

2016 Offering of Letters

You Can Help Mothers and Children Survive and Thrive

In the 1980s and 1990s, AIDS was killing parents in Zambia and leaving millions of children orphaned. Since then, the Zambian and U.S. governments and health institutions have worked together to gain control over the disease.

Yet HIV cases are still high in Zambia—about 1 out of 8 adults (over age 15) were HIV-positive in 2014, according to the United Nations. In November 2015, UNICEF reported that AIDS is now the leading cause of death for African teenagers. This is the case because these teens were most likely HIV-positive as younger children. Improving nutrition for infants and children who are HIV-positive is critical to stopping the spread of AIDS.

At St. Francis, a church-supported mission hospital in eastern Zambia, nutrition and treatment for HIV go hand-in-hand. By 7:30 every morning, one wing of the hospital is full of adults and children. They sit on ledges in the outdoor corridors, which serve as waiting areas for patients.

Among those lined up one morning are Felistas Miti Mwale and her 6-year-old son Colins. Colins is HIV-positive and has come to St. Francis' clinic for



PHOTO © JOSEPH MOLLIERI / BREAD FOR THE WORLD

In Zambia, a nurse talks with Colins and his mother about eating more nutritious food to help improve his health.

a check-up and monthly supply of antiretroviral drugs. As part of this check-up, staff will speak to Colins's mother about what they eat at home.

After asking about Colins's diet, the nurse asks his mother what time he takes his medication every day. The nurse notes that Colins is underweight for his height. She advises his mother to give him foods high in protein, like peanuts, which are readily available to many rural Zambians, as a snack.

For HIV-positive patients like Colins, the hospital receives assistance from the Thrive program of PATH, a U.S.-based nonprofit that specializes
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ACT NOW!

Please write or call your members of Congress (800-826-3688) to urge them to move forward on two critical matters:

- At least \$230 million for maternal and child nutrition programs as part of the Global Health Account of the State Department foreign operations appropriations bill.
- For your senators – passage of the bipartisan Global Food Security Act (S. 1252), which has now been approved by the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and which would assure that the Feed the Future initiative is made permanent.



Creative Collaborations Multiply Success

Bread for the World's annual Offering of Letters campaign engages churches and other faith communities in writing letters to Congress. There are as many ways to hold an Offering of Letters as there are groups that undertake the activity.

Power in Numbers

Jon Gromek, a Bread for the World regional organizer, is a lifelong member of the Greek Orthodox Church but calls himself an "honorary Catholic." After all, his wife is a member of the Catholic Church. Gromek worked with the Archdiocese of Cincinnati to spearhead an advocacy campaign with the Offering of Letters as its vehicle.

The archdiocese invited all of its parishes, schools, and institutions to pen letters urging Congress to renew funding for U.S. child nutrition programs. Letters were then collected at the archdiocese to be blessed.

In September, more than 12,000 letters arrived on Capitol Hill. "We had delegations visiting every member of Congress, personally delivering the letters," Gromek says. The archdiocese saw this collective effort as an especially powerful way to mark Pope Francis's address to the U.S. Congress.

Social Media Encourages Letters

Rev. Dave Buerstetta serves as Koinonia pastor for Woodridge United Methodist Church in Woodridge, Ill. He has integrated the Offering of Letters into the life of Woodridge. He uses the power of social media to raise awareness. Buerstetta also writes a

personal blog.

Robin Stephenson, Bread for the World's social media organizer, says "I use Pastor Dave as an example in my Social Media for Pastors training. He uses social media so effectively as part of his ministry."

Buerstetta praises Bread for the World for the support provided to churches that are planning Offerings of Letters. "Bread develops terrific, detailed information on the issues and how we can help," he says.

The letters from Cincinnati and from Woodbridge Church were among the more than 200,000 letters sent to Congress in 2015. In January of this year, the Senate Agriculture Committee passed the Improving Child Nutrition Integrity and Access Act of 2016. This bill would reauthorize child nutrition programs and expand summer and after-school meal programs. The full Senate must now act, but the bipartisan cooperation is a positive sign.

Spanish-speaking Evangelical Churches

In Southern California, David Gist, another of Bread for the World's regional organizers, has helped forge an exciting pilot program with four pastors who lead Spanish-speaking evangelical churches. The program's goal is to launch advocacy ministries in all four churches—including a monthly Offering of Letters.

Gist says, "These congregations come from conservative backgrounds. These four pastors are taking on a new and prophetic voice to honor God and help end hunger."

Participating churches are Centro de Restauración Familiar (Garden Grove), Primera Asamblea del Condado de Orange (Costa Mesa), Primera

Rev. Dave Buerstetta (center) with Jason Shubert (left) and Tim Waynick (right), members of Woodbridge (Ill.) United Methodist Church, as they bless letters written as part of the Offering of Letters.



PHOTO © DAVID GIST

The Rev. Fernando Tamara (right) is joined by Tim Hurley, a fellow with the House Foreign Relations Committee, and Joan Cordon, who serves on the staff of Representative Ed Royce (R-Calif. 39). Tamara is organizing the monthly Offering of Letters in four Spanish-speaking churches in Congressman Royce's district in Southern California.

Asamblea del Condado de Orange (Santa Ana), and Latino-americana Christian Reformed Church (Anaheim).

Rev. Fernando Tamara of Primera Asamblea, Santa Ana, explains, "The reason we started this strategy was the need for leadership in topics such as hunger, injustice, poverty, humanitarian need, and immigration." During February, Tamara visited two of the partner churches, taking the pulpit to introduce Bread for the World to the congregants.

Tamara, who is also a professor for the Latin American Theological Seminary, is passionate about Spanish-speaking churches joining the chorus of voices: "Our desire is to 'awake' these churches and show them that they have a voice and vote. They need to know that they can change laws and regulate the legislative system."

Tamara reports that the churches are inviting pastors and ministers to a forum on hunger and poverty, to which they will invite candidates for the California State Senate. The churches will also send 10 people to participate in Bread for the World's annual Lobby Day on June 7.



PHOTO © PATTI CASH

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in health in developing countries. Thrive is funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID).

The last stop for Colins and his mother on their visit is the pharmacy. The HIV drugs are supplied by the U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, another way the U.S. government provides assistance overseas. Patients who are malnourished also receive high-protein dietary supplements, supplied by USAID.

With the medicine and food Colins receives, the nurse believes he can live into adulthood. While no one can see that far into the future, he is being

given a chance to survive and thrive today.

You and other Bread for the World members have helped persuade Congress to fund this work in Zambia. Now you can help more children and their mothers around the world by participating in Bread for the World's 2016 Offering of Letters.

Each year thousands of churches conduct a letter-writing event before, during, or after their worship service. Interested individuals write letters to their members of Congress.

This year, these letters will urge senators and representatives to support robust funding for nutrition and health

for mothers, newborns, and young children. Specifically, Bread for the World is advocating at least \$230 million for programs for maternal and child nutrition. This increase should happen in the Global Health Account of the State Department foreign operations appropriations bill.

To help your church get involved—or to write your own letter to Congress—visit www.bread.org/ol2016. A free Offering of Letters kit and worship bulletin inserts—in either English or Spanish—are available. You may also call 800-822-7323, ext. 1072, to place an order.

A Special Celebration

On March 7, more than 100 people gathered in Washington, D.C., to celebrate the successful completion of Bread Rising, a three-year campaign that raised more than \$75 million for current and future efforts of Bread for the World and Bread for the World Institute.



Kelvin Beachum, now with the National Football League's Jacksonville Jaguars, talks with Eric Mitchell, Bread for the World's director of government relations, and Will Moore, executive director of the Eleanor Crook Foundation. Beachum has worked with Bread for the World to win reauthorization of the child nutrition programs and spoke at the March 7 dinner.



Art Simon, founder and president emeritus of Bread for the World, talks with Julia Ladner, a Bread for the World member from Lawrenceville, Ill.



Gayle Smith, administrator of USAID, was the keynote speaker for the March 7 celebration. She is pictured here with David Beckmann (top right), Bread for the World's president, Mark Brinkmoeller of USAID, and Dr. Sandra Joireman, chair of Bread for the World's board of directors.

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Please Renew Your 2016 Membership

In early March of each year, you and other Bread for the World members are asked to renew your membership by making a financial contribution. You should have received your annual membership card in the mail—along with a renewal form and return envelope. If you made a recent gift, you are considered a “member in good standing,” and there’s no need to send another gift.

Gifts in response to the annual membership appeal are the largest single source of the funds Bread for the World has to support our advocacy efforts with Congress. So please return your membership renewal as soon as you receive it—or donate online at www.bread.org/renew. Thank you!

Register Now for Lobby Day on June 7

Plan now to come to Washington, D.C., and meet hundreds of other Bread for the World members from around the country. The day begins with worship. Then Roger Thurow, author of *The Last Hunger Season* and the soon-to-be published *The First 1,000 Days*, will speak during the Lobby Day briefing. Next, you’ll have an opportunity to communicate personally with your members of Congress and their staffs. The day concludes with a reception and closing worship. For more information and to register, visit www.bread.org/lobbyday.



IRA Rollover: A Clarification

For individuals who are 70 ½ years old and who have authorized a check to be sent from their IRA to Bread for the World Institute, that gift does not qualify as an income tax deduction. However, the amount does qualify as part (or all) of the required withdrawal from an IRA. Thus, a rollover from an IRA to a charity may lower an individual’s taxable income for the year and may thereby provide some tax savings.

As always, you are encouraged to consult with your professional advisor. This information is *not* provided as legal or financial advice.

Throughout the year, Bread for the World hosts delegations of pastors, bishops, and others as they visit their members of Congress. In early March, 40 faith leaders made more than 100 visits on Capitol Hill to urge support for poverty-focused development assistance. Here Rev. Lawrence Kirby, pastor of Second Baptist Church in Kenosha, Wisc., meets with the Speaker of the House, Representative Paul Ryan, (R-Wisc.).



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WHAT'S ONLINE?

Newsletters and More...

- **Fresh Bread:** This easy-to-read newsletter provides an update on happenings in Congress related to issues Bread is working on. It includes suggestions for actions you can take. To receive this weekly newsletter (when Congress is in session), sent by email, subscribe at www.bread.org/freshbread.

- An electronic Bread newsletter is available at the start of every month. Each issue includes news about hunger and poverty issues, reflections on faith and advocacy, and suggestions for how you can take action by contacting your members of Congress. To view the current issue and subscribe, visit www.bread.org/newsletter.

- Updated state fact sheets about poverty and hunger for each state can be viewed, downloaded, and printed at www.bread.org/statefactsheets. These fact sheets are part of Bread for the World’s efforts to highlight issues of hunger in the 2016 elections. When meeting with candidates at both the state and national level, it can be helpful to cite actual statistics about hunger in your state.



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