

BREAD FOR THE WORLD'S 2016 OFFERING OF LETTERS

SURVIVE
— AND —
THRIVE



AN INVITATION

Use Your Influence on Congress

Dear Friend,

I invite you to participate in Bread for the World's 2016 Offering of Letters: Survive and Thrive. Please use this toolkit to involve your church in this campaign focusing on the nutrition and health of mothers and children around the world. As a collective Christian voice for an end to hunger, Bread for the World equips churches and individuals so they can have an impact on our government's policies.

By participating in this year's Offering of Letters, you can be part of God's movement in our time, giving us many opportunities to actually end hunger within a generation. Since 1990, the number of people who are hungry in the world has fallen by over 200 million, even while the world's population has increased. Bread for the World is so confident in this amazing progress over the past few decades that it is committed to helping achieve the goal of ending hunger and malnutrition by 2030.

How is this progress happening? In big and small ways—and all are important.

In 2015, the world's leaders adopted new global goals known as the Sustainable Development Goals. If achieved, the 2030 goals would free the world of hunger and poverty, reduce inequality, and improve health in all countries. These goals are meant to build on the Millennium Development Goals of 2000-2015 and finish the job the earlier goals started.

Working with churches, food banks, and the government, Bread for the World members are also stepping up and are more active than ever. There is energy from prayer, advocacy, and giving that is powering this movement toward the end of hunger.

In these and other ways, we are not only witnessing this great exodus from hunger, but we are also contributing to it.

And so I hope you will help keep this momentum going by writing to your members of Congress. With support from Bread for the World members, our government has helped to launch new efforts to reduce malnutrition among mothers and children in many of the world's most desperate places. These efforts are grounded in new knowledge of how best to use available dollars. Now we want Congress to affirm and provide additional resources to accelerate global progress against malnutrition. This year's Offering of Letters is focusing on women and young children because they are the most vulnerable to hunger and malnutrition. Malnutrition has devastating long-term consequences on health and can result in death.

Please also check out www.bread.org/elections to see what Bread for the World is doing to raise hunger as an election issue. Our Vote to End Hunger campaign is designed to influence voters and candidates for national office. Bread wants the new president and Congress elected this year to put our nation and the world on track to ending hunger by 2030.

Thank you for your participation in this year's Offering of Letters and for all you do to bring an end to hunger.

In Christ,



Rev. David Beckmann
President



SPECIAL NOTE—EARLY LETTERS ARE HELPFUL

A major goal of this year's Offering of Letters is increased funding for programs for the health and nutrition of mothers and children. This spring, Congress will be considering the funding levels of key global health and nutrition programs. As Congress begins determining next year's funding priorities, it is important for your members of Congress to hear from you with letters early in the year. Be sure to visit the Offering of Letters website at www.bread.org/ol for the latest sample letter to Congress.

A BIBLICAL REFLECTION ON SURVIVING AND THRIVING

Life in God's Image and a Challenge to Our Nation's Leaders

At the very beginning of the Scriptures, we hear that we are created in God's image (Genesis 1:27). Throughout the Bible, we hear that we are precious to God. Our lives are truly a gift from God, and through our efforts—God cares for all who share that gift of life.

Tragically, though, life for many women and children ends early, and they die unnecessarily. Every two minutes, a woman dies from complications in pregnancy or childbirth. Despite tremendous progress, a child dies somewhere every five seconds, and often the major causes are preventable diseases and malnutrition. Many children who do survive suffer from stunting, which causes lifelong health problems and irreversible damage to their physical and cognitive development.

Isaiah and other prophets challenged Israel—and us today—to practice “right worship.” The worship God desires is that we seek justice and share our bread with the hungry (Isaiah 56-58). In the Gospels of Matthew and Luke, we see how Mary and Joseph protect and care for the young Jesus. Later in the Gospels, Jesus repeatedly heals people suffering from disease (Luke 4:40-41 and 6:17-19). In response to a Gentile woman's persistent pleas and remarkable faith, Jesus heals her daughter (Mark 7:24-30).

Today, we follow Jesus' lead in caring for people who are vulnerable in our world—especially new mothers and their young children. Nearly half of all childhood deaths before age 5 are caused by malnutrition. Ending this needless tragedy requires continued improvements in nutrition for women and children during the 1,000 days from pregnancy to the child's second birthday.

In saving the lives of women and children, we live out the prayer that Jesus taught us: that God's will be done on earth as in heaven, that all may have daily bread (Luke 11:1-4). In Isaiah 65:17-23, we hear that God will “create new heavens and a new earth....No more shall there be in it an infant that lives but a few days....They shall not labor in vain or bear children for calamity.” As we join efforts to help mothers and children survive and thrive, we are part of God's vision of a world in which people “hunger no more, and thirst no more” (Revelation 7:16).

To achieve this new reality, we will need to engage in advocacy. We must urge our nation's leaders to support programs that help women and infants survive childbirth and early childhood and thrive beyond that.

Fortunately, proven steps—like providing nutritious food and showing how to prepare it, food supplements, pre-natal and post-natal care, hygiene, and vaccines and medications—can have a huge impact. Implementing these basic measures of development will save the lives of 15 million children and 600,000 women by 2020. Safe births and better nutrition for young children will also help break the cycle of hunger and poverty.

The U.S. government must provide leadership to see that these steps are taken and these programs are funded. Psalm 72, Jeremiah 22, and Proverbs 31:8-9 speak to responsibility of people in power to care and sustain all people created in God's image. Bread for the World's 2016 Offering of Letters will urge Congress to provide this leadership and funding.

Putting our faith in God's promise that “as many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourself with Christ” (Galatians 3:27), we are inspired and equipped to be bold in urging our elected officials to take this action. Moved by God's grace in Jesus Christ, we can play a role in helping every mother and child achieve their God-given potential.

Can we bring to life God's vision of a world in which people “hunger no more, and thirst no more”?



Bread for the World photo

HELPING MOTHERS AND CHILDREN SURVIVE AND THRIVE

An Overview

Ending hunger means more than just providing enough food and calories for everyone. Side by side with the need for sufficient food to live an active life is the need for the *right* foods—for good nutrition. A diet drawing from all food groups that is rich with vitamins and minerals is crucial for the health, growth, and strength of both bodies and minds.

Focusing on women and young children is important because these groups are the most vulnerable to hunger and malnutrition.

Nearly half of the world's smallholder farmers are women, with higher rates in developing countries. That means in the rural areas of Asia, Africa, and Latin America, the majority of people engaging in subsistence farming to feed themselves and their families are women. Being a smallholder farmer often means living on the edge. Changes in the climate, a natural disaster, or even just the limits of what can be grown on a small plot of land can limit both the quantity and quality of the food a family eats. And this can be devastating to a woman and her family.

Women are also the ones in a family primarily responsible for caring for the children. Bread for the World Institute's analysis shows that giving children good nutrition early in life—starting in the womb—benefits them in a multitude of ways throughout their entire lives. Studies show that malnutrition during the early months of a child's life can stunt their physical and cognitive development and increases the risk of illness in childhood and later in life. As a result, the cost of malnutrition is very high in terms of health care, school readiness, amount of education, and lost productivity and income.

In short, Bread for the World believes that good nutrition is a key way of combatting hunger and that good nutrition—eating well—is a pathway to good health and living an active, thriving life.

Better Health for a Better Life

Around the world, 17,000 more children will live and 650 more mothers will survive childbirth every day this year than was the case in 1990. Children are surviving at a rate never seen before. Since the 1980s, the United States has led global efforts to improve child survival. Developing countries with growing economies are now better able to invest in their own health systems, accelerating the survival of mothers and children.

However, hunger and malnutrition are still a major factor in preventable deaths. The respected British medical journal *The Lancet* reported in April 2014 that “high rates of malnutrition underlie more than 45% of all deaths in children younger than 5 years and are a significant factor in maternal mortality.” In fact, while the rate of death for children and mothers has rapidly dropped since 1990, the two Millennium Development Goals that addressed the health of children and mothers (No. 4: reduce child mortality; and No. 5: improve maternal health) were not met before the goals expired last year.

The world is positioned to ramp up progress on the nutrition and health of women and children. In 2015, United Nations member countries adopted the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as successors to the Millennium Development Goals. The first three SDGs tackle this problem head-on:

- Goal 1: End poverty in all its forms everywhere
- Goal 2: End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture
- Goal 3: Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages

The third goal includes targets to reduce global maternal mortality and to end preventable child deaths.

“Women are not dying because of untreatable disease,... They are dying because societies have yet to make the decision that their lives are worth saving.”

—Mahmoud Fathalla, former head of the International Federation of Obstetricians and Gynecologists

HELPING MOTHERS AND CHILDREN SURVIVE AND THRIVE

An Overview, cont.

What We and the U.S. Government Can Do

Congress plays a critical role in setting the policies and funding levels that will enable the U.S. government to do its part to improve nutrition and health among mothers and children. Through this Offering of Letters, you can help Congress summon the political will to do this.

Congress must support robust funding for nutrition and health for mothers, newborns, and young children. Congress can also pass the Global Food Security Act and reform the ways it provides food aid. The Global Food Security Act will ensure continued U.S. investments in agriculture, thus improving nutrition and increasing the productivity of smallholder farmers. Reforming food aid will also allow the U.S. to provide humanitarian assistance in a timely and more effective way. This means of providing food will benefit women and children, who need the right kind of nutrition in the 1,000-day window between pregnancy and age 2.

How the U.S. is Leading the International Community

The U.S. has long led the international community in this area as one of the largest donors to global programs for the health of mothers and children. Our government has operated programs over the past several decades in numerous developing countries.

The U.S. government has already committed to saving the lives of 15 million children and 600,000 women by 2020 in 24 countries (including Zambia; see stories of what's already happening there on pages 8-10). The U.S. is working with the governments of these countries to reach these goals. Currently 13 African countries have developed national strategies that include countrywide targets and scorecards to measure and track progress. In the last two years alone, these countries have collec-

Caring for people who are vulnerable in our world, especially children, means providing good nutrition so they can be healthy and active.



Zach Blum for Bread for the World

THE IMPORTANCE OF GETTING THE RIGHT NUTRITION AT THE RIGHT TIME


NEWBORNS



Breastmilk only

Children in developing countries who are given only breastmilk are 6 times more likely to survive than those who are not breastfed.


CHILDREN UNDER 2



Foods that complement breastmilk and provide vitamin A, zinc, and iron

- Nutrients such as vitamin A and zinc protect children from getting sick and help them recover from illnesses they may develop.
- Well-nourished children are up to 10 times more likely to survive an easily preventable or treatable disease than malnourished children.


ADOLESCENT GIRLS



- Recognition that better nutrition for them is critical
- Boost of iron, calcium, and folic acid intake

Girls who are at a healthy height and weight as they reach adulthood are far more likely to survive childbirth and give birth to healthy babies. Once a woman is pregnant, it is too late to prevent some of the damage caused by malnutrition, because better nutrition can't be achieved overnight.

PREGNANT AND NURSING WOMEN



- Pregnant women: folic acid, especially in the first weeks of pregnancy; more iron-rich foods
- Lactating women: recognition that their nutrition affects both themselves and their babies; more calories and a diverse diet

Iron deficiency is a top cause of maternal deaths. About 40% of women in developing countries are anemic. Iron supplements for pregnant women could prevent 19% of maternal deaths. Up to half of all stunting occurs in utero, caused by the mother's own malnutrition.

Source: International Coalition on Advocating Nutrition

tively achieved an 8 percent reduction in deaths of children under five. That's 500,000 lives saved. The U.S. also has an ambitious goal to reduce stunting by 20 percent by 2020 in the 19 countries where its Feed the Future program operates. Early results in five of those countries show that rapid progress is possible. Stunting rates have fallen at double the average rate in the years before the program.

What Do We Want Congress to Do?

It is possible to improve the nutrition and health of mothers and children and make strides in ending hunger overall. This is because of the impressive progress made in economic development over the last 25 years, the commitment and goals set by the international community (including the U.S. government), improved tools, technologies, and treatments to build the capacities of countries and communities, and the hard work of people in communities. We know how important good nutrition is to the survival of mothers and children and to improving an individual's health and productivity. It lays the foundation for a child's future.

The U.S. Congress can and needs to play an important role. Congress should increase funding to at least \$230 million for programs for mother and child nutrition. This increase should happen in the State Department Foreign Operations Appropriations Bill's Global Health Account.

Congress should play its role and work toward this goal boldly. It should see nutrition for mothers and children as an investment in people's lives long-term and in the economies and security of both other countries and our own. Congress should build broad, bipartisan support for this in the House and Senate and continue supporting the U.S. government's leadership in this area.

HELPING MOTHERS AND CHILDREN SURVIVE AND THRIVE

Questions and Answers

1. Why focus on mothers and children and their nutrition and health?

Making progress on malnutrition and health among women and children is key to ending chronic hunger around the world.

The first five years of life are the most dangerous. Babies and children have immune systems that are still developing, and so they are more susceptible to illnesses and diseases. Premature births, pneumonia, diarrhea, malaria, and other illnesses result in 5.9 million deaths of children under 5 every year. Most of these health challenges are avoidable. Malnutrition can also make children more susceptible to diseases and lifelong health problems. Chronic undernutrition leaves 170 million children each year vulnerable to disease and permanently impaired. About 3 million children die each year of causes related to malnutrition. In some parts of the world, a mother is more likely to die in childbirth than she is to finish secondary school.

Giving mothers and children a better chance at life through better nutrition means they are more likely to survive threats to life like disease and childbirth. And it means they can then thrive and have a more active, productive life—getting educated and earning an income to support their family with healthy food. When this happens, there is less hunger in families, communities, and whole countries.

2. Has any progress been made?

Yes! In 1990, more than 12 million children under 5 died from preventable causes. Today, that number has been reduced to 5.9 million. Each year, funding for U.S. Agency for International Development programs (from our federal government) saves the lives of millions of children under the age of 5 with simple solutions and inexpensive ways

to stop the top causes of death. These include diarrhea, pneumonia, malnutrition, and complications during pregnancy and birth. There is obviously much more to be done, but this amazing progress should give us hope. We can keep the progress going.

3. So we know what works?

Yes. We, as part of the global community, know how to end deaths and malnutrition. The United States has been a leader in efforts to scale up nutrition and save the lives of mothers and children around the world. Our government has worked with developing countries to increase access to lifesaving, cost-effective, and evidence-based solutions.

4. How can we urge Congress to take action on this issue?

There will be various times throughout the year when you need to reach out to members of Congress on the issue of this Offering of Letters. Your communication with Congress will be most effective during the annual appropriations process and the passage of authorizing legislation.


Bread for the World wants Congress to increase funding for the nutrition and health of mothers, newborns, and young children. In 2015, funding for nutrition in the global health account was \$115 million—a slight increase from previous years. Bread and its partners believe a funding level of \$230 million for nutrition programs is needed for 2016. Increasing U.S. investment in global maternal and child nutrition is central to successful development and helps improve the potential of millions of people.

In early spring, members of Congress will make their funding requests to appropriators in the House of Representatives and Senate. During this time, it is important that congressional offices hear from you about maternal and child nutrition programs within the government's global health account. We need to ensure that increased funding is a top priority for the appropriators. Later in the year, as the appropriations process moves forward, your advocacy will be crucial to ensure that any increased funding is maintained during House and Senate negotiations.

We will urge Congress to pass the Global Food Security Act, which continues U.S. investments in improving nutrition and increasing the productivity of smallholder farmers. For example, food-aid reform will also provide an opportunity to improve nutrition among mothers and children. There will also be an international Nutrition for Growth summit this summer in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. There, governments could decide to make significant new political and financial commitments. Bread is urging Congress to push for those commitments.

During the year, we expect there will be action on other pieces of authorizing legislation in this area. Bread will provide updates and actions that churches and their members can take. Visit our website at www.bread.org, and follow our newsletter, blog, and social media channels.

BREAD'S 2016 OFFERING OF LETTERS AND ELECTIONS



During presidential elections, important national issues are debated. Voters get to decide which candidate will deal with their concerns best. Bread for the World is urging Christians to ask presidential and congressional candidates: "If elected, what will you do to end hunger, alleviate poverty, and create opportunity in the U.S. and worldwide?" To end hunger by 2030, the U.S. government needs to make it a top priority in the 2016 elections. It will take political will and commitment from the next president and Congress to continue to lead global efforts to improve the nutrition of millions of mothers and children around the world.

Bread's 2016 Offering of Letters is one way for you to advocate for the 2030 goal of ending hunger. Help urge the decision makers in our federal government to commit our nation to doing its part toward the 2030 goal.

MOTHERS AND CHILDREN SURVIVING AND THRIVING

By the Numbers



2 1/2 MILLION more children surviving

200,000 mothers' deaths averted



since 2008 in 24 countries

...thanks to the maternal and child survival efforts of the U.S. Agency for International Development

LACK OF NUTRITION CAN CAUSE STUNTING

Worldwide



1 in 4 children suffers from stunting

In developing countries



up to 1 in 3 children suffers from stunting

STUNTING is a disruption to a child's physical and cognitive growth. It can cause lifelong problems with education, productivity, and earning potential.

Source: World Food Programme

REAL-LIFE STORIES ABOUT MOTHERS AND CHILDREN SURVIVING AND THRIVING

Eating Better Means Living Better

It's around 10:00 on a morning in October, and already the African sun is beating down, hinting at another hot and still day. In the shade in a clearing in the village of Chimudomba in eastern Zambia, a group of ten mothers and their babies and toddlers sit on mats.

Margret Zimba is beginning her lesson with the women. As a warm-up and review of previous lessons, she started by singing a song with the women in their native language. "How many times should a child eat per day?" the song simultaneously asks and teaches. The women clap and dance while singing. It's an easy way to get a simple but important message across to the mothers.

Zimba lives in the village and received training to be a volunteer nutrition leader from the Mawa program, run by U.S.-based Catholic Relief Services. Mawa operates with funds from the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), a major way our federal government carries out its response to hunger and poverty overseas.

With the help of leaders like Zimba, women are learning about good nutrition for their children from pregnancy until age 2. They are learning the importance of good nutrition in a child's first 1,000 days. Giving children enough food and nutrients early in life is

a proven way to prevent problems such as stunted growth, learning problems, and poor health, which can affect people for a lifetime.

Good nutrition is also important for pregnant mothers. Every year, thousands of women in developing countries die during childbirth. "If a mother eats well, it is easier to deliver a child, and they are not going to lose a lot of blood during delivery," Zimba explains. "You find a difference even in the children when the mother eats well during her pregnancy."

What Mawa teaches is the business of keeping people alive and healthy. It's critical in places like this village, where most families are subsistence farmers. During the "hunger season" in February and March—before new crops are harvested but after the previous year's crops have run out—these families sometimes experience severe malnutrition.

On this day, Zimba is giving the fifth lesson in a series of 12 in the village. Today's lesson will include a cooking demonstration. She teaches that just as adults in the village usually eat a variety of foods, young children's rapidly growing bodies need as balanced diet as well, but a baby can't chew foods like peanuts, which are high in protein. Zimba demonstrates how to grind up peanuts and black-eyed peas to add to the corn-based porridge normally given to children so they can get nutrients from different types of food. Zimba will return with the mothers to the mats later as they feed the new porridge mixture to their children in amounts based on their age.

Through this hands-on learning, mothers and babies are on the road to a better, healthier life.

Mothers in a Zambian village learn how to prepare and feed their children a more nutritious porridge.



Joseph Moliari/Bread for the World

REAL-LIFE STORIES ABOUT MOTHERS AND CHILDREN SURVIVING AND THRIVING



Living With HIV: Nutrition is Key

If you want to tackle hunger and poverty in Zambia, you also have to deal with HIV and AIDS. The country was one of the ground zeros for the disease in the 1980s and 90s, when it killed millions of parents and left children orphaned. Since then, the Zambian and U.S. governments, health institutions, and other organizations have worked together to gain some control over the disease.

However, HIV cases are still high in Zambia—12.4 percent of adults (over age 15) were HIV-positive in 2014, according to the United Nations AIDS program. And in November 2015, UNICEF reported that AIDS is now the leading cause of death for African teenagers, which means that many teens dying of AIDS were most likely HIV positive as younger children. Zambia has its share.

The connections between nutrition and health are becoming more understood in both developed countries like the U.S. and developing nations like Zambia. At St. Francis, a church-supported mission hospital in eastern Zambia, nutrition and treatment for HIV already 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. A hospital staff person leads an informal workshop on eating well at home for the group that arrives first in the morning. In this way, the hospital provides extra nutrition education to patients with HIV and their caregivers while they are waiting to be seen by the staff.



Joseph Moller/Bread for the World

When parents bring their children to a hospital's clinic for HIV checkups, they are asked about how they eat at home.

STEP 1

IT BEGINS WITH YOU

People in thousands of churches and faith communities across the U.S. write letters to their members of Congress, urging their support of programs that end hunger and poverty.

STEP 2

STEP 2

Congress determines funding and policy for U.S. government programs that address hunger and poverty.

STEP 4

STEP 4

Partners of USAID, including church-related agencies, implement the work on the ground.

STEP 3

STEP 3

The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), the main agency in the federal government responsible for humanitarian aid overseas, operates programs across the globe.

STEP 5

STEP 5

Hungry people living in poverty get the help they need and take life-changing action.

REAL-LIFE STORIES ABOUT MOTHERS AND CHILDREN SURVIVING AND THRIVING, cont.



Joseph Moller/Bread for the World

Colins and his mother speak to a nurse and trainees about his health.

Among those lined up one morning are Colins Mwale, a 6-year-old boy, and his mother, Felistas Miti Mwale. Colins is HIV-positive and has come to St. Francis' out-patient clinic for a regular check-up and monthly supply of antiretroviral drugs. He and the other patients—the hospital sees as many as 150 daily—will have a series of visits to offices along the corridor where their medical history and current health status will be checked. Staff also speak to patients—Colins' mother in this case—about what they eat at home during these check-ups.

In one office, after asking about Colins' diet, the nurse asks his mother what time he takes his medication every day. The nurse checks Colins' height and weight and then asks Felistas about Colins' mental development. "How is his speech? Does he play with his friends?" 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 is receiving assistance from the Thrive program of PATH, a U.S.-based nonprofit that specializes in health in developing countries. Thrive is funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), a major way our federal government carries out its response to hunger and poverty overseas.

The last stop for Colins and his mother on their visit is the pharmacy at the end of the corridor. The HIV drugs are supplied by the U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, started in 2008, and another way the U.S. government provides assistance overseas. Some patients also receive high-protein dietary supplements, supplied by USAID, if they are determined to be malnourished during their visits.

With the medicine and food Colins and his mother receive, the nurse believes he can have a good quality of life and live to be 45 or 50 years old. While no one can see that far into the future, he is being given a chance at surviving and thriving today.

Mary, an HIV-positive girl, and her mother receive nutrition advice during their visit.



Joseph Moller/Bread for the World

WRITE TO CONGRESS

Ask Congress to Support Global Maternal, Newborn, and Child Health and Nutrition

Offering of Letters campaigns encourage individuals to write letters to Congress about legislation that helps people who are hungry and living in poverty. The sample letter to Congress below and information about the issue in this toolkit will equip you to encourage individuals to prepare their own letters to their representative and senators in Congress.

Your letters to Congress will push for funding to provide vital programs and improve the nutrition of mothers and children and commit the U.S. to continued leadership in this area.

Writing a letter is simple and should take only a few minutes. Follow these steps for an effective letter:

1. Write your name and address at the end of your letter and on the envelope so your members of Congress know you are one of the people they represent.

2. Ask for specific action, using this sentence or your own words:

I ask you to increase funding to at least \$230 million in the nutrition programs of the global health account in the State Department foreign operations appropriations bill.

3. Give reasons for your request. Some examples:

- Share your personal story about what motivated you to write. Letters with personal stories are the most compelling and effective.
- My church is already helping by [example], but I also expect you to enact a plan to end hunger at home and abroad.

4. Send your letter to Congress. Put each letter in a separate envelope and address it.

Mail your letters to:

Sen. _____
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Rep. _____
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

SAMPLE LETTER

[Date]

Dear Senator _____, or Dear Rep. _____,

Our country has led the way in improving the nutrition and health of mothers and children so they can achieve their full potential. We have seen tremendous progress, but our work remains unfinished. My faith calls me to urge that we continue until every mother and child has the chance to survive and thrive. Every life is precious.

As Congress considers funding for next year, I ask you to support at least \$230 million for international maternal and child nutrition programs in the Department of State foreign operations appropriations bill's global health account.

Sincerely,

[your name]
[your address]
[city, state, ZIP]

For the most current version of this sample letter, updated as legislation moves in Congress, visit www.bread.org/ol.

A PRAYER AND LITANY FOR AN OFFERING OF LETTERS

Commit Your Efforts to God

Prayer Over Letters

Holy God, you long to call all people into your protective and healing care, as a mother hen gathers her chicks. We, too, can show your love in using the gift of our voices to advocate for mothers and babies at risk. Give us a hunger for righteousness, that our prayers and actions may ring out for the repair of all that denies needed food, clean water, and health care to pregnant women, new mothers, and their children. Bless the letters we compose to Congress, and open the hearts of our leaders. We give thanks for our right to speak out for justice, and a system that makes our voices heard. In Jesus name, we pray. Amen.

Personal letters are crucial and effective. But they are only the first step. Consider following up with a phone call, a letter to the editor of your local newspaper, and a visit to the local offices of your members of Congress. Meet your senators or representative in Washington, D.C., during Bread for the World's Lobby Day in June 2016.



Joseph Molieri/Bread for the World

Litany or Responsive Prayer

Bread of Life, strengthen in us your vision of a world where no baby or mother dies from hunger or poverty.

Make us restless to proclaim this good news to the world.

God of Compassion, we have become complacent in our lives and miss the suffering of others.

We confess our skepticism, our tendency to look away, our hardness of heart. In your strong love, stir us to see, pray, and act.

God of Mercy, we pray for our elected leaders, especially those in Congress with the power to change and restore life to pregnant women, new mothers, and infants living in poverty.

Move the hearts of our leaders to restore life to the vulnerable.

God our Healer, we pray for all who lack adequate access to healthcare, and especially for mothers and children who need life-protecting medicines.

Bring to your light our wounded system that denies healing to the least.

God our Creator, we thank you for the gift of water that sustains our planet and our bodies. None of your children should lack for this most basic gift.

Open fountains of compassion that clean water may flow to those most in need.

Giver of Life, be present with all preparing to give birth, and with new mothers and their children. May the raising of our voices bring love and healing justice to those who struggle with poverty, hunger, and disease.

Deepen our appreciation for the gift of our lives, and use us to bless the lives of others. In Jesus' name, we pray Amen.

These prayers were written by Rev. Julie Wakelee-Lynch, rector of St. Alban's Episcopal Church, Albany, Calif., a longtime Bread for the World Covenant Church. Wakelee-Lynch is also editor of *Daily Prayer for All Seasons*, a newly released supplement to The Book of Common Prayer.