

Hunger Sunday



breadfortheworld
HAVE FAITH. END HUNGER.

The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof. –Psalm 24:1

Water and Weather: Two Critical Factors in Ending Hunger

This spring and summer, churches around the country are joining Bread for the World in calling on our nation's leaders to provide more and better development assistance aimed at overcoming hunger and poverty in Africa, Asia, and Latin America.

These seasons are also a time when we continue to celebrate the Risen Christ and the gift of the Spirit that enlivens the life of the church. Helping to get more assistance to poor countries is one of the ways we can use our "Easter energy" to make a very big difference in the lives of hungry people.

Much of U.S. development assistance is channeled through organizations like Church World Service, Lutheran World Relief, and Catholic Relief Services as well as CARE and UNICEF. Their work along with other efforts can help meet the Millennium Development Goal of

cutting hunger and poverty in half by 2015. To reach that goal, Bread for the World is calling for an increase in poverty-focused development assistance. These programs address many of the challenges faced by poor and hungry people in our world including the two big Ws: water and weather.

Girls and women in developing countries walk, on average, almost four miles each day to fetch potable water for their families. Still, one in six people have no access to safe water. About 4,500 children die each day from unsafe water and lack of basic sanitation facilities. The loss of productive time and good health make it difficult for people in developing countries to grow the food they need.

Clean water initiatives funded by the United States make long-term improvements in water wells. These initiatives also help treat and supply safe drinking water. In 2006, USAID improved access to water to more than 9 million people. Another 1.5 million people received improved sanitation.

Weather—more specifically changing climate patterns—is also a key factor in global hunger and poverty. Environmental degradation and climate change are already having far-reaching ripple effects. The most severe are seen in tropical regions of Africa,



PHOTO © JIM STIPE

Poverty-focused development assistance helps provide the water that enables hungry people to grow more food to feed their families.

Latin America and India—places that already struggle with extreme poverty. In the Sahel region of West and Central Africa, the warmer and drier conditions have led to a shorter growing season for farmers. In the Ganges River watershed of India, the receding Himalayan glaciers are causing floods in the monsoon season and water shortages in the dry season.

Some of the impacts of climate change are less immediately apparent.

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**Plan now to celebrate
Bread for the World Sunday
in October**

**See page 4 for information
about special resources
that will be available later
this summer.**

JustFaith Inspires Action and Advocacy

St. Andrew United Methodist Church in Highlands Ranch, Colorado, is participating in the JustFaith program for the first time this year, and the program is already having an impact! Members of the group have already been moved to look for opportunities to put their faith into action—several have been inspired to get their church community more involved in Bread for the World.

JustFaith, offered in partnership with Bread for the World, is a 30-week adult education program with opportunities to read, view, discuss, pray, and be formed by our faith tradition. In short, JustFaith provides an experience that can change lives, inspire

compassionate witness and transform the world through love and justice. JustFaith offers a foundation to inspire Christians to become more deeply involved and committed to acts of mercy and justice.

St. Andrew's has worked with Bread for the World before. The Poverty and Hunger Subcommittee of the Social Justice Team has encouraged letter writing in many of the church's small groups for the past two years. However, one component of the ecumenical version of JustFaith is to hold an Offering of Letters as part of one week's meeting, and this has introduced Bread for the World to new members of St. Andrew's.

Jeri Dwyer, a JustFaith group member, says of the connection between JustFaith and the Offering of Letters: "It seems to me that writing these letters can and should be considered a valuable spiritual practice... I loved blessing our letters at the end of the class. Somehow it was even more meaningful to me to write these letters in community with my JustFaith family than writing on my own."

JustFaith has motivated several group members to expand the church's advocacy efforts with Bread for the World. This year, the Offering of Letters will be presented to the whole church community and be the focus of a special Sunday in the spring.

Jeri Dwyer said that JustFaith opened her heart to advocacy, and the connection that JustFaith made for her to Bread for the World has moved her to action: "For the last couple of months the JustFaith curriculum has been encouraging us to *not* run out and try to save the world without a little more preparation, but finally in the last few weeks we've been looking at specific ways we can use our longing to be God's hands and feet. Bread has become the answer to my prayer to find the right way to begin 'save the world.'"

As Jeri said, "I keep thinking about the Apostle Paul, and how he used his Roman citizenship to spread the gospel. I feel like Bread is giving me an avenue to do the same thing, and it feels great."

To find out more about JustFaith or to get your church involved with this exciting program, visit www.justfaith.org, email info@justfaith.org or call 502-429-0865.



The Rev. John Fife and Gene LeFavre (front row), founders of the Sanctuary Movement, meet with the JustFaith group at St. Andrew's Methodist Church in Highlands Ranch, Colorado.

Bread for the Preacher

Bread for the Preacher is a new monthly email newsletter for pastors that includes lectionary-based sermon resources with a focus on hunger, poverty and justice; prayers and other worship resources; brief bulletin announcements offering updates and actions; and new opportunities or resources for pastors and church members. Go online to www.bread.org.

Spanish Language Offering of Letters Kits

The Offering of Letters Kit and video are now available in Spanish. To order, visit www.breadstore.org or call 1-800-822-7323.

Take Two Minutes Now—For More and Better Development Assistance



PHOTO © JIM STIPE

Many churches schedule their Offering of Letters for a Sunday in May or June, sometimes in conjunction with Mother's Day or Father's Day. This is a crucial period in the legislative process in Washington, D.C. Congress is set to adjourn early because of the fall elections. As you plan your Offering of Letters, you may want to set aside time during an education hour or Sunday school for letter writing. Some churches have a table set (with paper and stamps!) to encourage letter writing after worship.

If you have already conducted an Offering of Letters, please consider sending follow-up letters. Congress has made some encouraging first steps toward increasing poverty-focused development assistance, but they need to get the job done. Communicating with your senators is especially important because the Senate hasn't yet adopted the Global Poverty Act.

As you write your letters, you may find these suggestions for an effective letter to be helpful:

(1) Put your name and address at the end of your letter AND on the envelope, so your Members of Congress know that you are one of the people they represent.

(2) Ask for specific action, using the sentence below or your own words. For example, "Please do all you can to increase poverty-focused development assistance by at least \$5 billion in fiscal year 2009, and pass the Global Poverty Act so that our assistance will have the maximum impact for those with the greatest need." NOTE: When writing to your senators, please ask them to cosponsor this legislation, as it has not yet passed in the Senate.

(3) Give reasons why you believe action is urgent. You might cite one or more facts:

- In September 2000, every nation of the world, including the United States, pledged themselves to work together to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. Keeping our promises will help achieve the goals of cutting poverty and hunger, improving health care and education, and protecting the environment by 2015.
- Nearly a billion people worldwide live on less than \$1 a day. We can support their efforts to better their

lives with effective poverty-focused development assistance.

- We can succeed in reducing extreme poverty if U.S. policy and programs cooperate with the work of developing countries, international institutions, the private sector, and faith-based development efforts.
- (4)** Put each letter in a separate envelope and address it. Send your letter to:

Senator _____
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Sample Letter to Senators

Date _____

Dear Senator _____,

I ask you to do whatever you can to provide more and better aid for the world's poorest countries.

All nations agree—extreme poverty can be cut dramatically by 2015. Progress has been made in recent years, so we know it can be done. But we're not on track right now. Better-funded U.S. aid programs can help improve health, nutrition, education, and water systems, and build long-term solutions for families and communities worldwide.

Please do all in your power to increase poverty-focused development assistance by at least \$5 billion in fiscal year 2009. I also want Congress to pass the Global Poverty Act, so that our assistance will have the maximum impact for those with the great need. I hope you will cosponsor this historic legislation.

Sincerely,

Your Name
Your Address

Pastor Heidi Neumark to Provide Biblical Reflection for Bread for the World Sunday

The Rev. Heidi Neumark, pastor of Trinity Lutheran Church in Manhattan, will author this year's preaching resource for Bread for the World Sunday. Neumark's ministry for 19 years in South Bronx was the basis for her award-winning book, *Breathing Space: A Spiritual Journey in the South Bronx* (Beacon Press). A frequent contributor to *Christian Century*, Pastor Neumark has become a spokesperson for bilingual ministry and immigrant rights. Both Transfiguration Lutheran Church in the South Bronx and Trinity are known for their innovative programs for children. She will be the featured speaker at "Come to the Waters," the July 10-13 national gathering of the Women of the ELCA.

A Bread for the World Sunday

Reflection Resource will include Pastor Neumark's study as well as suggestions for children's activities related to hunger themes. Worship bulletin inserts and offering envelopes will also be available free of charge. Congregations are encouraged to celebrate Bread for the World Sunday on October 19 or on another convenient Sunday in the fall.

Planning suggestions for Bread for the World Sunday will be available online at www.bread.org/sunday in early July. The Reflection Resource and the bulletin inserts will be posted soon afterwards. Printed copies will begin shipping in early August.

If you have immediate questions, please contact church@bread.org or call 1-800-822-7323.

Water and Weather

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For example, children are sometimes taken out of school to help families gather increasingly scarce fuel.

Countering climate change is possible, however, as shown by a program in Nepal. Small plots of damaged public forest land were offered to poor rural households. These families rehabilitated the land and were then able to sell products like timber for additional income. Mundra Bahadur Magar observed: "At the age of 10, our children had to collect forest products instead of going to school." An assessment after

five years found that the annual household income of participants had risen from \$270 to \$405, children's diets improved, school attendance increased, and women saved over two hours a day that had previously been spent collecting fuel and fodder.

These and other promising projects are essential if the Millennium Development Goal of cutting hunger and poverty in half by 2015 is to be achieved. Persuading Congress to increase poverty-focused development assistance by \$5 billion in 2009 will help make sure hungry people have the resources they need to deal with both water and weather.

Bread for the World is a collective Christian voice urging our nation's decision makers to end hunger at home and abroad. God's grace in Jesus Christ moves us to help our neighbors, whether they live in the next house, the next state or the next continent. By changing policies, programs, and conditions that allow hunger and poverty to persist, we provide help and opportunity far beyond the communities where we live.

BFW Staff Can Help

Bread for the World's staff can offer tips on letter writing, brief you on legislation, assist your church's hunger ministry, and put you in touch with others who are working on these issues.

Bread for the World National Office:
1-800-822-7323

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