

Hunger Sunday



breadfortheworld
HAVE FAITH. END HUNGER.

The Local Church and Bread for the World— A 35-Year Partnership

In 1974, Bread for the World was founded to end hunger at home and abroad. The organization arose from discussions within—and among—congregations in New York City. Soon churches across the country responded to Lutheran pastor Art Simon's invitation to create a "Christian citizens' lobby" that would urge Congress to address the root causes of hunger in the United States and overseas.

Since those founding days, thousands of local churches have organized Offering of Letters, sent representatives to Bread for the World gatherings in Washington, DC, and provided generous financial support. Many of the parishes

involved in those early years are still actively involved with Bread for the World. These churches also continue a variety of efforts to address hunger in their own communities.

"By the time the 1980s came around, New York City was in rough financial shape," says Rev. Jared Stahler, Associate Pastor of St. Peter's Lutheran Church in New York City. "Seniors were going without meals so they could keep a roof over their heads. HIV/AIDS and the growing population of people living on the street caused an explosion of need."

St. Peter's wanted to provide a safe place for those who suffered to come together over a meal. In time, the weekly dinner grew to include recipes, groceries, and resources for those who needed help. "We see this work as sacramental; our guests as Christ," Rev. Stahler says. "The tables at which our guests are served are extensions of Christ's table."

It didn't take long for St. Peter's weekly dinner to evolve into a non-profit organization, the Momentum Project, which provides hot meals, pantry bags, and a wide array of life saving support services at locations in four New York City boroughs.

Throughout the 1980s, Rev. Dr. John Damm served as St. Peter's senior pastor. Dr. Damm comments, "Art Simon—what a fantastic human

being. Out of the modest Trinity Church on the Lower East Side," Pastor Damm continues, "Bread for the World has become a luminous, life-changing citizens' lobby against hunger and poverty."

St. John Vianney Parish in Shelby Township, MI, is another local church that has been with Bread for the World from the beginning. Today, the parish still sets aside five to ten percent of the weekly collection to aid hungry and poor people. Pastoral Associate Fritz Bohlmann says that the Stewardship Program Committee is careful about where they invest the parish's offerings. Bread for the World has been a grateful recipient of that support for many years.

Ms. Bohlmann has served St. John Vianney's for two decades, but her connection with Bread for the World goes back to her early days—when she began teaching at a Catholic girls' school in Michigan. The school's principal, Sister Margaret, was enthusiastic in recruiting those in other religious orders to become involved in Bread for the World.

The congregation also serves as part of Macomb County Rotating Emergency Shelter Team. This coalition of 83 faith groups gives homeless people shelter in the homes of parishioners. Volunteer hosts

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Bulletin or Pulpit Announcement

Our church joins churches and individuals across the country in giving thanks for the work of Bread for the World for the past 35 years. We rejoice that this remarkable organization has done so much to alleviate the causes of hunger in the United States and around the world. In the hope we have because of the Risen Christ, we rededicate ourselves to taking action to end hunger in God's world.

Stopping Hunger at an Early Age

Interventions to curb childhood malnutrition create a more hopeful future

For Christians, Easter isn't a day—it's an eight-week long season that celebrates our being raised with Christ to new life. These 50 days are followed by the even longer season of Pentecost, in which the Spirit of the Risen Christ shapes and sustains the church. With this kind of long-winded "life support," Christians are well-equipped for the persistent, determined effort needed to end hunger in God's world.

That kind of sustained effort is especially crucial in addressing the surge in childhood malnutrition in the world's poorest countries.

The impact of high food prices is now being exacerbated by the global economic recession. Women and children are being hit hard and their health and nutritional status are suffering as a result. The World Bank estimates that we could see an increase of between 200,000 and 400,000 child deaths per year as a result of the economic slowdown and the rise in food prices.

Soaring food prices in the world's poorest countries have forced families trying to survive on just a few dollars a day to switch to less nutritious diets—or cut back on the amount of food they eat. As families switch to cheaper sources of calories, they give up key vitamins and minerals such as iodine, iron, or vitamin A. Young children who don't get these micronutrients undergo physical and cognitive impairment. By the time these children reach their fifth birthday, they may have suffered permanent disabilities, which make escaping poverty even more difficult.

In ten of the world's poorest countries, more than one-third of all

children under five were moderately or severely malnourished in 2006. Those rates are bound to be higher now.

In the small southern African country of Lesotho, for example, the rise in food prices has dramatically increased the rate of child malnutrition. In 2006, one out of five children was undernourished. A survey in 2008 found that close to half of all children in the country were suffering from hunger.

This level of malnutrition has inter-generational impacts. Girls who are malnourished during early childhood are more likely to be physically smaller and more likely to give birth to smaller children. When malnourished children grow up, their impairments lower their labor productivity—making it more difficult for them to escape hunger and poverty. Thus, they pass malnutrition and poverty on to their children.

The good news is that there are many successful approaches to combating child malnutrition. Most are inexpensive and can be quickly implemented. Reaching children under two years of age provides help during a critical window of opportunity. This is the age when good nutrition puts children on a path to healthy growth and development.

Empowering women with basic nutritional knowledge, promoting appropriate breastfeeding practices, helping families to diversify their diets, providing supplements with micronutrients such as vitamin A or iron—all of these relatively small investments pay big dividends in reducing malnutrition among children.



PHOTO © MARGARET W. NEA

Giving priority to nutrition for mothers and very young children helps break the cycle of hunger and poverty.

We have the knowledge to end childhood malnutrition in the world's poorest countries. What is needed is sustained attention and the political will to act along with reliable investments.

The United States can lead this sustained effort. Reforming U.S. foreign assistance—Bread for the World's 2009 Offering of Letters—could be especially helpful. As churches around the country put their "Easter energy" to work, they can encourage reforms that will improve nutrition in countries with the highest rate of child malnutrition. In this way, children will have the chance to grow into healthy and productive adults—who can then help end hunger in their own communities.

The “personal touch” can be persuasive—and exciting

Making Your Voice Heard for Foreign Assistance Reform



PHOTO © JIM STIPE

Churches around the country have organized Offerings of Letters on behalf of the reform of U.S. foreign assistance. Those letters are urging Congress to eliminate inefficiencies and remove obstacles—so that, in these times of economic constraint—more aid reaches the people who need it the most in Africa and other areas of the world.

As effective as these letters are, more extensive and personal efforts are essential for persuading our elected officials to change policies and programs to benefit hungry people. Here are some additional ways you can communicate with your members of Congress:

1) The spring and summer months are an ideal time to arrange a face-to-face meeting with your representative. She or he is likely to return to your district on a regular basis, especially on weekends. The representative’s local office can arrange for a meeting. Often these meetings can involve several members from your congregation—or from a number of churches. You can find your representative by going to Bread’s website, www.bread.org, and choosing ‘Take Action.’

These face-to-face meetings are immensely influential because you’ll have an opportunity to present more information and respond to questions. Often one or more Congressional staff persons will join the representative, and they will receive any printed materials that bolster your case.

Bread for the World staff can help you set up and prepare for these

meetings. Contact your regional organizer or call 1-800-822-7323.

2) Plan to participate in Bread for the World’s Lobby Day on Tuesday, June 16, 2009. Some congregations send a delegation each year for this in-depth experience in citizenship. Special training is provided and visits with Senators and Representatives are arranged. Lobby Day concludes with a reception and closing worship. For more details, visit www.bread.org/gathering2009.

3) Phone calls to your members of Congress can be especially effective because you can make contact at exactly the time when your opinion will have the greatest impact. When you call the Capitol switchboard (202-224-3121), you will be quickly connected to the office of your representative or senators. In most

cases, you’ll talk with a staff member who will take your message. In other cases, you’ll reach voice mail and be asked to leave a message. Only very rarely (the good news and the bad news) will you ever speak with your senators or representative. But all phone calls are carefully logged and monitored. Repeatedly, we hear from Congressional offices about an upsurge in phone calls about pending legislation.

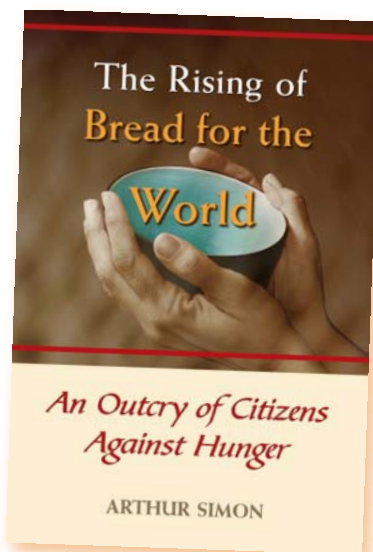
Ideally, your face-to-face meetings and phone calls will relate to specific legislation or committee hearings. When you go to www.bread.org to get the names of your representative and senators, you will also find suggested language and other recommendations—both for letter writing and for more personal communication with your elected officials.

Plan Now to Start a JustFaith Group in the Fall

The spring and summer months are an ideal time to recruit a leader and participants for a JustFaith group this fall in your church. These small groups engage in biblical reflection, focused discussions, and hands-on experiences that foster engagement in social justice. This study program is being co-sponsored by Bread for the World and JustFaith. For more information—including details about an orientation session near you—visit www.justfaith.org.

The Rising of Bread for the World: *An Outcry of Citizens Against Hunger* By Arthur Simon

Published by Paulist Press, this 200-page book will be premiered at a reception before Bread for the World's 35th Anniversary Dinner. Art Simon tells the surprising story of how God uses ordinary people to make an extraordinary difference in the lives of hungry people. In the 1970s, Art served as a Lutheran pastor in New York's Lower East Side. He brought together Catholics and Protestants in an organized effort to urge Congress to address the root causes of hunger. Today, 35 years later, Bread for the World is the nation's foremost citizens' voice against hunger. Copies of Art Simon's newest book may be ordered for \$16.95 (plus shipping) at www.breadstore.org. The books will be shipped in late June.



The Local Church – 35 Years

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provide food, transportation to work, job search help, and much more. “We are there to support and listen to them when they are in need,” says Bohlmann.

In Washington, DC, where Bread for the World moved in 1982, Holy Trinity Catholic Church has been a source of steady support. Interestingly, Rev. Dr. William Byron, SJ, served as chair of Bread for the World's board of directors for several years. After his retirement as president of Catholic

University, he served Holy Trinity.

Ron Castaldi, Social Justice Minister at Holy Trinity, says that members of the large congregation engaged in many services, including a monthly food collection benefiting four community organizations.

“Christ wants us to give; in doing so, we see his face in the eyes of those we help,” Castaldi says. “Doing good work as Christians is half the equation. The other half is the personal transformation we experience when we give of ourselves.”

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 and conditions that allow hunger and poverty to persist, we provide help and opportunity far beyond the communities where we live.

Bread for the World 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

Church Relations Staff

- **Carter Echols**
Sr. Associate for Local Church Outreach
- **Don Williams**
Associate for African-American Churches

Regional Organizer in National Office

- **Marco Grimaldo** (1-800-822-7323)
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Bread for the World Regional Offices

- **LaVida Davis** (1-800-447-0239)
Illinois, Indiana and Missouri Organizer
- **David Gist** (1-800-315-3239)
California Organizer
- **Matt Newell-Ching** (1-888-752-7323)
Western Organizer
- **Ricardo Moreno** (1-800-315-3239)
Organizer for Latino Relations
- **Tammy Walhof** (1-800-363-7239)
Sr. Upper Midwest Organizer
- **Meredith Story Williams**
(1-888-257-0239)
Central Southern Organizer
- **Elizabeth Coleman** (1-888-239-0073)
Southeast Organizer
- **Larry Hollar** (1-800-619-9239)
Sr. North Central Organizer
- **Derrick Boykin** (1-866-238-0507)
Northeast Organizer



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Vacation Bible School Suggestions

Vacation Bible School classes and other summer education events can be ideal opportunities for your church to focus on hunger issues. Explore these possibilities at no cost:

Helping Hungry People: this new five-session Sunday school curriculum (developed by Bread for the World to help elementary-age students learn about the Christian call to help people in need) can be easily adapted for a week of VBS. Each session uses scripture and imaginative activities to help young people learn about Jesus, about people living in poverty in different parts of the world, and about what they can do. Visit www.bread.org/helpinghungrypeople to download the curriculum at no cost, and use one session or all five!

Taking Root – Hunger Causes, Hunger Hopes: this five-session curriculum from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America could also be perfect for your vacation Bible School. Available for three different age ranges (grades 3-6, grades 7-9, and grades 10-12), *Taking Root* imagines a world without hunger and then sets forth the steps that will transform that image into a reality. Find complementary resources and information about this curriculum at www.elca.org/hunger/takingroot.

Just Eating? Practicing our Faith at the Table: this seven-session curriculum published by the Presbyterian Hunger Program helps high school students and adults explore the relationship between the way we eat and the way we live. This curriculum fosters discussion about daily eating habits, the Christian faith and the “needs of the broader world.” Visit www.pcusa.org/hunger/features/justeating.htm to order the resource or to download it at no cost.

In addition, www.micahchallenge.us/resources.shtml contains a page full of children’s activities related to the Millennium Development Goals and Bible studies addressing God’s concern for poor and hungry people.

*A Free Resource
for Busy Pastors*

Bread for the Preacher –

Pastors and others can now find scripture reflections that address issues of hunger and poverty. Bread for the World produces a monthly email newsletter, “Bread for the Preacher,” that provides commentary on the scripture readings appointed for each Sunday (and for major feast days) in the Revised Common Lectionary. This online newsletter offers prayers and other worship resources. To subscribe to this free resource, visit www.bread.org and click on Newsletter Signup.

A New Resource

Make the Most of A Mission Trip!

Mission trips have the potential to become life-changing experiences. *Getting Ready to Come Back: Advocacy Guide for Mission Teams*, a new guide prepared by Bread for the World, can help individuals and groups before, during, and after their mission trips. Developed in partnership with several denominations, this new resource extends the idea of Christian service beyond directly serving those in need. Those going on mission trips are encouraged to take action for systemic change to remove the underlying causes of human suffering.

This new resource helps short-term mission teams explore how U.S. policies and programs both aggravate and alleviate hunger and poverty. Practical suggestions are offered for ways individuals can advocate as informed Christian citizens when they return from their trips abroad.

The new resource sets forth a four-step process. Each step includes scripture resources for reflection, suggested discussion questions, and a prayer. To help groups prepare, *Getting Ready to Come Back* identifies sources of information on host countries—as well as the relationship between the U.S. and those countries. As the group travels, the new guide offers questions that will help participants record their experiences in a host country. Back home, *Getting Ready to Come Back* invites conversations about different forms of advocacy—with God, with one's community, and with elected leaders in Washington, DC. Trip participants are encouraged to make a commitment to some type of action. Reflection is the final step. Appendices include a glossary of terms and sample follow-up activities.

Copies of *Getting Ready to Come Back* are available for download and for purchase (\$10 each plus shipping and handling) by visiting www.bread.org/advocacyguide.

