

I Was Hungry, and You...



art by Rachel Farris

Worship Resources for the Creative Church - Hunger Emphasis 2026

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Sacred Seasons



Worship Tools for the Creative Church

Sacred Seasons is a series of creative worship tools to help raise awareness of hunger and justice issues. Once subscription-based, these unique packets are now sponsored and available to whoever needs them for no charge. To order, call 254/498-4997 or e-mail seedseditor1@gmail.com. For back issues or to donate, go to www.seedspublishers.org.

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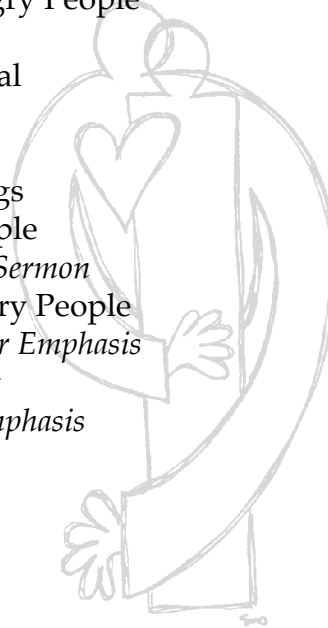
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Statement of Purpose

Seeds of Hope, Inc., is a private, independent group of believers responding to a common burden for poor and hungry people of God's world, and acting on the strong belief that biblical mandates to feed the poor were not intended to be optional.

Since 1991, the group has sought out people of faith who feel called to care for the poor; and to affirm, enable and empower a variety of responses to the problems of hunger and poverty.

Editorial Address

The Seeds of Hope ministry is housed by the community of faith at Seventh & James Baptist Church. Contact information: 602 James; Waco, TX 76706; 254/498-4997; seedseditor1@gmail.com; www.seedspublishers.org. Copyright © 2026.

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A Word about This Packet

We hope this packet will challenge and inspire your congregation. Alec Ylitalo's theme interpretation on page 4 will explain why we chose to leave one of Jesus' most famous quotes hanging: "I was hungry and you..." Rachel Farris' explanation of her cover art (on this page) takes us deeper into the theme of confession and hope.

Rachel has created most of our cover art for several years. A graphic artist and illustrator, she attends Seventh & James Baptist Church in Waco, TX, where the Seeds ministry is housed, and where her husband, Daniel, serves as minister of music.

You will see many offerings from our Liturgical Team, which includes Guilherme Feitosa de Almeida from the Baylor University Department of Theatre Arts; Ruba Byrd, pastor of a Friends congregation in Eugene, OR; Trent Clifford, a writer and former minister in Waco, TX, one of whose specialties is now in theatre; Erin Conaway, pastor of Seventh & James Baptist Church in Waco, TX; Ken Sehested, a founding Seeds editor and writer who lives in Ashville, NC; Sharlande Sledge, retired associate pastor at Lake Shore Baptist Church in Waco; Scott Turner, youth minister at Seventh & James; and Alec Ylitalo, pastor at Richfield Christian Church in Waco.

As always, you will sometimes see the names of our team members, but their work is everywhere in this packet. Trent has written a monologue and Ruba has written resources for children and youth.

You will also find a sermon by Brett Younger, pastor of the historic Plymouth Church in Brooklyn, NY, and one of our favorite sermon writers. There is also a pastoral prayer by Matt Rosencrans, associate pastor at Seventh & James and

the person who takes care of the building where the Seeds office is housed.

During our planning session last summer, we remembered the struggle we had with global hunger statistics for the 2025 Hunger Emphasis packet. The numbers we have access to are always a couple of years old, because that is how long it takes to tabulate all of the information and get it back to the anti-hunger community. But last year, we knew those numbers were wrong—because of the demolition of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and other aid to foreign countries, as well as hunger programs in the US. In essence, we ended up just telling you that.

So, this year, we decided to select a list of 11 countries and one region in the US that have been named as hunger "hotspots." We wrote summaries

Please see "A Word about" on page 5.

Reflection on the Hunger Emphasis Cover Art

by Rachel Farris

I wanted to reflect on the tension between the world we have created and the hope that remains within it. There is no pretending that everything is well. The trouble and need are real. The wounds are real. But so is the possibility of renewal. In the midst of trash waste, and selfishness, seeds continue to fall. Life continues to grow. And despite what we have broken, discarded, or failed to give, God's hope and provision remain.

We accumulate, consume, and discard so much, often looking for peace and reassurance in the midst of wounds we have not truly addressed. Yet even from the waste we leave behind, life can emerge. The fruit growing from discarded food represents that possibility: seeds falling into what seems useless, taking root, and producing something nourishing. It is a reminder that our excess can become provision when we choose to share rather than simply consume.

The child's hand represents our responsibility to care for those who are most vulnerable. We are called not only to recognize hunger and need, but to respond to it, using what we have so that others may have enough.

— Rachel Farris is a graphic artist and illustrator who attends Seventh & James Baptist Church in Waco, TX, where her husband serves as minister of music. She enjoys being involved with the ministry to children and creating digital and hand-drawn artwork inspired by biblical themes for church bulletins and worship packets.

I Was Hungry, and You...

A Theme Interpretation

by Alec Ylitalo

To me, this year's theme for our Hunger Emphasis liturgy is one of the most difficult pills to swallow. Not because it uses striking or outrageous language to get your attention, not because it is an impossible mandate or difficult challenge to us and to the world, but simply because it is left on each and every one of us to finish. In other words, it is an introspective question that requires us to put that magnifying glass upon ourselves and actually complete the sentence with all honesty, humility—and maybe even shame.

"I was hungry and you..." brings to mind, of course, the Matthew 25 text where it is completed in two different ways, "I was hungry and you gave me something to eat," or, "I was hungry and you gave me no food." To start there might be the best place when we are asking ourselves to fill in the blank while attempting to determine how we have measured up to the growing needs of our neighborhoods, our communities and our world. However, our hope is that you don't just stop with one of those two answers.

Too often in my life, I have passed by a cardboard sign being held by someone simply saying that they're hungry, and instead of giving them

something to eat like the Gospels call for, I would have just finished our theme statement with, "I was hungry and you passed by without even acknowledging my existence."

In addition, I have been part of a ministry for a few years now that recognized the weekend food

The beauty of the theme for this year is that we want you to traverse the whole spectrum of emotions that will come from finishing this statement over and over and over on a personal spiritual level, on a church-wide level, and even on a public policy level.

insecurity of students across our area and stepped in to provide some nourishment in the in-between times when they're not at school. *Pack of Hope* exists because someone responded, "I was hungry and you saw my struggle, and found a way to meet my needs."

You see, there are thousands of ways that the theme for this packet could and should be completed by each and every individual who is reading it. Yes, some of those ways that we answer will leave a lump in our throats because we're ashamed at how we responded to the dire needs of a fellow child of God. Yes, some of those ways will and have touched thousands of lives because we've joined together to bring justice to a small portion of our world. Also, yes, some of those ways will simply fill one person's stomach, change one person's life, and become the most important moment of embodying Christ's love that you will ever know.

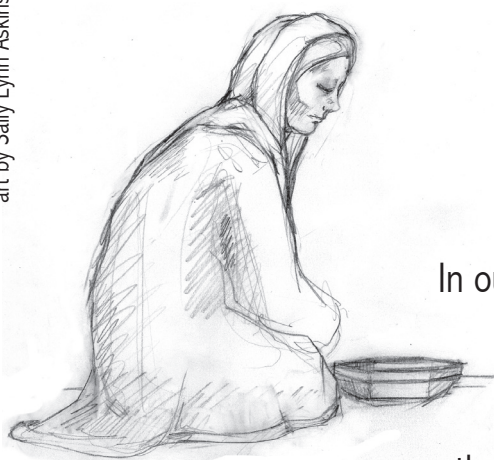
The beauty of the theme for this year is that we want you to traverse the whole spectrum of emotions that will come from finishing this statement over and over and over on a personal spiritual level, on a church-wide level, and even on a public policy level.



art by Sally Lynn Askins

In our world today, too often there is no shame in passing by and ignoring the person literally dying of hunger on the side of the road. Too often there is no empathy for the plight of someone who works 80 hours a week and still is trying to find a way to their next meal. Too often, as Jeremiah says, the people in power announce and claim “Peace, Peace,” when there is no peace among those who starve for just a morsel of food.

art by Sally Lynn Askins



In our world today, too often there is no shame in passing by and ignoring the person literally dying of hunger on the side of the road. Too often there is no empathy for the plight of someone who works 80 hours a week and still is trying to find a way to their next meal.

In these resources, may you find the challenge of filling in the blank, but may you also find the grace of God meeting you in every moment. May you find the inspiration to start filling in the blank with regards to a new hunger initiative in your life, your church, or your city. But also may you find the reassurance that you are part of a whole body of Christ that is working alongside you towards the very same goal.

May you realize the extent to which the children of God are hurting and need acts of grace. But may you also find words of hope even though it seems overwhelming and bleak. Friends, there are people around you crying out, “For I was hungry...” as they wait on our answer. If you need to start that answer, simply turn to another great teaching mo-

ment of Jesus as he turns to his disciples in Matthew 14 and simply says, “You feed them....”
—Alec Ylitalo, Senior Minister at Richfield Christian Church in Waco, TX, is a member of the Sacred Seasons liturgical team and also the Seeds Council of Stewards. He is involved in local social assistance programs and actions for justice, as well as local interfaith efforts.

A Word about

continued from page 3

for all those regions, including quotes and prayers. That section begins on page 20.

For this packet, we enlisted the help of Matthew Page, our Professional Writing intern from Baylor University, to write the descriptions of conditions in six US “hotspots.” He also wrote a prayer for each of those areas.

We are often struck by the way in which all of this material, winging its way from every direction imaginable, comes together with such beauty and cohesion. As Trent wrote in his substack, *Rewriting Faith*,

I wonder if the Divine, like butterflies amongst the flowers, is cross-pollinating my soul with those of other people of faith, that we might bloom in community with each other in profound and colorful ways.

As usual, all of this is painstakingly proofread by Ellen Kuniyuki Brown, who tries to make sure that we make sense. We hope this packet will be inspiring as you guide your congregation through a Lenten journey that will truly bring us to Easter on the other side.

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 we all receive the challenge and inspiration that we need, and may we all contribute to the healing of hunger in this world.

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

I Was Hungry, and You...

A Hunger Emphasis Liturgy

by the Seeds Liturgical Team

Call to Worship

One: I am a hungry child in Sudan where USAID funding was cut and the village I walked to for food didn't have anything to give me.

Many: Lord, when did we see you in Sudan?

One: I am a terrified mom in Yemen where one in every four pregnant or nursing moms are malnourished.

Many: Lord, when did we see you in Yemen?

One: I am a shell-shocked young man in Gaza where the ringing in my ears from the explosions never ceases. I give any food I can find to the little ones who don't understand why their bellies ache all the time...I know.

Many: Lord, when did we see you in Gaza?

One: Jesus said as we feed or neglect our siblings all around us; the ones also bearing God's image, we do the same to him.

Many: Give us eyes to see you suffering in the faces of our hurting ones, and help us to do what you are calling us to do.

—Erin Conaway

Hymn of Adoration

"Jesus the Lord Said, 'I Am the Bread'"

Sing! A New Creation No 121

Text: st. 1-5, Anonymous Urdu, tr. C. Dermott Monahan;

st. 6-7, Bert Polman;

based on "I Am" passages in the Gospel of John.

Music: Urdu Melody

Tune: YISU NE KAHA

Meditation of Preparation

For Jesus, then, liberation is total liberation. And thereby he identifies the root of all injustice and exploitation: breach of friendship, breach of love. We are not presented with a liberation open to a "spiritualistic" interpretation, still so tightly clung to in certain Christian circles. Hunger and justice are not just economic and social questions. They are global human questions, and they challenge our way of living the faith in its very roots.

—Gustavo Gutiérrez

Interpretive Poem

Note: We suggest that you consider having this poem read aloud while a group interprets it through pantomime or liturgical dance. This might be a good activity for youth and/or children.

"Rice is Heaven"

Rice is heaven

you can't make it on your own

Rice should be shared

Rice is heaven

We all see

the same stars in heaven

How natural that we

all share the same rice

Rice is heaven

As we eat

God enters into us

Rice is heaven



art by Rachel Farris

Oh, rice
Should be shared and eaten
—by the Korean poet Kim Chi Ha¹

Song of God's Care

"Look and Learn"

Sing! A New Creation No 186

Text and Music: Nah Young-Soo, Korean;
based on Matthew 6:23-24;
tr. and arr. John Bell

Reading from the Prophets

Jeremiah 6:14-16

Reading from the Acts

Acts 4:32-37

Hymn of Intercession

"Grant Us Wisdom to Perceive You"

The New Century Hymnal No 510

Text: Rae Whitney

Music: German carol, 14th century;

harm. Ralph Vaughan Williams

Tune: QUEM PASTORES 8.8.8.6.

Gospel Reading

Matthew 25:41-46

Pastoral Prayer

See "Prayer for the Hungry" on page 8.

Reading from the Psalms

Psalms 82:1-4

Hymn of Witness

"Lord, Whose Love Through Humble Service"

Chalice Hymnal No 461

Text: Albert F. Bayly, alt.

Music: Attr. B. F. White;

harm. Ronald A. Nelson

Tune: BEACH SPRING 8.7.8.7.D.

Sermon

See "A Church That Cares for Hungry People" on page 9.

Call to the Table

CELEBRANT: Just as God is worshiped when the hungry are fed and the thirsty given something to drink, so is God praised and glorified in this meal for which we gather as the Body of Christ. For it is in this meal that we proclaim, through the simplicity of bread and wine, that Christ is among us,

filling us not only with food, but with hope and peace and joy. Therefore, let us draw near to the table of our Lord and to one another.

—Ashlee Wiest-Laird

The Bread

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

The bread is distributed.

The Cup

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

The cup is distributed.

Blessing

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

—Ashlee Wiest-Laird

Meditation of Commitment

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

Please see "Liturgy" on page 12.

Prayer for the Hungry

by Sharlande Sledge

God of the Sudanese child and the Ukrainian teacher,
God of the Bangladeshi woman and the Lebanese man,
the wandering refugee and the grandmother in the projects,
God of every last one of us,
we come linked by our places in this world
where the sun laps time zones from today into tomorrow.
we are connected as family members on this earth,
who have the power to bring to the Table
bread and fish, rice and noodles,
oranges and potatoes, rice and beans, so everyone can eat.

But God, we confess that in a world where there is food
enough for everyone, we squander our power
to distribute the food on our shelves
or the money in our pockets to the hungry,

We know that we come to this day,
looking for an easier answer than sacrifice.
We know that the awareness of injustice
we feel at this moment
may fade as quickly as today's headlines.

So, God, give us compassion that lasts.
May we give whatever is in our power
to overturn the tables of injustice
and to pour out all the rice in our bags
for all those the world forgets to feed.

Trusting in your power,
we join with your people everywhere
who long for the day when we will never have to calendar
a "World Hunger Sunday" again,
when all the grain is distributed,
when every parent's hungry child is fed,
when justice and joy prevail.

May it be so. Amen.

—Sharlande Sledge, a member of the Seeds Liturgical Team, recently retired after serving for many years as associate pastor for Lake Shore Baptist Church in Waco, TX. She has long been active in encouraging church groups to respond to hunger issues in creative ways. This prayer is from Prayers & Litanies for the Christian Seasons (Smyth & Helwys Publishing Company) and is used with permission.

art by Sharon R. Rollins

A Church that Cares for Hungry People

A Sermon by Brett Younger

Text: Acts 4:32-35

There was not a needy person among them, for as many as owned lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold. They laid it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need. There was a Levite, a native of Cyprus, Joseph, to whom the apostles gave the name Barnabas (which means "son of encouragement"). He sold a field that belonged to him, then brought the money, and laid it at the apostles' feet.

Churches are often known for one thing, which is okay. Some churches are known for their sense of community. Churches that focus on friendship are fun—lots of parties, lots of traditions, and lots of food. People in these churches tend to weigh more. We gain weight at potluck dinners. People who think they are funny love these churches. Friendly people will laugh at attempts at humor, even when they fall short of actually being funny.

We need conversation. We need a chance to talk. We need a chance to listen. We need to be friends with people—people who would not be our friends without the church, friends who are older than we are, friends younger than we are and friends from far from where we are from. We need people to go to the theater, the ball game and the restaurant. Our country has an epidemic of loneliness. These churches are important because we need friends. We need churches that are good at community.

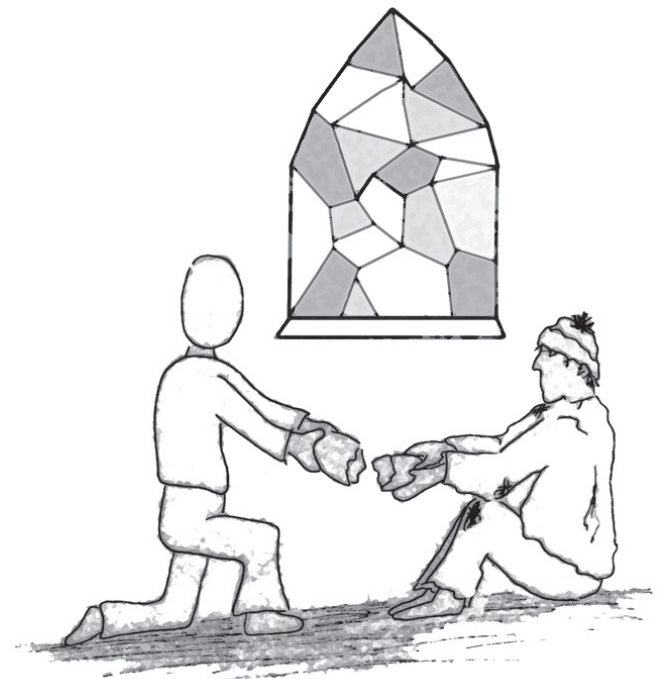
Some churches are known for their educational programs. Churches that focus on learning are great—lots of book groups, classes, lectures, discussions—and a little Greek in the sermon now and then. People in these churches like feeling smart. Clever people love these churches. We know how to encourage cleverness, even when we hear a comment that is not quite as clever as the speaker thinks: "That's an interesting way of looking at it."

We need to ask questions. We need to debate. We need to be informed. We need a chance to share what we are thinking. We need a chance to hear what others are thinking.

We need to practice being open-minded. We need to learn from people we would not know

without the church, people with other educational backgrounds, other opinions, and other ideas that are very different from our ideas. Our country has a shaky relationship with science and knowledge. These churches are important because people need to learn. We need churches that are good at education.

Some churches are known for their worship. Churches that focus on worship take faith seriously, take God seriously and take being serious seriously. We love music and silence. We love the *Gloria* and the *Doxology*. We love Advent and Easter. When we sing, we feel God with us. When we



art by Sharon R. Rollins & Katie Cook

pray, we feel hope. When we confess, we open our hearts. When we give, we share who we are. When we listen, we hear the Spirit.

We need worship because life is hard, because our culture pushes us to selfishness, and because our souls can feel empty. We need to share our lives with God. We need to love God and one another. We need to think beyond ourselves. Worship leads to real purpose and a broader perspective, to a sense of something bigger than we are, to holiness that invades our everyday, and that helps us recognize intimations of the divine. We need churches that are good at worship.

A few churches are known for caring for hungry children. These churches seem radical. They serve God by caring for God's most vulnerable children. They get upset and angry, not about trivialities, but about the deaths of infants. These churches love their neighbors as themselves—even when those neighbors are far away.

Churches that care for hungry people worry more about the poor than the rich, more about needy children than wealthy adults, and more about underprivileged strangers than privileged members. Churches that care for hungry people do not get stuck in a predictable routine of policies, programs, buildings and budgets. We seek God's agenda and not our own. We shape our lives according to Jesus' teachings. We follow Christ by feeding God's children. We feel the world's brokenness, but we also feel God's love.

We need churches that care for those who are hungry.

We need churches that feed starving children, like the first church. The first church was counter-cultural. They stood against the empire. They lived with Jesus' radical ideas. Money? Share it. Enemies? Love them. Violence? Renounce it. Foreigners? Welcome them. Sinners? Forgive them. Hungry children? Feed them.

Shane Claiborne writes this about the first church: "Imagine a biological family in which a brother eats well and stores up food in his pantry while his sister goes without and starves—is this not murder? How much more preposterous should this be within the Body of Christ? In the early church, if someone needed food but there wasn't enough to go around, the entire community fasted until there was enough for everyone to eat. What a testimony this should be to the contemporary American church family!"

The first church assumed God's church should share God's priorities. They did not have a hunger committee. They had a hunger church. They looked for needy people. Luke wrote, "Not a single person was overlooked."

A church member named Barnabas sold some of his property and gave the money to the hunger

The amount of money that the richest 1 percent of the world's population makes equals what the poorest 57 percent makes. Poverty exists not because we cannot feed the poor, but because we cannot satisfy the rich.

fund. He sold his land to feed hungry people. Barnabas thought that is what church people were supposed to do. The first church prays for hungry people, and becomes the answer to their own prayers. The first church would be shocked to learn that we still have hunger and that churches have stopped caring so much.

The statistics are devastating. Around 24,000 people die of hunger-related diseases every day. Six million children under the age of five die every year as a result of hunger. Some 730 million people woke up this morning with little hope of enough to eat today. Some 319 million are dealing with chronic hunger.¹

The problems are so overwhelming that we do not want to think about hungry people. More than anything else, what keeps us from thinking about hungry people is that WE are not hungry. For most of us, "hungry" means we do not have the exact food in our refrigerators that we have a taste for. For some of us, the only time we feel hunger pangs is when we fast before a medical test that most of the world cannot afford.

The amount of money that the richest 1 percent of the world's population makes equals what the poorest 57 percent makes. Poverty exists not because we cannot feed the poor, but because we cannot satisfy the rich. We may want to reassure ourselves that the hoarding of resources by the richest society in history has nothing to do with the suffering of children, but that is just not true. We are all connected.

If someone asked, "How much do you need?" we might answer, "Just a little more." And yet, in

our closets, there are clothes we do not wear. In our pantries, there is food that we will waste. In our bank accounts, there is money we do not need. We have to struggle not to lead self-centered lives. Americans make up 5 percent of the world's population, and consume 20 percent of the resources.

We have learned to make excuses:

"I work hard for what I have."

Empathy, the willingness to feel another's hunger, takes us to hard places, but those hard places are where we meet God.

"I have too much to worry about without worrying about starving children."

"It's not my responsibility."

Our lack of concern is embarrassing. Most Americans who call themselves Christians give less than a dollar a year to feed hungry people. We lose sleep over problems at work, difficulties at school and troubles at home, but few of us lose sleep over children starving. We tell ourselves there is nothing we can do about it, but that is not true.

It is true, though, that it is hard to care. You and I are stuck inside a system of consumption that we are reluctant to critique honestly. Our mortgages, luxuries and privileged lifestyles control what we think. Whoever is paying our bills tells us what we are supposed to believe. After a certain level of comfort is achieved, wealthy people—like most of us—try to avoid having too much empathy.

But overcoming hunger is not charity. It is justice.

God's view is different from ours. Our sense of injustice is tiny compared to God's. For us, the death of a hungry child is sad. For God, it is tragic. Our reaction is disappointment. God's reaction is pain beyond what language can convey.

Empathy, the willingness to feel another's hunger, takes us to hard places, but those hard places are where we meet God.

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

The British Red Cross estimates that two million people in Gaza face extreme hunger, with 470,000 on the brink of mass starvation and preventable

deaths. UNICEF² reports that over 320,000 children under five are at risk of acute malnutrition. More than one in three people (39 percent) are going days at a time without eating. Adults regularly skip meals to feed their children.

Aid agencies have treated tens of thousands of emaciated children in Gaza. Starvation is accelerating at a catastrophic pace. The United Nations World Food Programme has tried desperately to draw attention to the urgent need for a full-scale humanitarian response, given the escalating hunger-related deaths, rapidly worsening levels of malnutrition and plummeting levels of food consumption.

There are hundreds of thousands of people who have nothing to eat. Hunger is claiming lives every day.

Gaza is filled with children with wasted bodies, too weak to cry, babies dying from hunger and parents arriving at clinics hoping for something to feed their children. We might disagree on the reasons for this tragedy, but one thing is certain: the children who are suffering are not to blame.

Hunger affects their intellectual development, physical growth and their ability to fight off illness. Widespread malnutrition means that even common and usually mild diseases like diarrhea are becoming fatal, especially for children. Without proper nutrition, a child's heart shrinks. Then the liver, kidneys and intestines begin breaking down.

There is no time to lose. Without increased food aid, the famine will spread and more children will die. More food will save more lives.³

Most of us did not join the church because we want to give our money away, but we have to admit that in the Bible the church is far more concerned for hungry people than the other issues Christians tend to give their attention to.

Anne Frank writes: "Hunger is not a problem. It is an obscenity. How wonderful it is that nobody need wait a single moment before starting to improve the world."

We can be Christ's church in this moment. God will help us see our children in those who are hungry, and in doing so, see God's children. We want to think that what is good for us is good for the world, but the Christian message is that what is good for the world is good for us.

If we give to hungry people, we become more of who God hopes we will be. We know the hope of following Christ. We learn to live with God's compassion. We do more than agree that it is a good

idea to feed starving children. We feed starving children.

When Christ's church steps into a voting booth and we do not think of our own self-interests; we think of hungry people, we are being what God hopes we will be. When Christ's church volunteers at soup kitchens, food pantries, and other places where hungry people find food, we are being what God hopes we will be.



If we give to hungry people, we become more of who God hopes we will be. We know the hope of following Christ. We learn to live with God's compassion. We do more than agree that it is a good idea to feed starving children.
We feed starving children.

We can give one percent of our income to feed hungry people. Not many do that, but we can. God invites us to be a church with God's priorities. We can save some of God's children. We can be a church that cares for hungry people.

—Brett Younger, a generous and frequent contributor to *Sacred Seasons*, has pastored a number of churches in Indiana and Texas, and now serves as pastor of the historic Plymouth Church in Brooklyn, NY. Before moving to Brooklyn, he taught homiletics at McAfee School of Theology at Mercer University in Atlanta, GA. He has written numerous books and is much sought after for his thoughtful editorial writings.

Endnotes

1. From the World Food Programme (www1.wfp.org/zero-hunger).
2. UNICEF, founded in 1946 as the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund, has been officially named the United Nations Children's Fund since 1953.
3. According to the World Health Organisation, famine was first confirmed in Gaza in August of 2025. To read more about Gaza and other countries facing famine, go to page 20.

Friend,
even if I came to you
in the rags of weariness,
the cloak of invisibility or
dust of neglect, the
web of a spider,
would you offer me
a drink of water
seeing thirst,
and help to decide
a way, at the crossroads
of life?

If I look into your
hands, what will I find:
a golden thread,
the strength of beauty,
a loaf of bread?
—David Sparenberg,
from "Dressed for the Occasion"



art by Rebecca S. Ward

Liturgy,

continued from page 7

Hymn of Commitment

They Asked, "Who's My Neighbor?"

The New Century Hymnal No 541

Text and Music: Jan Wesson, alt.; Luke 10:29-37

Tune: NEIGHBOR 11.8.11.8.8.

Benediction

Friends, as we go out into the world, unexamined apathy is our most dangerous way to be in the face of so much suffering. May God give us eyes to see, strength to not look away, wisdom to discern our role, and great courage to take the first step. May the Lord comfort your pain, irritate your distractions, and send you boldly in hope to keep pushing on the long moral arc of our lives so it stays bent towards justice and love.

—Erin Conaway

1. This poem is taken from *Hosanna! Ecumenical Songs for Justice and Peace*, No 64, and was copyrighted by the Christian Conference of Asia in 1982.

Responsive Prayer for Renewal

by Matt Rosencrans

ONE: Our Lord and our God, at the formation of our world, you grasped the chaos and molded it into a new heaven brimming with light and a new earth teeming with life.

MANY: *You are the God who brings order from chaos.*

ONE: As we look back throughout time on this earth, we note with heartbreak numerous times when this world fell into chaos again.

MANY: *You were God then, and you brought order back out of chaos.*

ONE: We look around today and we cannot help but see chaos again in our midst.

MANY: *We see wars, and rumors of wars, and our hearts break again.*

ONE: We see many who have suffered greatly because of natural disasters and our heart breaks.

MANY: *We see those who are suffering from starvation and famine, and our hearts break.*

ONE: O Lord, be with us today, all of us.

MANY: *In every corner of this world, we pray that your spirit is at work bringing order again from the chaos.*

ONE: We know that you continue to call us to be agents of your peace.

And not just peace but presence.

MANY: *And not just presence, but a helping hand. To bring water, to bring food, to bring care to all of those who are in need.*

ONE: O God, we are strong in desire but weak in body.

MANY: *Strengthen and renew us this day.*

ALL: Help us to be people of endurance so we can continue to serve you faithfully this day and in the days to come.

Amen.



art by Rebecca S. Ward

—Matt Rosencrans is associate pastor at Seventh & James Baptist Church, where the Seeds offices are housed. He offers patient and often unheralded help in keeping the offices warm and safe.

James, Brother of Jesus

A Monologue

by Trent Clifford

These early days have been a whirlwind. Following Jesus throughout his ministry was always an exercise in stepping into the unknown. Serving alongside my brother has always been an exercise in trust. But at least while he was here in body, we had something to look to. We could look him in the eye, catch that spark of mischievous knowing, and allow that feeling to settle in our gut that everything was going to be okay.

Then Jesus left, and we were left with nothing but a memory. Or so we thought.

When the Spirit blew through our midst, stirring our souls and setting us ablaze, we all knew that it was the start of something new. Or perhaps the continuation of something old. The memory of Jesus infused with this real presence, intermingling within our souls and drawing people into our midst like insects to a lantern. (Not quite what Jesus probably meant when he said not to hide our light under a bushel, but it's close enough.)

The only problem with so many gathering in community around us is the very real logistic conundrum that accompanies it. Where do these people go? What do they eat? How can we possibly afford to nourish them in both body and soul?

Luckily, I'm my mother's son, just as Jesus was. And Mary always knew how to welcome folks to her table and have them leave with hearts and bellies full. It was at her bequest that Jesus turned water to wine at Cana, and it was her voice in his ear that prodded his heart to feed the thousands among the hills who had come to hear him teach.

And just as Jesus fed those thousands from the offerings of those willing to share, so too shall we.

I am an organizer. I am someone who revels in making sure that a system is working as it should. While Jesus reveled in the craft of our father's carpentry, I found myself drawn to the business of it. It may not

be a gift that draws a crowd, but it is a gift that allows people to be cared for, once they are drawn.

Now, at the outset of whatever this is becoming, I find myself at the center, organizing our shared possessions and ensuring there is enough to go around. While this is in one sense a celebration, in another it is the slow creation of a life lived together, and that requires a sense of care that extends to the long term.

As we break bread together, we are reminded of my brother's own brokenness. And as our bellies are filled, so too are we reminded of his sustaining grace—the way that it is through brokenness that we find wholeness.

And as the women among us—for like my mother, are they not the best at feeding a crowd, the glue that holds a community such as ours together, the embodiment of this good news we share?—ladle soup into a bowl for another hungry newcomer, I hear a phrase I've come to cherish pour from their mouth:

"I was hungry, and you fed me."

May that always be the case, in body and soul. May we placate their hunger for community with an open-armed welcome. May we satisfy the hunger of their curiosity with the wisdom of my brother and the ways we have learned to apply it.

May we abolish the hunger of their heart by sharing the Spirit that has blown among us and remained. And may we, day after day, soothe the hunger of their bodies with bread broken and shared freely.

—Trent Clifford, a member of the Seeds Liturgical Team, is the author of *Reclaiming Faith* (2024), *By a Firefly's Glow* (2025) and *Reimagining Scripture* (2026). He is a writer, speaker, theatre maker, and spiritual director based in Waco, TX. A seminary graduate, he served on a number of church staffs before turning to the arts for his career.



art by Susan Daily, IBVM

Quotes, Poems & Pithy Sayings

If this is going to be a Christian nation that doesn't help the poor, either we have to pretend that Jesus was just as selfish as we are, or we have to acknowledge that He commanded us to love the poor and serve the needy without condition, and then admit that we just don't want to do it.

—Stephen Colbert

"Congregations should not be allowed to drop a few extra bucks in the plate on a special Sunday or suffer a meal of rice and beans and then think, 'Well, that's over for another year.'"

—Raymond Bailey

Christ is shown in mercy when his people break bread to them; he is shown in judgment when we do not. Never did Lazarus press closer to the rich man's door than does the hungry world that presses its claim upon us in Jesus' name right now. God's people ought to break bread to them in sacrificial giving, in political action, and in economic sharing of our abundant resources. The challenge is to find the way rather than bemoan our helplessness.

—W. Clyde Tilley

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

—Anne Braden, Civil Rights leader from Louisville, KY

Help us to recognize
You in the words of truth,
the things of beauty,
the actions of love about us.
We pray through Christ,
who is a stranger to no one land
more than another,
and to every land no less than to another.
—World Council of Churches

When the church as a whole is no longer seen as speaking to questions that transcend politics, and when it is no longer united by a common faith that transcends politics, then the world sees strong ev-

idence that Nietzsche, Freud and Marx were right, that religion is really just a cover for people wanting to get their way in the world.

—Tim Keller

When [Christ says] "Forgive your enemies," it is not for the sake of the enemy, but for one's own sake that he says so, and because Love is more beautiful than Hate. In his entreaty to the young man whom, when he looked on, he loved, "Sell all that thou hast, and give to the poor," it is not of the state of the poor that he is thinking, but of the soul of the young man, the lovely soul that wealth was marring.

—Oscar Wilde, *De Profundis*

Any interpretation of the gospel in any historical period that fails to see Jesus as the Liberator of the oppressed is heretical. Any view of the gospel that fails to understand the Church as that community whose work and consciousness are defined by the community of the oppressed is not Christian and is thus heretical. Within this context, the issue of heresy must be debated.

—James H. Cone, *God of the Oppressed*

Only blindness of a willful sort can prevent our seeing the face of the Risen Lord in the faces of the suffering poor.

—William Sloane Coffin



art by David Shoemaker

Sharing Food with God's People

A Children's Sermon

Text: John 6:1-13

by Ruba Byrd

You can use this activity as a children's sermon or in a church school class. To prepare, ask the kids and their families ahead of time to bring an item or two of the child's favorite foods that would be suitable for a food pantry. (Check the guidelines for the place you'll donate the food to, whether a pantry run by your congregation or another organization.) The main requirement is for them to bring items that the children themselves like to eat.

Also, make a selection of extra items available that day in case a family forgets or didn't get the message. Stack those foods up front next to you, and ask kids without items to choose a food they like either before worship or when they come up for the sermon. At the start of the sermon (or lesson), ask each child to hold up their item and tell the group what it is. Then ask:

Now, everyone has a food that you yourself like to eat yourself, right? When they say yes, say something like, Doesn't it feel good when you are really hungry and you've been waiting to eat, to find out that the person who made the meal picked something you think is super yummy? That shows that they care about you and want you not just to have food that keeps you alive, but food that you really enjoy.

God wants every person to enjoy the good things God created. But we know that many people all over the world don't even have enough to eat to stay healthy. Maybe they live in a place where the food is scarce because of war or famine or a natural disaster. Or maybe they don't have enough money for the food they need. Maybe the food they do get keeps them alive but doesn't taste very good. This isn't what God wants, and God gives you and me ways we can help.

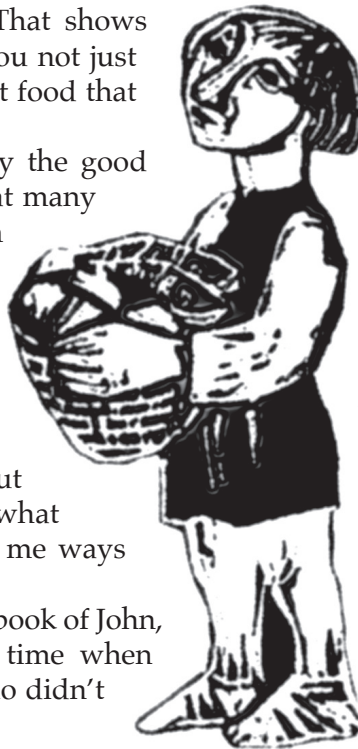
There's a story in the Bible, in the book of John, that you might remember, about a time when there were a lot of hungry people who didn't

have any food, and Jesus needed help to feed them. Guess who helped him out? A boy, maybe someone just your age! Then tell the story from John 6:1-13 of how Jesus fed the five thousand. All four gospels include this story, but only John mentions that it was a boy who contributed his meal of five barley loaves and two fish. If you want to read the story, the translation called The Message tells it in very relatable modern English.

After the story, say: Without that boy's lunch, all those people would not have been fed. And I think maybe his mom or dad made that exact meal for him because he loved it! And he was willing to give it to Jesus, who used it to feed everybody. Most of the time, we can't give big things to help other people. But there's always something we can give, and God can always take our gift and use it to help others in ways we might never know about. What you and I can do is ask God to show us what we can give.

Today, you can give some of your favorite food to people right here in our town. We'll take this food to [name the organization], where someone else will find it and enjoy it too. First, let's say a prayer for them and for all the people in the world who don't have enough to eat:

God, thank you for creating our beautiful world full of so many good things we need. Thank you for giving us bodies that can smell and taste and enjoy so many scrumptious textures and flavors. We feel sad when we think about other people who don't have enough. Show each one of us what we can do to help you give them what they need. Let each person who uses the food we brought today know how much you love them, and remind us how much you love us, too!



art courtesy of the Franciscanos de la Cruzblanca.

Please see "Children's Sermon" on page 19.

Connecting with God's Hungry People

A Children's Activity for Hunger Emphasis

by Ruba Byrd

If you use the children's sermon "Sharing Food with God's People" in a church school setting, or if the children have a separate time before or after the worship service, you can use this exercise in conjunction with it. It can be adapted even to preschool-age kids.

If you do this part before the sermon, the children need to bring their prepared items into worship with the notes attached. If it happens afterwards or at a separate time, they'll need to keep the items with them or get them back before doing this part.

For this activity, each child is going to create a short note to attach to each item of their favorite food that they brought to contribute to the food pantry. Have some unlined index cards, transparent tape, and colored pencils and/or markers available. (If their item is too small for the index cards, cut the cards to a size that will fit on the item, or have them fold their note to fit.)

Younger children can draw pictures, and teachers can add notes if desired. Older children can

draw and/or write messages, in their own words or using the examples below. You can ask them to add their first name and age if you want.

The idea is to create a connection with a real person they can imagine who'll be choosing and enjoying this food they like, too. A simple guideline is, "Write a note you would like to get with a food you like if you went to the pantry."

If the pantry is part of a religious organization, messages with a spiritual theme are probably appropriate (you can check on this beforehand), such as: "God loves you." "God wants you to have good things." "Sending a prayer and my favorite food!" "You are loved." "God bless you today!"

For a secular food bank, stick with messages like, "This is one of my favorites!" "Wishing you a good day." "I hope something good happens to you today." "I hope you enjoy this!" "From someone who likes this too." Or simply, "Enjoy!" After you review each child's note, help them attach it to their item. (Using transparent tape is probably the simplest, though you could use string if the item is oddly shaped.)

Give kids some leeway to make the notes personal, but steer them away from messages such as, "I hope things get better," "I'm sorry you don't have enough food," or "I hope this helps you." Those put the recipient primarily in the role of a needy person and create distance rather than relationship.

If you have time and it seems appropriate to your particular group, guide a short conversation about the different kinds of people who might enjoy the food they're donating. With older kids who can handle more difficult topics, you could talk about situations in which people don't have enough food.

For instance, someone might have lost their job unexpectedly. Maybe their company shut down,

Please see "Children's Activity" on page 19.



Setting up a Little Free Pantry

A Youth Activity for Hunger Emphasis

by Ruba Byrd

One creative way that many communities are finding to make food even more accessible to those who need it is the *Little Free Pantry* movement. Remember a while back when people began putting *Little Free Library* boxes in their yards, small cabinets where anyone could take a book they liked or leave a book they were done with?

The Little Free Pantry concept is similar, but instead people share food and hygiene items in small outdoor boxes that are accessible twenty four hours a day, seven days a week. (You can go to littelfreepantry.org for all kinds of resources, including a map of over 2,000 Little Free Pantry locations in the US)

There are a number of ways to get your youth involved in this grassroots movement. The pantry boxes are set up and managed by many different individuals and organizations, not any centralized group. Folks see a need and set up a pantry. If you find pantries already set up in your community, a first step is to engage your youth in collecting items and taking them to the pantries to see the concept for themselves.

If you do this, invite the youth to donate their favorite food items (as in the kids' activity) as a way of passing on something they personally enjoy to someone who might have the same preferences. You can also adapt the kids' exercise of writing notes to go with the food items for your youth to encourage their personal sense of connection with the recipients.

If you want to get a bit more ambitious, consider whether there's a place on your church grounds to install a Little Free Pantry. This can be quite a creative project for youth and others they inspire to



help. They might want to choose the kind of structure to use and how to decorate it. They might build the pantry from scratch or repurpose a cabinet from a thrift store or Habitat for Humanity ReStore shop. (If your church building is like mine, there's probably a dusty old cabinet in a room somewhere, just waiting to be used for this!)

If your youth want to create and run a Little Free Pantry, it's important to get approval from your church staff and building managers. You need to have good plans for how the food will be stocked on an ongoing basis so that something is available most of the time.

You need to plan for the additional traffic at all hours from folks coming to the pantry. You might find a local organization already running Little Free Pantries that is looking for locations but will manage the logistics of keeping the pantry stocked.

Or if you don't have a place physically to offer for a pantry, let your youth get creative about collaborating with others. Maybe there's another congregation that does have room, and their youth could team up with yours to make it happen. Even if your congregation doesn't have the resources to completely run a pantry, your youth can still take on the project and find the right fit for the calling and resources you have.

My small church in Eugene, Oregon, heard that a local organization called Burrito Brigade was stocking some Little Free Pantries and needed more locations. We offered a spot outside our church office, and our kids had a great time decorating the pantry. But we aren't responsible for stocking the pantry just by ourselves—Burrito Brigade volunteers pick up donated food from Costco and oth-

Please see "Youth Activity" on page 19.

Children's Sermon,

continued from page 16

As the children go back to their seats, have them put their items with the others, and if possible, leave them there during the rest of worship. If appropriate, give folks the chance to donate money to add to what you take to the food bank through the offering that day or in an extra basket at the back. (Also, see the extra exercise on page 17 and the youth activity on page 18, both of which you can use in conjunction with this lesson.)

—See below for Ruba Byrd's bio.

Children's Activity,

continued from page 17

or they got sick and couldn't work or had to quit to take care of a sick family member. Maybe their SNAP¹ benefits were suddenly cut.

Maybe their kids couldn't get meals at school during the holidays, or the neighbor who helped an older person shop went out of town and the older person ran out of food. Maybe they had a house fire and lost their belongings.

Let the kids take the lead in thinking of possibilities. Gauge carefully how much detail you use to describe these situations, making sure the kids don't get overwhelmed or pulled into feelings of distress. These are hard realities even for adults to take in. The main point is that everyone needs help at some time in their lives—and each one of us will, too. God gives us to each other for just those times. We're probably more alike than we are different.

The final piece of this activity could be to go to the food pantry as a group (with families and other adults, if possible). If the pantry is run by your congregation, it should be quite easy to do this during class time so the kids can put the food on the shelves themselves. Going to a different location will require a more organized field trip. Either way, it will help them concretely visualize where their favorite foods are going and might encourage future trips to donate food. (For another idea about how to use the items, see the youth activity on page 18.)

—See below for Ruba Byrd's bio.

Endnote

1. SNAP is the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, a US program formerly known as Food Stamps.

Youth Activity,

continued from page 18

er grocery stores and fill the pantry at designated times each week.

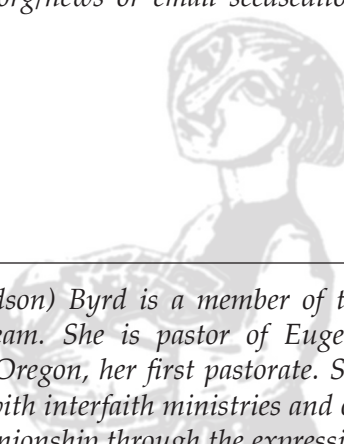
We do provide produce from our church garden when it's in season, and many of our folks regularly bring food to the pantry. Some of our members who face food insecurity at times are recipients, too. The give and take goes both ways. That's the level of involvement that works for us, and it has been a great blessing.

Having the pantry in our parking lot has made all of us more aware of how widespread food insecurity is locally. There's a wonderful nonprofit food bank not far away, yet we still see a steady stream of people of all ages pulling up to the Little Free Pantry day and night, looking for food to tide them over until the next paycheck or the next meal.

Most of us had no idea the need was this great. For us, Jesus' challenge—"I was hungry, and you..."—feels more personal and more real now that every day we see the faces of our neighbors in need.

—See below for Ruba Byrd's bio.

Editor's note: For another story about a little Free Pantry, see "Something Sacred & Holy," Hunger News & Hope, Vol 25 No 2, Fall/Winter 2025, page 2. Go to www.seedspublishers.org/news or email seedseditor1@gmail.com.



—Ruba (Jan Richardson) Byrd is a member of the Seeds Liturgical Team. She is pastor of Eugene Friends Church in Oregon, her first pastorate. She is involved locally with interfaith ministries and offers spiritual companionship through the expressive arts. Our readers may have seen her earlier writings under the name Jan Richardson.

Hunger around the World

by Guilherme Almeida, Ruba Byrd, Katie Cook & Sharlande Sledge

We're trying something new with this year's Hunger emphasis packet. Instead of several pages of statistics, we chose to feature 12 regions that are experiencing disruptions that seriously affect food security in those regions. We got some of our information from the United Nations World Food Programme's (WFP) Hunger Map,¹ which lists 266 million people at risk for acute food insecurity for the coming months. This is a significant rise from former years; food aid agencies are just beginning to tabulate the devastating results of the dismantling of humanitarian aid in early 2025—from a number of donor countries, but particularly the United States.

Much of the information for individual countries comes from the WFP website or that of the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), or from *Hunger Hotspots: FAO-WFP Early Warnings on Acute Food Insecurity*.² Other sources will be noted.

Most of our readers already know that the most frequent causes of acute hunger are armed conflict, climate change, displacement (both internal and external) and what the United Nations (UN) agencies call "economic shock." These factors reinforce each other, worsening conditions and creating crises that will require years of response. War displaces civilians, disrupts agricultural production and market functioning (thus destroying food systems), drives up food prices, and blocks access to humanitarian aid and food assistance. According to the WFP, conflict and violence have displaced more than 123 million people in the last two years, breaking all previous records. This displacement, in turn, causes the reduction of food production and increases pressure on local resources and food markets.

In the FAO-WFP report mentioned above, armed violence was the main cause of acute food insecurity in 14 of the 16 "hotspots" listed.

An unprecedented five countries (Sudan, Gaza, South Sudan, Haiti and Yemen) are listed as "in or near famine." The UN's Integrated Food Security Phase Classification program (IPC) has classified these countries as IPC5 (famine, or catastrophe)

or IPC4 (state of emergency or near famine). The IPC defines famine as a situation in which at least one in five households in an area faces an extreme lack of food, leading to starvation and destitution, which in turn leads to extremely critical levels of acute malnutrition and death.³

Earthquakes, floods, wildfires and drought also cause humanitarian crises in particular areas, as in the case of Venezuela's recent earthquakes and wildfires in the US Pacific Northwest. The frequency of these so-called natural disasters of late are linked to global climate change. They cause displacement and homelessness, instability, the interruption of supply chains and economic shock. These disruptions are happening around the globe so quickly that many more will have occurred in widely diverse places before we even finish describing these 12 regions. We have chosen two such regions to spotlight, realizing that they are two among dozens.



art by René Boldt

We have also chosen to include Cuba, even though it is not on the UN agencies' list, because of close relationships between our sponsors and writers and the churches of Cuba—and also because of information we have received from them. We also chose Cuba to show that the stroke of a pen in high places can do as much damage as an earthquake.

Gaza/West Bank

Despite a partial resumption of humanitarian assistance in Palestine, needs in the Gaza Strip remain critical and largely unmet. Israeli forces have routinely stopped food aid at the border, claiming that it was only being taken by Hamas operatives. A number of aid agencies report that they have not been allowed to enter the territory, and some aid workers have been killed. Famine was confirmed in Gaza Governate in 2025 and has only expanded. Some 2 million people are categorized as either being in IPC5 (famine) or IPC4 (near famine). At the last report, military operations were intensifying, while demolitions of homes and settler violence continued.

Much of this is also true for the West Bank. Food aid groups have become increasingly concerned about growing food insecurity in the West Bank. Tens of thousands of people have been displaced there amid military activity. Movement restrictions make conditions worse. Hundreds of thousands of Palestinians have lost their work permits, and are unable to leave to find work elsewhere.

The following quote is from a 12-year-old boy in Gaza.

All my life I have wanted to grow up to be the best football player in the world. This summer hundreds of us gathered to watch the World Cup on a sheet stretched in front of a crumbled house—a Gaza-styled movie theatre! For a few minutes I thought that playing football is the best thing in the world, Then I realized the best thing would be for me to become a doctor to help the people of Palestine be healthy. I could help heal them with good medical care, including the right food, like the rice and lentils we used to eat.

PRAYER

Holy One, you who are known to some people of Palestine as Jesus Christ and to others as Allah, stretch forth your wounded hands in blessing over your wounded people to heal and to restore, and to

draw them to yourself and to one another in love. You know each name, each face, each story in the West Bank and in Gaza. Hold them close when they are far from home in a land they barely recognize. Comfort them when they are alone or afraid, and shield their hearts from despair. (Sharlande Sledge)

Sudan

Sudan is Africa's third largest country, behind Algeria and the Democratic Republic of Congo, and likely one of the earliest civilizations in the entire world. Cemeteries and artifacts of ritual nature have been found in this area with dates as early as 40,000 BCE. The better-known settlers of this area were the Nubians, whose excellence in culture and science created a civilization matched only by the ancient Egyptians who were their demise when that empire commanded most of the area around the Nile riverbed.

Now, with 67 percent of its population facing an extreme lack of food, Sudan is, with Gaza, at the top of the list of "hotspots" on the WFP Hunger Map. Sudan has been designated under the IPC5 category, which indicates outright famine. This was first detected in the Zamzam refugee camp in North Darfur in 2024. It has since spread to other refugee camps.

An August/September 2026 Brief from the World Food Programme reported that the civil conflict in this area has only intensified after four years of unrelenting "violence, displacement and humanitarian access constraints." The ongoing civil war, further displacement of people (9 million at the last count), flood risks and economic shocks make the prospect extremely bleak for more than 19 million Sudanese. Sudan receives one of the largest budget disbursements in the UN's emergency response, but this aid is still insufficient to aid such a large area with so many disparate needs.

PRAYER

We come as seekers, unsure of what we seek. We seek, at least, release from such hunger. We come as followers, not understanding the One we follow. We follow the Giver of All Good Gifts. Holy One, by Your grace, meet us where we are. Meet us here. Meet us now. Meet us in the uncertainty and lack of release from this poverty. Don't let witnessing poverty harden us or allow us to rest from fighting it, relieving others from it, and bringing aid to those in it. (Guilherme Almeida)

South Sudan

The world's youngest country, South Sudan has known little peace in its 15-year history. Ongoing conflict, particularly in the Upper Nile and Jonglei states, is now driving extremely critical levels of food insecurity. About 83,000 people have faced famine since July 2025. This includes the two states named above and displaced persons who fled to Sudan and are now returning—not because conditions are better in South Sudan, but because they are worse in Sudan. As the conflict intensifies (which it is predicted to do), the nearly 2 million people already displaced will be joined by more. This is straining already overstretched host communities. To make matters worse, drought is affecting crops in one area, while another is being inundated with widespread floods. More than half of the population, almost 8 million people, is at risk for acute food insecurity—including 2.2 million children.

An August/September World Food Programme Brief reported that much of the “damaged crops, reduced availability, and weakened household resilience” are results of El Niño-related drought. The WFP has supported climate resilience initiatives, including rehabilitation of infrastructure: bathed by the Nile and affluents, the only water source for the region, it is through dykes and canals that the seasonal replenishing of water takes place in the region. Additionally, the WFP supports the nutrition and school meals programs that continue to provide a lifeline to the children and families in the region.



art by Rebecca S. Ward

PRAYER (Based on Psalm 17)

Hear a just cause, O Lord; attend to our cry. Give ear to our prayers for South Sudan. Wondrously show Your steadfast love, O Savior of those who seek refuge from their adversaries at Your right hand. We call upon You, for You will answer, O God; incline Your ear to the hungry ones, hear our words. Turn your face towards those who work against food insecurity and bear witness to those who are weakened by lack of resources. Let your mercy and grace strengthen all in need today. (Guilherme Almeida)

Haiti

Another country listed by WFP and FAO as “highest concern” is Haiti. For many years, Haiti has been the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere. Unstable governments, dictatorships and political unrest have kept the country continually off balance. In recent years, gang violence has been a crucial factor in the further destabilization of the country. It would also seem that Haitians, who were already struggling, never completely recovered from a catastrophic earthquake in 2010. Now, a protracted economic crisis and the impact of floods will further undermine livelihoods and agricultural production. This is predicted to cause the deterioration of already critical levels of acute food insecurity in the months to come. More than half the population is categorized by the IPC as Phase 3 (Crisis), with 2 million in Phase 4 (Emergency). Further displacement because of armed violence will add to the current 1.3 million internally displaced persons (IDPs).

In a recent Reuters Daily Briefing, Carlos Carillo and Ricardo Arduengo wrote,

*Majorie Edoi...a 30-year-old mother of three, sells food [in Port-au-Prince] out of one of the many makeshift camps for displaced people set up across the city's schools. "We can't buy anything. We can't eat. We can't drink," she said. "I'd like there to be a legitimate government to establish security so we can move around and sell goods, so the children can go to school."*⁴

PRAYER

God who comforts the sorrowing and gives rest to the weary, we pray for those in Haiti whose lives have been disrupted by unrest that has continued for far too long. It must often feel to them as if they can't go on, and yet somehow they do. Bring respite and hope to each one today, a reminder that they are not alone, that they are loved by you. And

channel your love through us as we offer what we can to the respite and hope with which you sustain the world. Amen. (Ruba Byrd)

Yemen

Yemen has been in conflict for a very long time. For millennia, Yemen was at the intersection of culture and trade between the Arabian Peninsula and the Horn of Africa. The Arabian Sea, the Gulf of Aden, and the Red Sea all surround Yemen and create a maritime boundary that both united and separated civilizations, most notably the Sheba kingdom (the famous encounter between the Queen of Sheba and Solomon is narrated in I Kings 10 and 2 Chronicles 9). This place, who yielded our vernacular “mocha” from the Port of Mokha in West Yemen, is now one of the world’s most urgent humanitarian crises.

The war continues to escalate. This, combined with severe damage to the country’s infrastructure and extreme constraints against humanitarian access by Houthi rebels, compounded by severe humanitarian funding cuts,⁵ is projected to worsen food insecurity. Pockets of population in four districts face famine, while 5.5 million face the Emergency category. More than 18 million face the IPC category 3, which is Crisis, or worse. The 2025 harvest was undermined by climatic shocks, particularly flooding. This not only reduced food production, but increased risk of waterborne diseases. More than half the population faces acute food insecurity.

A September 2026 World Food Programme brief reported that Yemen faces “compounding effects of prolonged conflict, climate shocks, disease outbreaks and a deepening economic collapse.” Displacement of people, cross-border strikes, and the hiatus of UN operations due to a mandate by the UN Secretary-General only aggravate this sustained crisis. The World Food Programme provides limited food assistance and school meals, along with family grants in southern Yemen to aid in shopping for basic food needs.

PRAYER (Based on Psalm 130)

Out of the depths we cry to you, Lord; hear the voice of your children in Yemen displaced by ongoing conflict and depleted by the greed of many. We wait for the Lord, our whole being waits. The frail bodies of those who hunger wait. Day and night we wait for the Lord. We watch each other while we sleep. We remember those who struggle

and lack their next meal. We put our hope in the Lord and not in worldly governance; we trust in the unfailing love of the Lord and watch while we work. (Guilherme Almeida)

Lebanon/Syria

Lebanon, a small and densely populated country, was already facing profound socioeconomic crisis when the current Middle East war began. As a host country to Syrian refugees for years, Lebanon had been stretched to the limit. It has experienced sharp escalations in violence since the beginning of the current conflict, with hundreds of casualties reported within a few hours. This has devastating humanitarian consequences for the survivors. Conflict, economic collapse, rising prices and market disruptions are turning what was mostly a displacement crisis into a deepening food security crisis.

Lebanon’s neighbor, Syria, has been extremely fragile for a long time. Years of conflict, economic collapse and repeated shocks have left only 18 percent of the population food secure. Now a combination of climatic shocks, rising prices and limited access to jobs and services have more than 7 million people facing acute food insecurity.

The following is a quote from Wissam Nisralah, President of the Arab Baptist Theological Seminary in Beirut.

In a matter of days, hundreds of thousands have been displaced. Behind every number is a name, a child, a mother, a grandmother, a home now empty.... Our guesthouse and campus are receiving families who have nowhere else to go, adding more needs to those who are already afflicted by the fighting. Despite the sounds of drones intensifying in our skies and smoke from the bombings rising over Beirut, we continue to witness glimpses of Christ’s love at work: a love that shapes, softens, and unifies. Our guests come from different backgrounds and areas across Lebanon. Yet in the midst of uncertainty, we see them gathering hand in hand to assist the kitchen staff in preparing meals. Join us in prayer that during this season of hardship, just as these meals nourish their bodies, the word of God may also nourish their spirits.

PRAYER

God, we ask your blessing on these strangers who have fled across the border from Syria looking for safety, shelter and food. We ask your blessing on

the those who have not escaped the crises, and on those who have become hosts who are also under attack. May freedom from fear roll down on Lebanon and Syria and hope settle on our sisters and brothers who live this tenuous life. God, you call us all to practice hospitality. Teach us how to do this hard thing—to welcome our neighbors. (Sharlande Sledge)

art by Erin Kennedy Mayer



Ukraine

Russia's invasion of Ukraine and the ongoing war, now in its fifth year, led to a major humanitarian crisis in Ukraine—and also to a global food crisis. Destruction of or damage to agricultural infrastructure and the disruption of food supply chains is threatening the food security of already vulnerable populations. Ukraine was once Europe's breadbasket, with more than 30 percent of its people involved in agriculture. Now, 31 percent of the population are in need of lifesaving assistance. Some 3.7 million are internally displaced and more than 5 million are still living as refugees in Europe. This is one of the fastest forced population movement since World War II.⁶

The following is an excerpt from an article by Greg Kannon of Music Mission Kiev.

As the group of adults gathered upstairs at St. Paul's Church in Kiev for a few precious hours, their children were downstairs—not defined by war, fear, or displacement. They were simply children again, singing, playing and learning as children. Every week in Kyiv and surrounding areas, Music Mission Kiev provides food or food vouchers to over 2,000 widows, orphans, and internally displaced persons (IDPs) because of

the great support provided by many Americans. A simple meal may last only a few minutes, but its impact can last a lifetime. It tells a frightened child, "You are loved." It tells a struggling family, "You are not alone." And it reminds us that even in the darkest days of war, God's light continues to shine through God's people.⁷

PRAYER

O Lord, when we come to your Table, may we realize our hope: that the great Ukrainian breadbaskets will be filled again for all hungry families in their country and the nations who depend on them. The Ukrainians' actions still show that they have the capacity to create from wheat and oil and eggs and love so that millions of loaves satisfy the hunger of their neighbors. Sooner than we anticipate, may we add our prayers of thanksgiving for the acts of justice and peace we see added to the feast. Soon and very soon, O Lord, may the satisfying meal begin for the people of Ukraine. (Sharlande Sledge)

Myanmar

In Myanmar, ongoing armed conflict impacting much of the country, along with a worsening economic crisis, are expected to sustain persistently high levels of acute food insecurity. Continued conflict is likely to drive further displacement, adding to the 3.6 million Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and almost 1.6 million refugees and asylum seekers in neighboring countries such as Bangladesh and Thailand. Residents are also still struggling to recover from a 2025 earthquake. Funding shortfalls, extreme access constraints and monsoon flooding are further aggravating the crisis. All of these factors have resulted in substantial livelihood losses. Last fall, 1 million people faced emergency levels (IPC4) of acute food insecurity. The situation is likely to have worsened since then.

T. S. Kai interviewed 17 internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Myanmar for an *Arch Public Health* study. Here is what two participants said:

We were displaced from our homes to save our lives by abandoning everything of our belongings. We do not have anything to eat in the jungle. I cannot express how hopeless I feel now.

We feed our children anything we can get our hands on. Little bean and rice soup now and again. Life is tough. Our children are malnourished; everything has risen following military takeovers, especially rice prices. We cannot af-

ford to eat rice since a sack costs (40000–50000) Kyats, equivalent to (19 - 23) \$ USD. Cooking oil prices have also increased. We do not have a place to borrow money. We die from starvation.⁸

PRAYER

God who knows each sparrow that falls, who numbers the hairs on our head, we know you hear and ache with the voice of each hungry child crying in the night in Myanmar. We know that when armed conflict and natural disasters force millions from their homes, you know each name; you walk the hard road of exile with each displaced person. Take us with you, God, as you walk with them, as hard as it is to imagine such need. Remind us, again and again, that although we can't feed every hungry child, we can feed one, and then another, and another. If we are willing, you will show us the way. Amen. (Ruba Byrd)

Venezuela

The people of Venezuela have been reeling under economic collapse for decades. Beginning in the 1990s, Venezuela, once a prosperous country, began to experience drastic economic failure. The situation began to worsen in 2013. In 2016, UN groups that monitor extreme poverty began to warn of famine in the country. Venezuelan refugees began pouring into surrounding countries. Resources were stretched to breaking point from years of economic crisis, political unrest and outright conflict.

Then, on June 24, two large earthquakes hit northwestern Venezuela, causing widespread damage across the country. The capital city of Caracas was profoundly affected, as was the state of La Guira, where 80 percent of the buildings collapsed. During the summer, the United States Geological Survey (USGS) predicted that the death toll could easily reach 10,000 before the initial cleanup and rescue efforts are over.

A number of religious groups responded quickly and are still working alongside local groups. Presbyterian pastor Ricardo Corzo Moreno of Caracas told the Religion News Service, "Not even in my worst nightmares did I imagine a situation as apocalyptic as the current one." Corzo Morena immediately began coordinating aid responses with almost 100 church leaders from Latin America, North America and Spain. Leaders also expressed worry that the international community will go on to the next disasters and forget about the ongoing rebuilding needed in Venezuela.⁹

PRAYER

God of mercy, we ask that you would spread your healing wings over the people of Venezuela. They have suffered for so long, going without food and other crucial supplies, feeling unheard by their own government and in the international community. Give them strength and hope. We give you thanks for those who are working to bring them the necessities they lack, close by and around the world. Give them all comfort and peace in the midst of shock and trauma. Remind them that they are not alone, and show us how to make that statement true. Keep us from turning our eyes away and forgetting the long work that still needs to be done. Amen. (Katie Cook)

Cuba

Although Cuba is not listed as a hotspot by the World Food Programme (WFP) or the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation, its people are suffering from an extreme hunger crisis. Cuba ranks 97th among 193 countries in the 2025 Human Development Report. The WFP does report that there are increasing difficulties for the food security and nutrition of many Cuban families.

In fact, as Giselle Coleman-Martinez, Economic Officer 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." In addition to the lack of food, there is no medical care to speak of—not even over-the-counter medicine. Electricity is unreliable and scarce. This, in turn, causes agricultural projects to slow down even more.

The causes, of course, are multifaceted, with a combination of unproductive domestic policies, climate change and increasingly punitive US sanctions. According to Cuba pastors and leaders, the situation affects women and children the most, especially Afro-Cuban women and people with disabilities.

"Our youth can no longer dream about their future," said Rev. Coralía Blanco, a Cuban pastor. She added that there is an unprecedented migration of young people out of Cuba in recent years, and 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."¹⁰

PRAYER

God of hope and bounty, we ask you to empower the Cuban people in their daily struggles for nutrition, for medical help, for electricity—for all of their daily needs. We think we can imagine what their lives are like, but we really can't. We ask you to pour out a new spirit of hope across their land, and a new spirit of courage and generosity across our lands. For those of us who have all we need, inspire and energize us to share what we have, in whatever way we can. This seems difficult. There are roadblocks. We need to be creative and persevering. Do not let us give up until our Cuban sisters and brothers enjoy a bountiful future. (Katie Cook)

Democratic Republic of Congo

The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) hosts one of the largest hunger crises in the world. Hunger and violence fuel one another, with armed conflict and widespread displacement for the past 25 years. This is particularly acute in the eastern provinces. Humanitarian access for nearly 600,000 people was restricted by fighting for the first nine months of 2025. Severe flooding has disrupted agricultural activities. An Ebola outbreak in Kasai province that same year further weakened in-

frastructure and supply chains. To make matters worse, yet another Ebola outbreak occurred earlier this year. By early August 2026, the epidemic had become the fastest growing Ebola outbreak on record, as well as the second largest. The country has been declared a "public health emergency of international concern" by the World Health Organisation (WHO), which reported 4,665 confirmed Ebola cases, including 2,184 deaths, just before press time. Critical funding shortfalls have exacerbated all of these problems.¹¹

Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), known in the English-speaking world as Doctors Without Borders, is operating a number of Ebola treatment centers. This work is challenging, not least because of the ongoing violence and lack of infrastructure. But is also difficult because "there are currently no approved vaccines or treatments available for the Bundibugyo virus, which is causing the current Ebola disease outbreak." Still, MSF teams are working to stop the outbreak "as quickly as possible while ensuring people have continued access to care."¹²

PRAYER

God of sanity, there are times when the world seems to have gone crazy, and none of us know how to respond. The people of the Democratic Republic of Congo have lived in the midst of chaos for many years. Violence has been a part of their lives for so long that many do not know a time when there was no war. Food is scarce. Crops have failed and the supply chain is disrupted. And now this vicious disease is ripping its way across the country and spilling over its borders. We pray for peace in the midst of violence, abundance in the midst of hunger and healing in the midst of disease. We pray for those who venture into this chaos to bring treatment and hope. May their courage prevail. (Katie Cook)

US Pacific Northwest

As of press time, 37 uncontained, large (at least 100 acres in timber and 300 in grassland) wildfires have been reported in the US Pacific Northwest. These fires are forcing hundreds of residents from their homes and shutting down major roadways. This severely affects the region's infrastructure, supply chains and agricultural production. The fires have also pushed the air quality index to unhealthy levels across Washington and Oregon. Since January of this year, the US has experienced almost



art by Lenora Mathis

50,000 fires that consumed more than 7 million acres across the country. A year earlier, some 43,000 fires burned almost 3.77 million acres. This is an alarming trend. Across the US, more than 30,000 firefighters from as far away as Australia and New Zealand have been battling at least 90 uncontained fires, with more than half of them occurring in the Pacific Northwest.

When wildfires swept through southern Oregon in 2020, Maria and her family lost...their home, their car and most of their belongings.... "We need to work three times as much," Maria says. "The cost of everything—rent, food—is so much higher." To offset the inflated cost of living since the wildfires, Maria has relied on a weekly farmers market run by a local nonprofit called Rogue Food Unites, where she can receive staples like eggs, vegetables, and fruits for free.¹³

PRAYER

Loving God, the majesty of your creation fills us with wonder. The mountains and towering forests remind us of your eternal presence. Yet when wildfires rage out of control in an ecosystem out of balance, the cost in human suffering is devastating. None of us is immune from sudden loss. Yet instead of making us fearful, may this knowledge lead us to trust you more fully each moment, knowing that whatever happens, you will be with us. And keep us alert and ready to respond when disaster strikes your children, to offer food and clothing, shelter and solace, until the long work of restoration is done. Amen. (Ruba Byrd)

—Guilherme Almeida, Ruba Byrd and Sharlande Sledge are members of the Seeds of Hope Liturgical Team. Katie Cook is the Seeds editor.

Endnotes

1. This interactive map can be found at www.hungermapwfp.org/food.
2. The report was sponsored by the Global Network Against Food Crises and the European Union.
3. The IPC plays a critical role in identifying famine conditions and informing the response needed to save millions of lives. The IPC is now the primary mechanism the international community uses to analyze data and arrive at a conclusion as to whether famine is happening or is projected to occur within a country.
4. Carlos Carillo and Ricardo Arduengo, "Camping in schools, hungry Haiti families ask: when

will normality return?" Reuters Daily Briefing, July 2024.

5. Funding to Yemen was slashed as a part of the US government's Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE), implemented in early 2025. A concerted effort to rally global donor countries to respond to the crisis in Yemen fell apart later that year because the US government decided that any resources donated would be seized by Houthi rebels. (Devex newswire.)

6. The region was also one of the world's major sources of fertilizer, needed for crops in countries as far away as Africa. For more information on the effect of the Russia/Ukraine war, see "The War in Ukraine & the Global Food Crisis," *Hunger News & Hope*, Vol 22 No 3, Fall 2022, page 1. (Go to www.seedspublishers.org/news or email seedseditor1@gmail.com.)

7. Greg Kannon, Chief Executive Officer, Music Mission Kiev (musicmissionkiev.org.) For the full article, email seedseditor1@gmail.com.

8. T.S. Kai, "Vulnerability to health and well-being of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Myanmar post-military coup and COVID-19." *Arch Public Health* 81, 185 (2023).

9.. Religion News Service. The quote from Ricardo Corzo Moreno was translated from Spanish.

10. Jacob Bailes and Katie Cook, "The Cuban Food Crisis," *Hunger News & Hope* (HNH). For more information, see the award-winning feature cluster on Cuba in the Spring/Summer 2025 issue of HNH, starting on page 6. (Go to www.seedspublishers.org/news or email seedseditor1@gmail.com.)

11. World Health Organisation (www.who.int); World Food Programme.

12. Médecins San Frontières is an independent global organization that provides emergency medical aid to people affected by war, epidemics and disasters in more than 70 countries. MSF maintains neutrality in conflicts, but speaks out about extreme violence or neglect witnessed by its teams.

13. *The Capital Press*, a weekly agricultural newspaper covering the West Coast of the US; Cable News Network (CNN.)



Hunger in the United States

by Matthew Page

Editor's note: In the section about global hunger in this packet, we added prayers to each entry. Matthew, our Fall 2026 editorial intern, has added prayers to these entries.

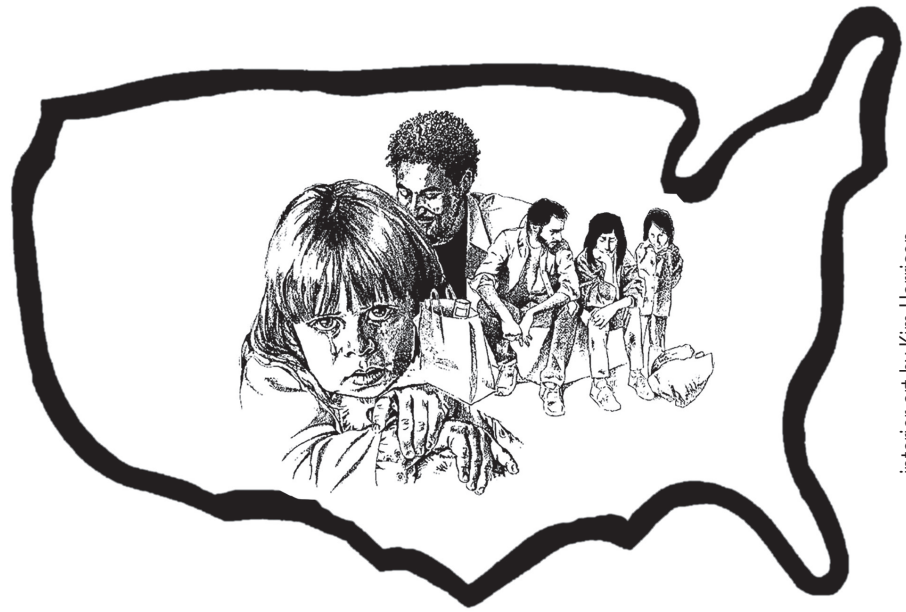
Hunger may be a topic we hear about mostly in conversations about nations across the world. However, it is an issue every country faces, and the United States is no different.

Approximately 48 million people throughout the country experience food insecurity.¹ That's about 13.5 percent of US households. Additionally, according to a study done by the USDA, about one in five children in the US aren't able to access the food they need to be healthy.² These statistics reveal an issue still affecting many families today.

According to a survey released by the Federal Reserve Bank of New York, more people in the United States are experiencing hunger now than during the COVID-19 pandemic six years ago.³ The New York Fed periodically surveys Americans about their food security, inquiring about whether they skip meals, depend on food donations or receive federal assistance for groceries. Replies from the most recent survey, conducted in February of this year, show 10 percent of families nationwide reported missing meals due to a lack of food, and nearly 16 percent relied on food donations. For families earning less than \$50,000 a year, food insecurity rates were nearly double, with almost 20 percent having to skip meals or go without food.

Recently, in the Pacific Northwest, tens of thousands of people have been displaced because of wildfires in the region. The damage to infrastructure has put families in very difficult situations in getting access to the right amount of food. And there is no evidence that these fires or their effects will slow down any time soon.

Hunger is a much closer issue than we may notice sometimes. Perhaps even your neighbor or



interior art by Kim Harrison

someone you know is facing food insecurity. It's important that we continue to support the organizations that are working to fight hunger locally as well as internationally.

Below are some target locations for food insecurity in the current day.

Arkansas

According to various sources, Arkansas is ranked as the state with the highest percentage of food insecure households in the United States between 2021 and 2023. Most sources estimate that the number is more than 19 percent of households.⁴ The Arkansas Hunger Relief Alliance suggested after a recent survey that up to "37 percent, or 1.4 million, of Arkansans do not have the food resources to meet their needs."⁵ Residents face the difficulties that come with vast rural areas like limited access to grocery stores. Additionally, modern estimates have suggested that rural areas seem to be facing a higher amount of food insecurity than urban areas all over the United States.

Dear Lord, we pray for those in Arkansas who have struggled for so long to put food on their families' plates. Bring them peace; urge us to show them that they are not alone. We pray that you work through us, that we may reach out and give what we are able to help them through this difficult time. Amen.

Texas

The state of Texas has one of the highest food-insecure populations in the nation, with an estimated over 6 million Texans experiencing hunger. Texas faces a similar issue as other states with rural towns. Texans in these rural areas have tougher experiences finding nutritious and affordable food easily. And, like many states in the south, Texas is currently facing drought, extreme heat, scattered wildfires and threats of tornadoes. It has been estimated that one in four Latinos are experiencing food insecurity in Texas, and that Black children are nearly twice as likely as other children to experience hunger.⁶ Ultimately, many Texans rely on resources like food banks. Feeding Texas CEO Celia Cole stated, "Food banks are seeing increasing demand from Texans who are working hard but still struggling to afford groceries alongside rising housing, utilities, healthcare and other living expenses."⁷

Dear Lord, we pray for the millions in Texas who are faced with hunger. We pray that they will find peace in your presence, even through the threat of severe weather and the frustration of having limited access to food. Guide us as we show them that there is hope, and remind us all to take this opportunity to change people's lives in Texas. Amen.

Kentucky

Feeding America estimated that one in five people in Kentucky are facing food insecurity. The organization's Kentucky officials said that "food insecurity

represents a significant public health challenge with far-reaching social, economic and medical consequences for individuals, families and communities."⁸ One of the primary causes was in the passing of the One Big Beautiful Bill Act, which reduced Kentuckians access to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and other food assistance, especially in rural parts of the state.⁹ Limited transportation and remote grocery stores make accessing food for many rural Kentuckians difficult as well. Currently, severe storms are seen moving through parts of the state, the effects of which could worsen the conditions for many residents facing hunger.

Dear Lord, we pray for the protection of people in Kentucky, that they will find strength when they feel like there is so little. Help them to find peace in you as we seek ways to help them. Work through all of us so that we can demonstrate your love in Kentucky. Amen.

Louisiana

Roughly one in five people in Louisiana face food insecurity. Based on recent estimates, Louisiana is also ranked as having the highest percentage of senior adults (60+) with food insecurity at about 14 percent.¹⁰ The state has a large number of low-income households, as well as many rural towns. An issue that only makes matters worse are frequent storms, especially in southern parts of the state. According to various weather sources, Louisiana has been experiencing events of heavy rain and flash floods, which may cause damage to infrastructure and contribute to the high percentage of food insecurity that already exists.

Dear Lord, we pray for the citizens of Louisiana who struggle to get an adequate amount of food. We pray that you will give them hope, even in the midst of flooding and severe weather events that have been displacing so many. Reach out your hand to them, and help us to do so as well. Amen.

Mississippi

The state of Mississippi is considered by many to be the poorest state in the US. Because of this, it has one of the highest percentages of households with food insecurity, exceeding 16 percent in most studies. Additionally, more than 25 percent of children in Mississippi live in households facing hunger.¹¹ Rural areas, especially in the



art by Sharon R. Rollins



art by Audrey Cary Lange

Mississippi Delta region, are affected the most by food insecurity, and food banks are an increasing necessity. Mississippi Food Network reported that “visits across its network were up 36 percent from a year ago.”¹²

Dear Lord, we pray for the people of Mississippi in the midst of their long experience of food insecurity. Reach out your hand through us to the many children of Mississippi who go to bed hungry. Guide the hearts and hands of those who are trying to help. Cause us to give them hope in these unsure times. Amen.

Hawai'i

Food insecurity in Hawai'i has had complex changes due to various factors. Three years ago there were massive wildfires on Maui. Residents are still working to recover from these, as well as the ongoing risk of hurricanes. Many in Oahu are still reeling from the effects of Hurricane Lowell. Alicia Higa, the Executive Director of humanitarian organization 'Elepaio, stated that “when the storm happened...we realized that we needed to quickly put on a food distribution because so many of our community members had lost power for over 24 hours.”¹³ Hawaiians also face a very high cost of living and groceries, because 85-90 percent of food

is imported. All these factors form a harsh situation when it comes to food; many residents have been experiencing trouble accessing the right amount of food for their households. Feeding America judged the rate of food insecurity in Hawai'i at around 13 percent in 2024.

Dear Lord, we pray for the citizens of Hawai'i who have persevered through severe weather and economic hardship. Continue to give them strength as they face disaster after disaster. Show us ways to make their lives better and to help them find peace in you. Amen.

—Matthew Page is a senior Professional Writing student at Baylor University. Now hailing from Colleyville, TX, he has lived with his family in many places.

Endnotes

1. From the Hunger In America page on the Feeding America website: (www.feedingamerica.org). Feeding America is a nationwide network of more than 200 food banks. In addition to providing food to pantries, soup kitchens, shelters and other agencies, Feeding America is one of the best sources in the US for information concerning food security.
2. “Household Food Security in the United States in 2024,” published by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA).
3. “More People Are Going Hungry Now Than At The Height Of The Pandemic,” National Public Radio.
4. US state statistics are taken from studies done by Feeding America and the USDA census from 2024.
5. “New Research Takes Closer Look At Hunger Across Arkansas,” published by KARK.com.
6. See “Hunger In Texas” at the Feeding Texas website (www.feedingtexas.org).
7. Quote taken from “Hunger Action Month Highlights Food Insecurity Across Texas,” *Crossroads Today*.
8. From “Fifth Of Residents Lack Access To Food, Agency Says,” *The Cadiz Record*.
9. “Kentucky Ranked Second in the Nation for Hunger and It's Only Getting Worse,” *KyPolicy*.
10. See Feeding Louisiana (www.feedinglouisiana.org).
11. Mississippi Food Network.
12. From “Mississippi Could Face \$75 Million SNAP Cost As Food Pantry Demand Rises,” *Mississippi Today*.
13. From “Hundreds Gather For West Oahu Food Distribution,” a news report by KHON2.

Benediction

God of the hungry,

Shelter of the homeless,
Provider of all we need
and much of what we want,
you welcome us
like a parent calling a child
to a nourishing meal.

Coming together as one family
reminds us that both our affluence
and our want are known to you,
our fulness and the things
for which we starve.

As you replenish us with
food for our souls,
turn our eyes and hearts
to the needs of our brothers and sisters,
who go to bed hungry
and wake up longing for bread.
Help us realize how much is enough
and how much is too much
to hold lightly in our hands.

Give us enough trust
to live secure in your love
and to share it freely with others
in open-handed confidence
that your grace,
like loaves and fishes,
will never run out.

May it be so. Amen.

—Sharlande Sledge

—Sharlande Sledge, a member of the Seeds Liturgical Team, recently retired after serving for many years as associate pastor for Lake Shore Baptist Church in Waco, TX. She has long been active in encouraging church groups to respond to hunger issues in creative ways. This prayer is from Prayers & Litanies for the Christian Seasons (Smyth & Helwys Publishing Company) and is used with permission.

art by Sharon R. Rollins