our door people are starving and Jesus does not tire of saying to us: "Give them something to eat" (Mark 6:37).

—Evangelii Gaudium apostolic exhortation, 49; November 2013.
Cited by Sr. Margaret Magee, OSF, in *Acting Franciscan*



art by Susan Daily, IBVM

Statement of Purpose

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

Editorial Address

Seeds is housed by the community of faith at Seventh & James Baptist Church. Mailing address: 602 James Ave., Waco, TX 76706; Phone: 254/755-7745; Fax: 254/753-1909; E-mail: seedseditor1@gmail.com. Web: www.seedspublishers.org. Copyright © 2025; ISSN 0194-4495. Seeds of Hope, Inc., holds the 501(c)3 nonprofit tax status.

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

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