

Hunger News & Hope

...a Seeds of Hope publication

Sudan Enters Tenuous Peace After 17 Years of Conflict

*Poverty-Ridden Country on the Brink of
Official Genocide as Factions Sign Accord*

compiled by Claire McKeever and Robert Askins

For the past seventeen years, two million Sudanese civilians have lost their lives, and another four million have been displaced, due to a civil war that plagues their country. The largest country in Africa, Sudan's chaotic, unsettled atmosphere is due in large part to the current Sudanese government, which has encouraged the war.

Through divide-to-destroy tactics (which pit ethnic groups against each other), mass starvation, bombing of humanitarian targets, enslavement of women and children, disruption of communities that flee war zones—and widespread persecution based upon race, ethnicity, and religion—the Sudanese government threatens the very survival of some ethnic groups.

Though Sudanese conflicts are difficult to summarize based upon one issue, ethnicity—or religion—Sudanese conflict is most often described as the Northern Islamic against the traditional Christian, African south. Although the definitions of race and ethnicity span much wider than these limited categories, the fact remains that no matter the group or affiliation, the government will encourage and support fighting. The main culprit in perpetuating civil disputes is Omar Hassan Bashir, an army officer who seized power over the country in a 1989 coup.

Power and money-hungry, Bashir—along with other Sudanese government

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Rwanda: The Battle to Rebuild a Broken Nation

by Beth Forshee

This April an international delegation traveled to Kigali, Rwanda to commemorate the ten-year anniversary of the 1994 genocide, in which the Hutu people massacred approximately one million Tutsis in one hundred days. Of the Tutsi survivors that year, tens of thousands became refugees and victims of the HIV/AIDS virus. By the end of the genocide 95,000 children had been orphaned.

Some say the motivation was to seize land, while others believe it was to seize power. (See the sidebar "Eight Stages of Genocide" on page 3.) Whatever the reason for the genocide, it has been called one of the most horrific slaughters of innocent civilians in the 20th century. More tragically, most of the world hardly noticed.

Ten years after the tragedy, international reporters visited the sites of massacres in cities like Kigali and Nyarubuye. They found stacks of skeletons in school yards and inside church buildings.

Hope for a Hungry Nation

After the genocide, homes were ravaged, land had been stripped and was covered with bodies, women were raped and/or killed, children were left to flee the country alone to raise themselves, and land was seized. Peace was a word with no meaning. The rampage had begun much like the Nazi Holocaust, where one population felt more privileged, and decided to take what they felt was theirs, no matter the consequence. The Hutu people desired Rwanda's land.

Part of the government's effort to rebuild Rwanda is to give the land back to the people and find ways to rejuvenate its

exhausted soil. Farming provides Rwanda with its largest exports of coffee, rice, and potatoes. However, the land has suffered from a lack of fertilization along with low rainy seasons. Crops are struggling to meet the basic needs of the Rwandan people. The country's coffee exports have also decreased due to competition with other countries producing higher yield crops.

Exports affect the economy of Rwanda and the provisions it needs to rebuild, but the quantity of food grown affects what the Rwandan people eat each day. Most Americans count on at least three meals a day, not to mention snacks. Since the genocide, many Rwandans are fortunate to eat one meal a day. Those suffering the most are the children. Because so many children were left orphaned after the genocide, they have been forced to raise themselves. Often these brothers and sisters find food provision to be a difficult task.

A great number of Rwandans are displaced, left to wander the streets homeless. According to the World Food Programme, Rwanda remains a desperately poor country, with 66 percent of the total 8.1 million Rwandans living below the poverty line.

Struggling to meet basic needs has become a way of life for many Rwandan people, but the government refuses to give up hope for complete restoration. A percentage of funding from exports has been set aside for the rebuilding of life as it was before. Hoping to continue to build exports, the government is giving land and seed to families to begin farming again.

Rwanda has also suffered from repeated droughts, making food an even more limited resource if they do not plant crops on time. Though many surrounding nations did not respond in any way during the genocide, several are willing now to help the Rwandans meet basic needs. The World Food Programme and several other development organizations are working with these countries, and with Rwandans to rebuild crops and provide for basic health needs.

Hope for a Diseased Nation

One cannot enter a discussion of Rwanda without realizing the hold that the HIV/AIDS epidemic is taking on the people. The disease seriously affects the rebuilding of the nation. During the genocide more than a million were killed and literally thousands of women were raped, leaving them pregnant or infected with HIV/AIDS, or both. This started a



Whatever the reason for the genocide, it has been called one of the most horrific slaughters of innocent civilians in the 20th century. More tragically, most of the world hardly noticed.

rampant outbreak of the virus among the Rwandan people. Many women who contracted the disease in 1994 are now dying from it, leaving orphaned children (264,000 by 2001), many of whom are infected as well.

Many people in the West realize there is no cure for this disease but know how to prevent it from spreading. Unfortunately, many Rwandans do not.

Educating the Rwandan people on AIDS prevention has to be a top priority for this nation to break out of a cycle of destruction. Several outreach programs across the world are sending workers and resources to promote HIV/AIDS education, hoping to prevent the continuous spread of the disease and the pain and destruction it brings.

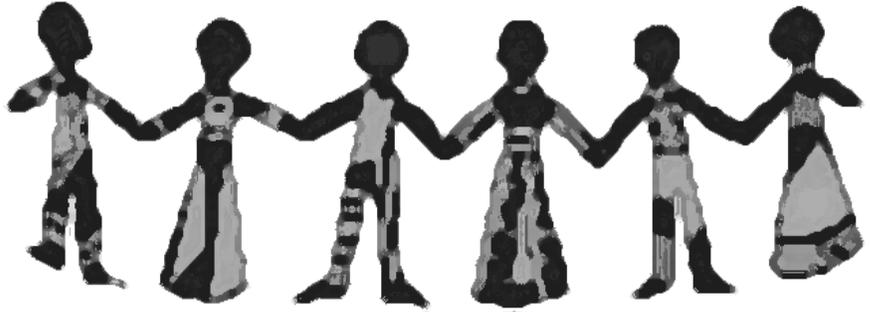
Rebuilding Spiritual Hope

According to a story in the *Houston Chronicle*, several Rwandans have turned away from the Roman Catholic Church, the primary church in Rwanda. These Rwandans maintain that during the genocide many priests and nuns, in whom Rwandans hoped they could find refuge, turned against them, killing people themselves or refusing to help. Finding the ability to trust once more is a difficult task, they say. They do not blame God, although they are seeking out different Christian denominations, and even different faiths.

Poverty, hunger, disease, and spiritual destruction have made the rebuilding of Rwanda a difficult task. Although ten years have gone by since the genocide, pain still lingers among the people. The genocide has left scars deep within the souls of the Rwandan people.

Though the government hopes to restore food production and receive foreign help for the HIV/AIDS epidemic, the true restoration for this nation begins in spiritual healing. Many Rwandans can see no hope of leaving the streets, but more profound than that is a sense of betrayal that will take more than food and shelter to heal. Meanwhile, the nation continues to struggle to forgive, to forget, and to move forward—away from poverty, hunger, disease and destruction.

—Beth Forshee is a freelance writer living in Colorado. For more information, see: Mary Wiltenburg, "In Rwanda, Forgiveness is a National Struggle," *Houston Chronicle*; World Food Programme (www.wfp.org); All Africa (<http://allafrica.com>); UN Food and Agriculture Organization (www.fao.org); PBS Frontline, "The Triumph Over Evil: 100 Days of Slaughter" (www.pbs.org); Famine Early Warning System Network (www.fews.net); Francesco Fontemaggi, "Poverty-stricken Survivors Living on Hope in Rwanda."



The Eight Stages of Genocide

from Genocide Watch

1. *Classification.* We begin by distinguishing populations into "us and them" categories—by ethnicity, race, religion, or nationality. Examples are German and Jew, Hutu and Tutsi.
2. *Symbolization.* We assign names or symbols to the classifications. We name people "Jews" or "Gypsies," or distinguish them by colors or dress. Examples are the yellow star for Jews under Nazi rule and the blue scarf for people from Cambodia's Eastern Zone under the Khmer Rouge.
3. *Dehumanization.* One group denies the humanity of the other group. Members of it are equated with animals, vermin, insects or diseases—thus overcoming the normal human revulsion against murder.
4. *Organization.* Genocide is always organized, usually by the state, though sometimes informally (Hindu mobs led by local RSS militants) or by terrorist groups. Special army units or militias are often trained and armed. Plans are made for genocidal killings.
5. *Polarization.* Extremists drive the groups apart. Hate groups broadcast polarizing propaganda. Laws may forbid intermarriage or social interaction. Extremist terrorism targets moderates, intimidating and silencing the center.
6. *Preparation.* Victims are identified and separated out because of their ethnic or religious identity. Death lists are drawn up. Members of victim groups are forced to wear identifying symbols. They are often segregated into ghettos, forced into concentration camps, or confined to a famine-struck region and starved. This is the stage at which a Genocide Alert must be called.
7. *Extermination.* Extermination begins, and quickly becomes the mass killing legally called "genocide." It is "extermination" to the killers because they do not believe their victims to be fully human. When it is sponsored by the state, the armed forces often work with militias to do the killing.
8. *Denial.* This eighth stage always follows a genocide. It is among the surest indicators of further genocidal massacres. The perpetrators of genocide dig up the mass graves, burn the bodies, try to cover up the evidence, and intimidate the witnesses. They deny that they committed any crimes, and often blame what happened on the victims. They block investigations of the crimes, and continue to govern until driven from power by force, when they flee into exile.

—The above are excerpts from "Eight Stages of Genocide" by Gregory H. Stanton. For more information on these stages and how to combat each, see www.genocidewatch.com.

Five Aid Workers Murdered in Afghanistan:

Doctors Without Borders Suspends Operations

KABUL/AMSTERDAM—On June 2 five members of Médecins San Frontières, Doctors Without Borders, (MSF) were killed on the road from Khairlchana to Qala-I-Naw in Badghis the Northwest providence of the embattled nation of Afghanistan. The five-member party set out at three in the afternoon in a Toyota Landcruiser. The car was expected to make radio contact at 3:45, but that call never came.

The MSF employees in both Khairlchana and Qala-I-Naw sent out search parties to find the missing aid workers. By 7:45 the missing vehicle was returned to the Khairlchana compound. The condition of the vehicle indicated a violent confrontation. The front and back windows were shattered. The passenger windows had been blown out and the interior of the vehicle was pockmarked with shrapnel.

The victims included three European aid specialists and two Afghani nationals. Helen de Bier, a Belgian project coordinator, formerly worked in both Iraq and the Ivory Coast. Willem Kwint was an independent businessman. Mr. Kwint was a logistician who assisted the program with computer technology. Egil Tynaes, the oldest member of the party, was a 62-year-old physician who had worked previously in Afghanistan. The Afghani victims were a driver named Besmillah and translator Fasil Ahmad.

With these five fatalities the number of aid workers killed in Afghanistan rises to thirty-three. Remnants of the Taliban still operating within the country claimed responsibility for the murders. This claim has not been confirmed. The attacks, while terrible, are not surprising. The Taliban have declared Jihad on aid workers specifically, claiming that these groups work for the US military under the cover of humanitarian aid.

In response to these murders Doctors Without Borders has suspended its operations in Afghanistan for the first time in 24 years. After surviving the Soviet occupation, the bloody civil war, and the rise of the Taliban, the organization is rethinking its role in the area. The suspension is in effect to allow the aid group to “consider how we can continue to offer medical assistance to people in desperate need under these conditions.”

The deaths of these individuals is a tragedy, of that there can be no doubt. But they are not the only victims. Many men, women, and children who could have been saved with their help will go without. —from *Médecins Sans Frontières, Reuters, and Associated Press*

Most of the important things in the world have been accomplished by people who have kept on trying when there seemed to be no hope at all.

—Dale Carnegie



Tenuous Peace in Sudan,

continued from page 1

officials—has discovered a desire for something that will bring about both of his wishes: oil. In the past few years, the Sudanese government has collected millions of dollars from oil exports.

This profit provides a greater motive and means for an accelerated assault upon out-of-favor groups. The money pays for more weapons with which to kill, and motivates the Sudanese government to seek more oil, on more land, no matter the cost.

On May 27, an historic peace treaty was signed in Kenya, ending the 21-year war between the north and south regions. The Sudanese People’s Liberation Army (SPLA) and the government finally came to an agreement that allows self-rule in the Christian south for six years—at the end of which the crucial issue of independence will be settled.

This will free the south from the restriction of Sharia (Islamic holy law) enforced in the predominantly Muslim north. While there is a sense of joy and accomplishment between the factions, a dark cloud continues to hang over what appears to be a tenuous peace.

The western region of Darfour has in the past months teetered on the edge of UN-pronounced genocide. *Janjaweed* are Muslim militias that have terrorized the black African population in the past months, some say with the help of the government.

These militias burn farms, steal livestock, commit personal violence against black Sudanese, in order to force them across the border into Kenya. It would seem, then, that the secessions of hostilities in the south have only freed more troops to take part in ethnic cleansings to the west.

Just after the ten-year anniversary of the horrific tragedy of Rwanda (see pages 2-3), we can only hope that this kind of violence is not going unnoticed.

—Sources: *www.ushmm.org, British Broadcasting Company news*

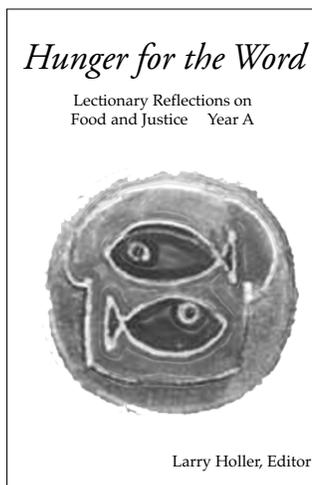
Bread for the World Releases New Lectionary Aid Focused on Hunger

Hunger for the Word is a new three-part series offering reflections and commentary on scripture around hunger issues. The first volume, "Year A" was published shortly before press time. "Year B" will appear next year, and "Year C" the next.

The series is edited by Larry Holler, a Bread for the World regional organizer. It combines the reflections of 46 pastors, lay persons, and professors—all involved in the fight against hunger. Each of their contributions is a unique perspective on the scripture's requirement to the Christian community in the areas of food security and justice.

Included in the volume are weekly ideas for music and children's sermons. In keeping with the ecumenical mission of Bread for the World, the resource uses both the Revised Common and Roman Catholic Lectionaries.

Watch for more information about this new resource in upcoming issues of *Hunger News and Hope*.



World Food Day Events Will Concentrate on Biodiversity

As it has for a many years, the US Committee for World Food Day will commemorate on October 16 the 1945 founding of the UN's Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO).

The theme of this year's activities, offered through the FAO's Telefood program, will be "Biodiversity for Food Security."

The purpose of this presentation is to bring to our attention the pressure humans put on certain species within our environment, and the long term effect of this kind of myopia.

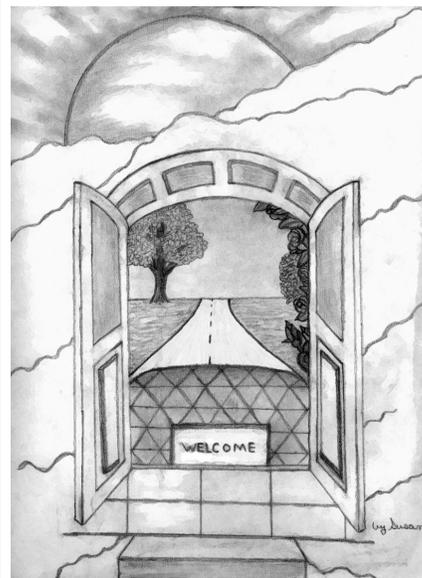


In order to effectively provide for the people of the world, the program says, we must not simple focus our energies on a particular breed of cattle or type of wheat, but to the surrounding animals, plants, microorganisms, and processes that make their existence possible.

For further information about the program and corresponding resources, contact: Erwin Northoff; Information Officer, FAO; Phone: (+39) 06 5705 3105; Email: erwin.northoff@fao.org, or visit the FAO web site (www.fao.org.)



Introducing the Seeds of Hope Hunger Emphasis packet for 2004:



The Gift of Hospitality

Sacred Seasons is a quarterly series of creative worship tools to help raise awareness of hunger and justice issues. A year's subscription includes Advent, Lent, Ordinary Time, and a fall hunger emphasis resource. To order, call 254/755-7745; fax 254/753-1909; write to Seeds Publishers at 602 James, Waco, TX 76706; or email seedshope@aol.com.

Single packets are US\$50. (Non-US subscriptions are \$135; individual packets are \$60.) For more information, see www.seedspublishers.org.





'WIC' Only Stores Charge More than Grocers

NEW YORK, NEW YORK—According to a June 6 story in the *New York Times*, a growing number of “WIC-only” food stores, particularly in California and Texas, are charging 10 to 20 percent more for their groceries than other retail grocers. “WIC-only” stores cater exclusively to participants in the Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) nutrition program. The WIC-only stores often provide convenient locations and special services like transportation. The higher cost means that states, which use federal grant money for WIC, are paying more for food—millions of dollars in the aggregate—and potentially can serve fewer people. The problem was recently exacerbated by recently rising food costs—such as the price of dairy products, which soared 10.4 percent earlier this spring.

—from the *New York Times*, and the *Food Research and Action Center*

USDA Official Questions Hunger Data

WASHINGTON, DC—Early in the summer, US Department of Agriculture (USDA) undersecretary for food and nutrition Eric Bost questioned claims by advocates and national indicators showing hunger on the rise.

Bost acknowledges “a bump,” but wonders “how much of [the increase] is due to people taking the easy way out.” Longer lines at food banks and higher

food stamp participation do not necessarily mean greater need, the undersecretary said. He credits better government outreach for the uptick. Since pantries do not require income documentation, not everyone receiving help there is in need, he says. Bost has also disputed a USDA survey on food insecurity, calling the survey questions too vague and likely to inflate results.

—from the *Columbus Dispatch*, and the *Food Research and Action Center*

Medicare Credit for Low-Income Seniors Raises Concern for Food Stamp Benefits

WASHINGTON, DC—The new Medicare prescription drug law gives a \$600 per-year credit to low-income seniors for purchasing medicines. The Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) and Department of Agriculture (USDA) agree that the credit is not income to a senior, so it does not affect food stamp amounts.

But they are at odds in interpreting how reduced drug bills will affect a senior’s other public benefits. The USDA says if a person’s out-of-pocket spending on medicine decreases because of the \$600 credit, their income will increase, and therefore their food stamp benefits decrease.

DHHS disagrees: “The law is clear in terms of [the \$600] having no impact on other federal benefits.”

—from *National Public Radio*, *USDA policy memo on the Medicare Prescription Drug Program and Food Stamps* (see www.fns.usda.gov for more)

Web Site Links Seniors to Affordable Drugs

WASHINGTON, DC—Medicare recipients, particularly those most in need, can find prescription savings online at the Access to Benefits Coalition (ABC) website. ABC was launched this month. It is a

coalition of 70 national non-profit members committed to ensuring low-income Medicare beneficiaries know about and use prescription drug savings programs. ABC’s goal is to help 5.5 million lower-income seniors receive the \$600 Medicare credit per year and other savings by 2005.

—from the *Access to Benefits Coalition* and the *Food Research and Action Center*. For more information, see www.accesstobenefits.org

Record Job Loss for Women

WASHINGTON, DC—The 2001 recession began the only continuous period of job loss for women in 40 years. 300,000 women lost their jobs between March 2001, the start of the recession, and March 2004, representing a 0.5 percent decline in women’s employment.

The female employment-to-population ratio dropped during this period from 60.2 percent to 59.2 percent. —from the *Institute for Women’s Policy Research*, *June 2004*, and the *Food Research and Action Center*. For more information, see www.jobwatch.org.



Free Summer Lunch Served in Central New York

HERKIMER, NEW YORK—Children up to age 18 can get lunch at various sites in central New York this summer. Some sites are “open sites,” meaning any child will be served. Others require registration. There is no limit on the number of children served.

The free lunches are provided through the federally-funded Summer

Food Service Program. Edie Mesick, executive director of the Nutrition Consortium of New York State, wishes more schools and agencies would become Summer Food sponsors and more children received the free lunches. "It is disappointing that this valuable program is not reaching every child or every community that needs it," Mesick said.

—from the Herkimer Evening Telegram (www.herkimertelegram.com), and the Food Research and Action Center

Florida Report Says Welfare Reform Brought Some Improvement

Welfare Officials Deny Benefits to Many

MIAMI-DADE COUNTY, FLORIDA—Employment rates of welfare recipients have increased and the poorest neighborhoods are doing the same, or better, based on a five-year evaluation of welfare reform in Miami-Dade County.

The study found that most of the people who left welfare for work appear better off financially, but many of them are still poor and struggling. Their jobs generally are low-paying and offer no benefits.

Welfare administrators in Miami-Dade County imposed extremely harsh sanctions: the report expressed surprise that benefits were denied to 61 percent of welfare clients in fiscal 1999-2000 because they did not meet job-search obligations.

Recipients may have missed job-search activities because the opportunities were unhelpful, according to the report.

The state also failed to let all clients know they may still be eligible for child care assistance, food stamps, Medicaid and tax credits after leaving welfare.

—from the Miami-Dade Sun-Sentinel ([see www.sun-sentinel.com](http://www.sun-sentinel.com)), and the Food Research and Action Center

Deadly Floods Strike Haiti and the Dominican Republic

FOND VERRETTES, HAITI—The rains began in mid-May. They fell for two weeks without stopping, drenching the Caribbean Island of Hispaniola.

The downpour caused flooding that wiped away entire villages. The rains are over now, but 3,400 people are dead—with more missing. The rainy season will begin again in June and people fear that the flooding will resume.

Small low-lying communities on the border between Haiti and the Dominican Republic suffered the most extensive damage. Fond Verrettes on the Haitian side of the border is a poor town filled with fragile houses constructed with scrap metal and wood.

The town sits in a mountain valley near a small stream that normally provides fresh drinking water. During the flooding the stream swelled to 1,600 feet across. The place where the town sat is now a field of stones.

Rocks, ranging in size from large pebbles to small boulders, were carried down from the mountains by massive mudslides. In some places these mudslides—resulting from rampant deforestation—were more destructive than the flooding.

This deforestation is caused by unchecked cutting; the sale of firewood is one of only a few sources of income for the rural poor. This and other private uses have left the mountains virtually bare.

As a result of falling rocks and high water, Fond Verrettes has been cut off from the outside world. Roads are washed away or blocked by large stones. The only sources of clean wa-

ter—the now swollen stream and a damaged cistern—are both unusable. There is also a shortage of latrines.

To make matters worse, a few days after the rains subsided the US Marines declared that the emergency was over and barred all humanitarian helicopter flights in Haiti. In response, aid workers have resorted to loading food and supplies onto mules to reach people in isolated areas.

The military assistance has provided significant help in the worst hit city, Mapou, also on the Haitian side of the border. Close to a thousand bodies have been uncovered from only one mudslide near Mapou, which is less mountainous and closer to the sea.

The US Marines, in the country to maintain order after the ousting of President Jean Bertrand Aristide, have played a part in the aid effort both for good and ill. The relief effort on the Dominican side of the border functioned with a greater efficiency; trucks and helicopters delivered food and supplies to victims shortly after the rains ended.

Although Médecins Sans Frontières (Doctors Without Borders) and Child Watch, among other aid organizations, responded quickly to the disaster, Haiti is still in drastic need.

Fortunately, the international community is still responding. The European Union has formulated an aid package of US\$2.43 million. Japan will donate 100,000. While the US has pledged 50,000.

—compiled by Robert Askins. Sources: Médecins Sans Frontières, Reuters, Associated Press, Save the Children

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Statement of Purpose

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

Editorial Address

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quotes, poems, & pithy sayings

Genocide is defined as the intentional destruction in whole or in part of national, ethnic, racial, or religious groups as such. "Never again," we said at the end of the holocaust in the early decades of the 20th century. Unfortunately, it has happened again and again, and it is still happening. There was probably a greater number of massive genocides in the 20th century than any other century in the history of humankind. In the last century alone, 132.8 million people were killed as a result of genocides.

1.5 million Armenians were killed between 1915 and 1923.

3 million Ukrainians were killed between 1932 and 1933.

1.7 million Cambodians were killed between 1975 and 1979.

More recently, there have been 500,000 Ugandans killed, 2 million Sudanese (this is still going on) and 800,000 Rwandans killed by other Rwandans.

—*from Greg Stanton, founder and director of Genocide Watch*

The fact that we are human beings is infinitely more important than all the peculiarities that distinguish human beings from one another.

—*Simone de Beauvoir*

Years ago I recognized my kinship with all living things, and I made up my mind that I was not one bit better than the meanest on the earth. I said then, and I say now, that while there is a criminal element, I am of it; while there is a soul in prison, I am not free.

—*Eugene V. Debs*

Without a sense of reckless vulnerability, a sense of wanderlust, we [the Church] root ourselves in a self-confident doctrine of "us/them," which not only gives us a false sense of security in an ever-changing world, but a security which robs us of the transforming nature of Christ's redemption on the cross.

—*Heather Oldham, "Not All Those Who Wander Are Lost: A Meditation on the Church," Sacred Seasons, Ordinary Time 2004*



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Seeds of Hope Publishers also produce quarterly packets of worship materials for the liturgical year—with an economic justice attitude.

These include litanies, sermons, children's and youth activities, bulletin art, and drama.

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