

*“There
was no one
needy
among
them...”*



***a worship
packet for your
congregation's
hunger emphasis***

*Worship tools with a peace and
justice emphasis from
Seeds of Hope Publishers,
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602 James Ave.; Waco, TX 76706;
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Sacred Seasons Worship Resources

from
Seeds of Hope Publishers

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Statement of Purpose

Seeds of Hope, Inc., 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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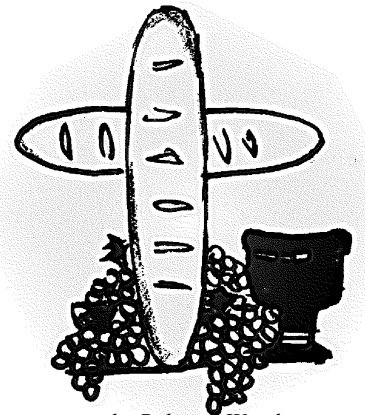
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The 2000 Seeds Hunger Emphasis Packet

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art by Rebecca Ward

a word about this packet

These materials are offered to you on clean, unattached pages so that you can more easily photocopy anything you wish to duplicate. Feel free to copy any of this, including art, and adapt these tools to your needs.

The art on the cover was created for our packet theme by Lenora Mathis, a first-year student at Austin College in Sherman, Texas. Much of the art was created by Rebecca Ward, a student at Midway High School in Woodway, Texas. Several of the worship ideas are from new Seeds writers, including Matthew Schobert, a graduate of Truett Theological Seminary and a Master of Social Work student at Baylor University.

The material in this packet is your congregation's to use freely. We have tried to pull together creative and inspiring resources that you can use to raise awareness of hunger issues (especially from a biblical perspective) in your congregation.

We have tried to provide these tools to you in a user-friendly, yet attractive presentation. We endeavored to choose a variety of age groups, worship areas, events, and angles, so that you would have a potpourri of art and ideas from which to choose.

We make a conscious effort to maintain a balance between the apostolic and the contemplative—on the one hand, the dynamic challenge to stay true to God's mandate to feed the poor and struggle for justice, and on the other hand, our own compelling need for nurture and healing while we work toward those dreams.

We prayerfully hope that these aids will enhance your congregation's autumn worship experiences and, at the same time, help you to creatively raise awareness of the needs of God's people.

“There Was No One Needy Among Them”

some beginning thoughts

Editor's note: Those of us who create seasons of “hunger awareness” for our churches have become quite familiar with those scripture passages that we usually choose for those emphases. We go to Matthew 25; we rely on Amos; we bring out Isaiah 58 again. (Indeed, those scriptures are featured in the hunger emphasis calendar that is included in this packet.) But this time we looked for a passage that would be perhaps a little different, perhaps a little fresher for those of us who have done this many times before.

We enlisted the help of Matthew Schobert, a recent seminary graduate and a student in Baylor University's Master of Social Work program. With Matthew's help, we decided to concentrate mainly on three passages: For the Old Testament reading, Exodus 16:13-18, which tells of the provision of manna to the newly liberated Hebrew people in the wilderness; For the New Testament reading, Acts 4:32-35, which explains how the first Jerusalem church provided for its growing number of members; and for the Epistle reading, 1 Corinthians 8:1-15, which describes the sending of alms from Corinth to famine-stricken Christians in Jerusalem.

We asked Matthew to come up with some worship resources based on these three passages. (You will find several of his creations in the packet.) Below is his initial (and, it seems, most enduring) response:

Where is the Spirit of God Writing It Now?

by Fred Matthew Schobert

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone who had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved. (Acts 2:42-47)

And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly. All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed any possessions as their own, but everyone shared all they had. With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and much grace was upon them all. There were no needy persons among them. For from time to time, those who owned lands or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales and put it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to anyone who had need. Acts 4:31b-35 (based on NIV)

Acts 4:32-35...

There must be something important
in this passage.

There must be something special
in this text.

It seems so familiar;
And it seems so unfamiliar.

It is familiar
for Luke wrote it previously in Acts 2:42-47.

It is unfamiliar
for I am haunted by the question,
“Where is the Spirit of God writing it now?”



art by Rebecca Ward

“There Was No One Needy Among Them”

a call to extraordinary service

by Fred Matthew Schobert

Meditation

The anticipation of Christmastide is a distant memory.
The passion of Eastertide is a fleeting thought.
Ordinary time, the season of Kingdomtide,
is fast growing stale.
Our thoughts and meditations
are far from the coming of the Messiah.
Our thoughts and meditations
have forgotten the suffering of the Messiah.
Our thoughts and meditations now dwell on the Spirit,
on the presence of the Messiah, amidst God’s people.
Despite this,
we have lost the exuberance of Pentecost
and are awash in complacency.
Yet Ordinary time is Kingdomtide,
A time of community-building and growth.
A time of working for the commonwealth of God.
A time which should be anything but ordinary.

Theme Interpretation

CONGREGATION: For Scripture tells us:
“There was no one needy among them.”

FIRST READER: *(Read Exodus 16:13-18.)*

LEADER: It is now Kingdomtide,
Ordinary time,
Yet there is nothing ordinary
about God’s provision
of quail and manna.

CONGREGATION:
For Scripture tells us:
“There was no one needy
among them.”

SECOND READER:
(Read Acts 4:32-37.)

LEADER: It is now Kingdomtide,
Ordinary time,
Yet there is nothing ordinary
about believers
sharing possessions
with one another.

CONGREGATION: For Scripture tells us:
“There was no one needy among them.”

THIRD READER: *(Read II Corinthians 8:1-15.)*

LEADER: It is now Kingdomtide, Ordinary time,
Yet there is nothing ordinary about Christians
giving generously to those in need.

CONGREGATION: For Scripture tells us:
“There was no one needy among them.”

LEADER: Lord God, in this season of Ordinary time,
we beseech you to do
extraordinary works among your people.

CONGREGATION: Lord God, in this season
of Ordinary time,
we pray that we too do extraordinary works,
by the power of your Spirit, for others.

ALL: For Scripture tells us:
“There was no one needy among them.”



—Matthew Schobert, a native of DuQuoin, Illinois, is a recent graduate of the MDiv program at Truett Theological Seminary in Waco, Texas, and is now a student in the Master of Social Work program at Baylor University.

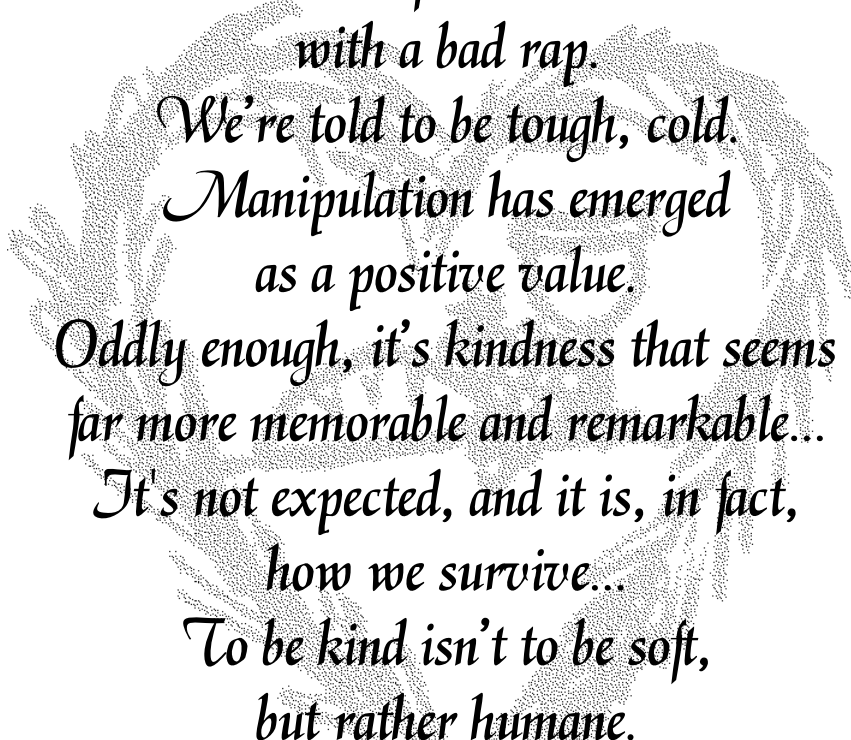
—art by Lenora Mathis

bulletin art

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone who had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved. ... And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly. All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed any possessions as their own, but everyone shared all they had. With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and much grace was upon them all. There were no needy persons among them. For from time to time, those who owned lands or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales and put it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to anyone who had need.

Acts 2:42-47; 4:31b-35 (based on New International Version)

bulletin art



*Kindness has fallen on bad times
with a bad rap.
We're told to be tough, cold.
Manipulation has emerged
as a positive value.
Oddly enough, it's kindness that seems
far more memorable and remarkable...
It's not expected, and it is, in fact,
how we survive...
To be kind isn't to be soft,
but rather humane.
Cold is simple...
Kindness often takes far more courage.*

—Wendy Wasserstein

art by Rebecca Ward

bulletin art

*The human is created for transcendence.
It is the Jewish and Christian belief
that we are meant for a selfhood
that is more than our own selves—*



*that we are by nature created
to envision more than we can accomplish,
to long for that which is
beyond our possibilities.*

*—from Gravity and Grace
Linda-Marie Delloff, editor
art by Rebecca Ward*

God, Our Souls Are Weary

a prayer for servants

by John Stewart Ballenger

God, our souls are weary.
Living takes its toll.
And living as You wish
is neither the cheapest nor the easiest of ways.

I want to go home;

I want to be taken care of.

We hire ourselves out, seeking rest,
to compromise,
and find—unrest,
find ourselves—compromised.

My God, I am unworthy to be called Your child,

but I want to come home;

I want to be taken care of.

So we look to You:

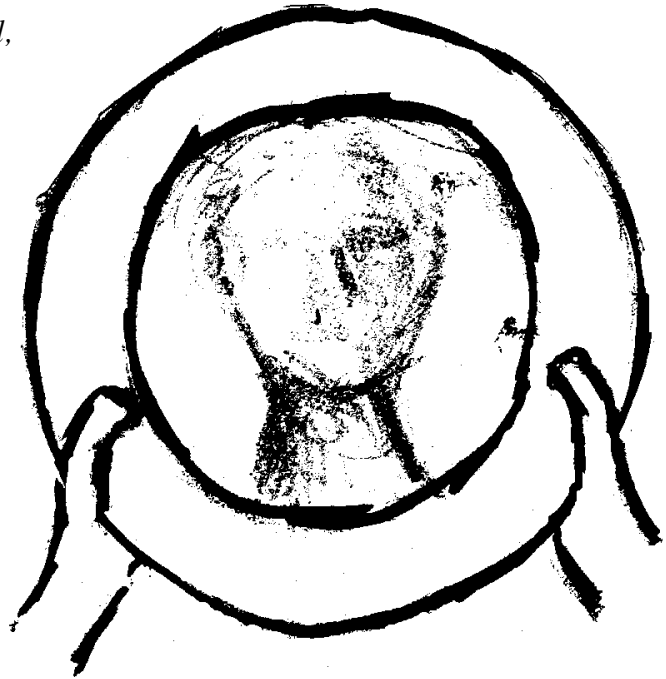
Dissolve our way into Yours
that the world might see,
not my candle,
but Your sun.

Of my loaves and fish,
freely offered,
feed the world;

Of my time, wisely spent
create a vision for eternity.

Teach me that it is in the wearying
of my soul

that You provide rest—
that it is in “taking care of”
that we are taken care of.



Ours is a joy through pain—
the glory of a rainbow through clouds
still wringing out rain.

Can we make of this place our home?

By the grace and with the power
of You, our God.

Let it be so.

Amen.

—John Ballenger is a minister in Atlanta, Georgia and the drama/poetry editor for Seeds of Hope.

The art on this page is by Rebecca Ward.

Absurd Encounters

a pastoral prayer

by Peter Gape

May our encounters with God bring us

Refreshment and weariness:
Bracing us with the assurance of God's love;
While causing us to be weary of our mundane lives.

Thankfulness and discontentment:
Grateful for the undeserved sacrifice done for us;
While feeling wretched about our apathy and indolence.

And joy and sorrow:
Delighting in the new life that God,
through love, has breathed in us;
While being remorseful that many times
we choose merely to exist,
Denying ourselves the joy of experiencing
the fullness of our humanity.



May the absurdities
that these encounters bring
cause us not only
to realize our feebleness
But also discover God's grace
that enables us
to have the strength
to sacrificially offer ourselves—
Feeding the hungry,
Comforting those who mourn,
Proclaiming peace amidst strife,
Breaking the chains of injustice
and oppression,
And loving those who hate us.

All for the sake of the kingdom.
Amen.

—Peter Gape, a native of the Philippines, is an international partner in Latin America for Habitat for Humanity International. The art on this page is by Rebecca Ward.

Helping People to Feed Themselves

ideas for a children's story

by Katie Cook

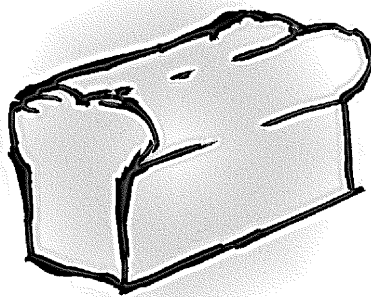


This activity should work either in a children's time during worship, or during a church school session. Before the service or session, set up a table and two chairs in the area where you will tell the children's story. You will need a loaf of bread, some twine, and a pair of strong scissors. Before the story, place the loaf somewhere where the children can see it, but not on the table.

Also beforehand, choose two volunteers from an older group (perhaps the youth) and enlist them for the activity. You may need them to help guide the children in discussion. When the activity begins, ask them to sit at the table, and tie their hands and arms so that they cannot reach anything on the table. You might choose to get the children to help tie them.

Then say to the group, "Justin and Caitlin are hungry. We want to see that they get something to eat. Now, is there any food for them here?"

Hopefully, the children will see the loaf of bread and suggest that you give it to your volunteers. You may have to gently guide the discussion, or let "Justin" or "Caitlin" mention it. (Try to give the children plenty of opportunity to come up with the answers themselves.) When the children are aware of

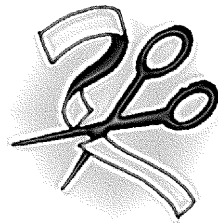


the loaf and agree that it should be given to the two, ask one of the children to place the loaf on the table. Then say, "We have found something for you to eat, Justin and Caitlin. Now you may eat."

With any luck, someone will point out that they can't eat

because their hands are tied. You might instruct your volunteers to wait a moment and then say something to that effect, if the children don't suggest it. Then tear off a piece from the loaf and place some bread in the mouths of your volunteers. You

might ask a couple of the children to do the same. (Make sure it's someone you know will be gentle.) "Is that better?" you might ask. "Have we done everything we can do to help them eat?"



Again, hopefully, someone will suggest that they could feed themselves if you untied them. If no one thinks of this, get the scissors out and say, "What if we got them out of this twine? Then they would be able to feed themselves." Then cut them loose.

As Justin and Caitlin proceed to feed themselves, briefly explain to the children that these two are like many of the world's hungry people; they like to be able to feed themselves, and they know how. But many kinds of problems keep them from doing it. Maybe they don't have enough money to buy seeds. Maybe they don't have access to land to grow their own food, or to a market where they can sell it. Maybe they need a well to water their crops. Maybe they need a farm animal to help with plowing or to provide milk or eggs.

Explain to the children that, just like with Justin and Caitlin, the best way to help hungry people is to help in such a way that they can help themselves. You might want to mention some of the ways your congregation already does this. You might suggest that the children give their own money to help someone in this way.

Here's one idea for response: Recently a group of children at a children's church camp, after going through a curriculum about hunger, were given the opportunity to give money towards buying an animal for a poor family through the Heifer Project International.

The size of your group would affect what they could buy. For instance, a water buffalo would be \$250, but a share of the buffalo would be \$25. A llama would be \$150, with a share being \$20. Chicks would be \$20. These animals provide milk or eggs for the family, and sometimes they make plowing easier. The family, in turn, gives an offspring of their animal to another family in need.

When the children at this camp learned what each sum of money could buy for a family in another country, they became excited about the idea and gave three times what the sponsors expected. You can look up the prices for chickens, ducks, bees, heifers, and many other animals at www.heifer.org, or contact HPI at PO Box 808; Little Rock, AR 72203; 501/376-6836.

—The basic idea for this children's story came from a Thanksgiving resource published by the Sharing Way office of Canadian Baptist Ministries in Mississauga, Ontario. The idea for the response came from Jackie Saxon, a minister in Austin, Texas.

quotes, poems, & pithy sayings

Micah declares that God asks of us three things: to do justice, love mercy and walk humbly with God. This is an all-three injunction; so many of us tend to get hung up or stuck on one of the three. Does our theological dialogue lead us to do justice? Are we merciful in all things and toward all—including those who we judge to be unjust? Do we walk humbly with our God in such a way that eliminates us from the role of judge of what and who is ultimately just?

—James Schwarzlose, OEF, a minister in Woodbury, Georgia

When I first came to this country, I cried when I saw all of the food—because my mother died from hunger. For many years in Liberia, I ate from the missionaries' garbage cans.

—Evan Solomon Ernst, a seminary student in Columbus, Ohio and a native of Liberia



art by Lenora Mathis

An ordinary human being...never ceases to be the tattered image of God he or she has always been...completely transparent to God for someone else so that for a little while the one in need can see God truly through that human being.

—Roberta Bondi

You pay tithes of mint and cummin; but you have overlooked the weightier demands of the Law: justice, mercy, and good faith. It is these you should have practiced, without neglecting the others.

—Jesus to the Pharisees and Sadducees, Matthew 23:23

Any religion that professes to be concerned with the souls of [human beings] and is not concerned with the slums that damn them, the economic conditions that strangle them, and the social condition that cripples them is a dry-as-dust religion.

—Martin Luther King, Jr.

“Fear,” said Jacob, turning back to the woman, “fear makes us not only less than we might be but less than we

think we are. Faith reminds us we should doubt our fears.” Jacob motioned to the path ahead of them. “Perhaps we can lean on each other for a while.” The woman laughed out loud. “How can I be a support to you?” “Ah, that is not so difficult,” said Jacob. “You see, the difference between a Tower of Babel and a tower of strength is the difference between those who live to make themselves more and those who know the way to heaven is in making others more.”

—Noah benShea

There are 40 million people who die from hunger each year. I hope each person can arrive at that minimum level of utopia which allows him or her to eat at least once each day. To be able to eat is to guarantee God's most important gift to us, which is life itself.



—Brazilian theologian Leonardo Boff

However much concerned I was at the problem of misery in the world, I never let myself get lost in brooding over it; I always held firmly to the thought that each one of us can do a little to bring some portion of it to an end. Thus I came gradually to rest content in the knowledge that there is only one thing we can understand about the problem, and that is that each of us has to go his or her own way, but as one who means to help to bring about deliverance.

—Albert Schweitzer

A New Song for Silenced Hearts

an invocation by Howard Williams

O God, in this hour,
may you cause our silenced hearts
to sing a new song—
A song that comes from the melody
whispered in our ears by the Spirit.
Cause us to be renewed,
that our song will sing your praises—
for your faithfulness and unending love.
Holy Spirit, whisper a song, a new song,
that will cause us to dance
with the floods and the hills
as they too sing and clap
and seas roar.
Draw near, O God,
that we might sing this new song together
as your people in this community,
here in this place of worship.

—Howard Williams is a minister and the
director of denominational relations at
Baylor University in Waco, Texas.



art by Lenora Mathis

Bread, Rest, and Strength for the Journey

a youth-led communion service for a weary congregation

by Katie Cook and John Garland

Note: This service is designed to be led by youth, but it could actually be led by any group within the congregation. You will need baskets or trays (preferably of wicker or wood), different kinds of bread (for instance, baguettes, tortillas, pita, round sourdough loaves, or pumpernickel—but you need to make sure it is all easy to tear into pieces), and bunches of red grapes.

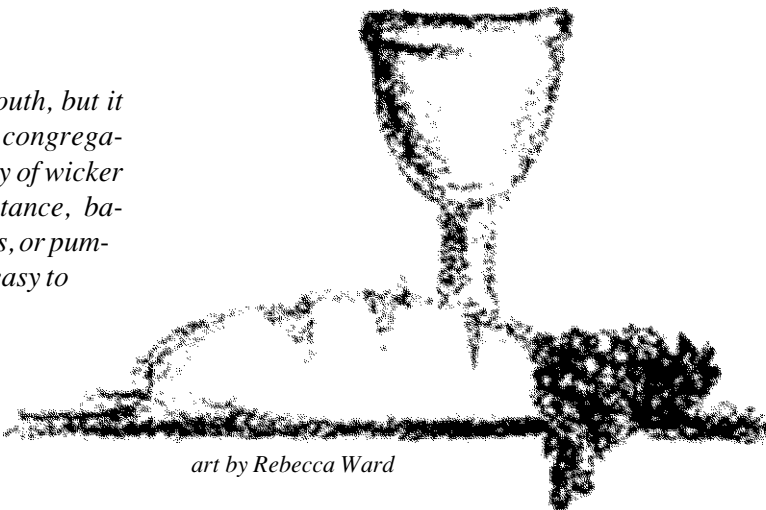
At one point in the service, your leaders will ask the congregants to form two lines facing each other (perhaps down the aisles of the sanctuary). If you have a large group, you may want to have two or more sets of these lines. Your worship leaders will send the trays down from both ends of these lines, so you will need two baskets or trays per set of lines. Get the youth to arrange an assortment of breads with grapes on each basket or tray.

You will need six readers for readings, a reading chorus (with a leader), and a person for both the invocation and benediction. (The youth may prefer to voice their own prayers. Please encourage them to do so if this is the case.)

We have suggested hymns here, but please feel free to be creative and improvise according to your congregation's personality and needs. Your youth might be also interested in adding their own touches with homemade banners, interpretive dance, or their own choices for music. They might want to insert some kind of special music in the form of a solo or choral anthem. You also may prefer to use other translations of the scriptures. The scriptures below are based on the New Revised Standard Version.

Invocation

God, you are our Creator, who shaped the earth and all its creatures, who invented the wheat and the grape. You are the source of our life, the one who nurtures us as if we were small children. We are thirsty and hungry, without resources, and we are exhausted. We call unto you today because, as usual, we have pushed ourselves to the limit. We have tried to accomplish things on our own. We need your nourishment. We need your comfort. We need to gain strength from being with you. Come to us, come into our midst. Feed us.



art by Rebecca Ward

Reading: I Kings 19:1-8

Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done and how he had killed all the prophets with the sword. Then Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah, saying, "So may the gods do to me, and more also, if I do not make your life like the life of one of them by this time tomorrow." Then he was afraid; he got up and fled for his life, and came to Beer-sheba, which belongs to Judah; he left his servant there. But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a solitary broom tree. He asked that he might die: "It is enough; now, O Lord, take away my life, for I am no better than my ancestors." Then he lay down under the broom tree and fell asleep. Suddenly an angel touched him and said to him, "Get up and eat." He looked, and there at his head was a cake baked on hot stones, and a jar of water. He ate and drank, and lay down again. The angel of the Lord came a second time, touched him, and said, "Get up and eat, otherwise the journey will be too much for you." He got up, and ate and drank; then he went in the strength of that food forty days and forty nights to Horeb the mount of God.

Hymn: "Help Us Accept Each Other"

—particularly the last verse:
Lord, for today's encounters
with all who are in need,
who hunger for acceptance,
for righteousness and bread,
we need new eyes for seeing,
new hands for holding on,

(continued)

renew us with your spirit, Lord,
free us, make us one!
(words: Fred Kaan, 1975; music: John Ness Beck, 1977,
hymn # 437, *The Worshiping Church*, Hope Publishing
Company)

Reading: Isaiah 55:1-3a

Ho, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters;
And you that have no money, come, buy and eat!
Come, buy wine and milk without money and without
price.
Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread,
and your labor for that which does not satisfy?
Listen carefully to me, and eat what is good,
and delight yourselves in rich food.
Incline your ear, and come to me;
listen, so that you may live.

Note: At this point, instruct the worship leaders to help the congregation to form into facing lines. Don't tell them yet what is in store. (You might want to have someone playing guitar or organ while the lines are forming. Songs like "Let Us Break Bread Together" or "In Remembrance of Me" would be appropriate here.)

After the lines are formed, have one of the worship leaders explain that bread and grapes will be coming down the lines, and that each congregant is asked not to feed himself/herself, but to feed the person across the aisle. Each person should tear off a piece of bread and feed it to his/her partner, and then tear off a grape and do the same. As he/she does this, he/she should say, "Bread for the journey. May the Peace of Christ go with you."

As the congregants are doing this, the reading chorus should begin:

Choral Reading

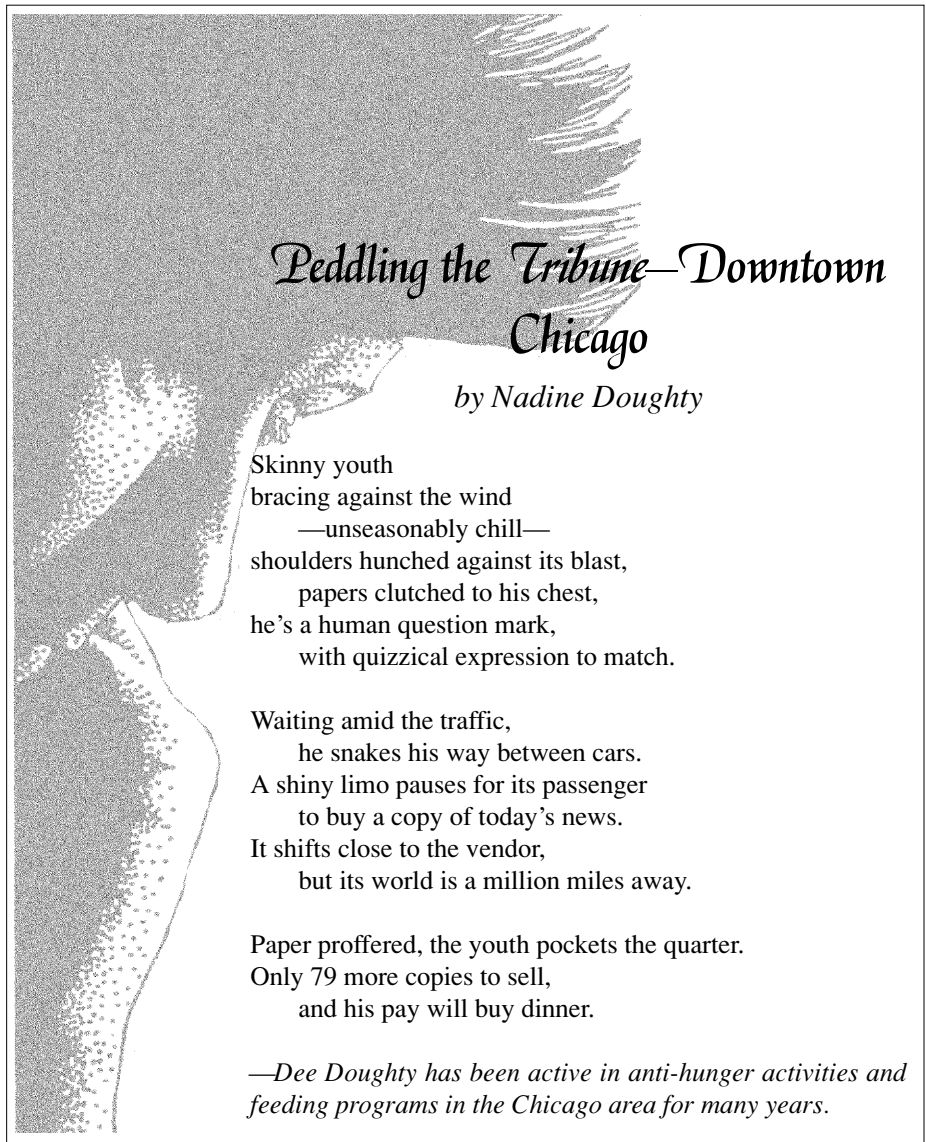
Chorus Leader: Come, every one of you who is thirsty
Chorus: Come to the waters.
Chorus Leader: And all of you who are hungry and have no money for food,
Chorus: Come on! You can buy

all the food you need!
Chorus Leader: The angel said to Elijah,
Chorus: "Get up and eat! Get up and eat, or the journey will be too much for you."
Chorus Leader: Jesus said,
Chorus: "Eat and remember who I am, so that you will remember who you are."

Note: The following readings are also for reading while the people partake of the food. We suggest that you assign them to the reading chorus, since they will already be in place.

First Reader: The Lord spoke to Moses and said, "I have heard the complaining of the Israelites; say to them, 'At twilight you shall eat meat, and in the morning you shall have your fill of bread.'" (Exodus 16:11-12a)

Second Reader: Seek the Lord while God may be found. Call upon God while God is near; let the wicked forsake



*Peddling the Tribune—Downtown
Chicago*

by Nadine Doughty

Skinny youth
bracing against the wind
—unseasonably chill—
shoulders hunched against its blast,
papers clutched to his chest,
he's a human question mark,
with quizzical expression to match.

Waiting amid the traffic,
he snakes his way between cars.
A shiny limo pauses for its passenger
to buy a copy of today's news.
It shifts close to the vendor,
but its world is a million miles away.

Paper proffered, the youth pockets the quarter.
Only 79 more copies to sell,
and his pay will buy dinner.

—Dee Doughty has been active in anti-hunger activities and feeding programs in the Chicago area for many years.

their way, and the unrighteous their thoughts; let them return to the Lord, that the Lord may have mercy on them, and to our God, for God will abundantly pardon. For my thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways my ways, says the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts. (Isaiah 55:6-9)

Third Reader: Then Jesus took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me." And he did the same with the cup after supper, saying, "This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood." (Luke 22:19-20)

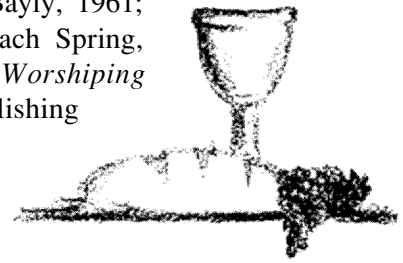
Note: At this point, ask the people to be seated again.

Hymn: "Lord, Whose Love in Humble Service"

—particularly the first two verses:
Lord, whose love is humble service
bore the weight of human need,
who upon the cross, forsaken,
worked your mercy's perfect deed:
we, your servants, bring the worship
not of voice alone,
but heart, consecrating to your purpose,
every gift which you impart.

Still your children wander homeless,
still the hungry cry for bread;
still the captives long for freedom,
still in grief we mourn our dead.
As you, Lord, in deep compassion
healed the sick and freed the soul,
By your Spirit send your power
to our world to make it whole.

(words: Albert F. Bayly, 1961;
suggested tune: Beach Spring,
hymn # 426, *The Worshipping
Church*, Hope Publishing
Company.)



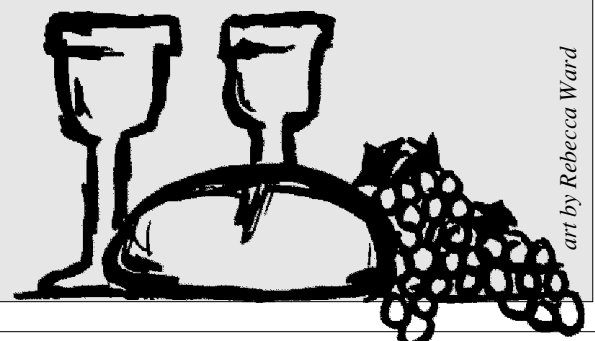
Note: Ask the congregation to stand at this point.

Benedictory Petition: Holy God, Feed us with the bread we need for this day. Infuse us with the strength and passion for the days to come. Walk with us, sing your song into our hearts, stay with us to the end of the journey. For we cannot make it without you. Amen.

Benedictory Reading: Isaiah 55:10-13

For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return there until they have watered the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and succeed in the thing for which I sent it. For you shall go out in joy, and be led back in peace; the mountains and the hills before you shall burst into song, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands. Instead of the thorn shall come up the cypress; instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle; and it shall be to the Lord for a memorial, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off.
—John Garland, a native Louisville, Kentucky, is a sophomore environmental studies major at Baylor University.
Katie Cook is the *Seeds of Hope* editor.

*The question of bread for myself
is a material question,
but the question of bread for my neighbor
is a spiritual question.
—Nikolai Berdyaev*



art by Rebecca Ward

Just a Few Sandwiches...



a monologue for an adult male

by Katie Cook

I was just going down there to pass out some sandwiches. That's how the whole thing started. I didn't really want to go, but I kept running into all these scriptures, and I kept hearing it from the pulpit, how I should somehow connect myself with the poor. Quotes from Mother Teresa saying the poor are our salvation. Tapes of Tony Campolo saying if you don't have poor people in your life you're impoverished.

I just couldn't stand to hear all that stuff any more. I thought that, if I'd just go down there this one time, then I could say, "Okay, yes. I did it. And I was right; those people are there because they want to be. They're all lazy and they're a drain on society." I could say it because I'd seen it for myself.

So I decided to go with a group from the church. It was a Thursday evening. Thursday was the day our church sent a group. I didn't say anything in the van driving down there, because I'd gotten the impression that to say anything bad about poor people was some kind of cardinal sin with this bunch. So I kept my mouth shut.

We went first to the kitchen. One of the women heated up some soup, another started making sandwiches. Some of the men were putting paper on the long tables. They told me to roll the flatware into napkins. So that's what I did. Then I helped cut a big cake that came a grocery store. It had some kind of message on it; I guess somebody didn't pick it up or something.

After about 45 minutes, the first of Them came in. A scruffy-looking guy who looked about sixty years old. I asked one of the women if she knew him, and she said he was more

like thirty. "They age fast out there," she said, and went on making sandwiches.

"What's his problem?" I said.

"He's mentally retarded. It's hard for him to hold a job."

"He looks normal to me," I said.

"Uh, huh," she said, and went on making sandwiches.

Several others came in: a man who kept a running argument with himself, a woman with a bunch of stuff in a shopping cart who wouldn't let the cart get more than three feet from her, another older man with an incredibly long beard and a face that looked like it had seen everything. All of them had on too many clothes for that warm evening. It looked like they were wearing three or four layers.

I asked the sandwich woman about that. "I don't know," she said. "I've always thought that it was psychological. Like insulation

from the world. But it's probably because they have no place to keep their clothes. So they wear all of them."

"Well, I think it's weird," I said.

"Um, hum," she said, and moved the sandwich tray over to the serving line.

I was stationed to hand out cake, so it was a little while before my serving job actually began. So I watched as the line grew longer and people got their food and sat down to eat. The sandwich woman got a cup of coffee and sat down next to an African-American man. I watched them talk. She looked him in the eye—something I hadn't tried yet. And he smiled at her, an indulgent sort of smile. "Odd," I thought.

Then I noticed how many children there were. Mothers with two and three small children. Lots of them. "The average age of homeless people in this country is seven," another server told me.

Seven!

One of the children came to ask for cake. I put a piece on a small paper plate for him, and tried looking him in the eye. He smiled at me, showing several front teeth missing. That was when something started happening inside me.

"You're new," one of the scruffy God-knows-how-old guys said, holding out a paper plate.

"Yes, I am," I said, trying the look-them-in-the-eye experiment again.

"This is nice of you. I'll bet you have a job that keeps you working all the time."

“Well, yes, I do...”

“I’ll bet you’re tired.”

“Well, yes...”

“Well, thanks,” he said, and walked off.

A woman in the corner started quoting a prayer that sounded familiar. Another woman was crooning what sounded like a hymn. One of the volunteers sat down with her and they started humming together. Everybody smiled. “How can these people keep their faith in God when they have nothing?” I thought.

We finished serving, so I thought I’d try the get-some-coffee-and-sit-down-with-one-of-them experiment. The sandwich woman (I finally sneaked around and found out that her name was Ruth and that she worked here all the time) really seemed to enjoy it. I sat close to her so I could hear what she said and maybe pick up some pointers.

“You took him in off the street?” she was saying. “Joanie, you don’t have enough food for yourself and your family! Is he going to help with the rent?”

“With what? He’s got no money.”

“Is he a relative?” I was horrified to hear myself asking.

“Oh, no. But my boy knew him in school. It’s just for a while. He didn’t have any place to go. I don’t think he’s strong enough for the street.”

“What does Billy think?” Ruth said. Billy, I found out, was Joanie’s husband.

“He agrees with me,” Joanie said.

“Please be careful that you don’t get burned. You’re just a paycheck away from the streets yourself.”

“I know. We’ll be okay. I couldn’t just turn him away. I couldn’t. He’s the same age as my boy.”

“What is that? Twenty-four?”

“Sixteen.”

“Oh.”

Then Joanie patted Ruth on the shoulder, as if to assure her that all was well, said goodbye to me, and left with an older man, two teenagers, and a small child.

“She works?” I said.

“Not for much,” she said. “She cleans rooms in a motel for 30 hours a week. God knows what she gets for it. Billy got hurt in a roofing accident. He tries to find day work, but he’s not as strong as he used to be, so they usually pass him over. They come for a meal now and then when they run out of food.”

“What about those able-bodied boys?” I said.

“Johnny works evenings and weekends as a busboy. Most of his pay goes toward the medical bills they piled up when his dad got hurt. I don’t know about this other boy. I worry. She does this kind of thing. She’s got nothing, NOTHING, and she takes people in.” She shook her head.

“What about the child?” I said.

“Belongs to her niece. She’s in jail.”

I shook my head. “Drugs?”

“I don’t know,” she said. “Probably.”

A teenager who looked like a punk rocker sat down where Joanie had sat. “Did you get something to eat?” Ruth said.

“I thought it might be too late,” the boy said.

“I’ll bet there’s something left,” Ruth said.

I got up to go to the kitchen. I found a sandwich and some chips and fruit juice. “Hey, thanks, man,” the kid said.

I drew Ruth aside. “Why is he here? Does he live on the streets?”

“Ask him,” she said.

I took a deep breath, tried not to look at the red spiked hair or the tattoos, and said, “Do you have someplace to go?”

“I’m stayin’ at the shelter tonight,” he said.

“Why don’t you have a home?” I said, and immediately I wished I hadn’t said it.

“My old man beats the crap out of me. I finally decided to ditch that dump,” he said.

“Do you have a job?”

“Well, I’ve been lookin’ for one.”

I took another deep breath and said, “Did you know that the way you’re dressed might affect whether you get a job or not?”

He looked me straight in the eye and said, “Do you really care?”

I suddenly, to my utter amazement, realized that I DID care. “Look, man. I’ll try to help you find a job, if you’ll let me coach you a little.”

“For real?” His steely blue gaze was fixed on me with hope mixed with disbelief.

“For real.”

Great merciful heavens,” I thought to myself, “What am I doing?” Then we proceeded to make plans for him to come to the church, where I would meet him and go over some plans.

“Hey, have you eaten?” he said.

“No...” I said.

“Are you hungry?”

“Well...”

“Have half of my sandwich.” And he began to cut his sandwich in half. He handed me one of the halves.

“Oh, no, I couldn’t do that,” I said.

“Really, I want you to have it,” he said.

“Oh...”

“Really.”

So I took it, and ate it, and washed it down with the rest of my coffee. And I looked at this boy who looked to me like the Number One Menace to Society. Then he handed me a potato chip.

“Well, you and Tony really hit it off,” Ruth said, as the volunteers were preparing to leave for the church. “That’s the first time I’ve seen him actually talking to anybody—especially an adult male. You must have a knack for this.”

A knack, indeed.

I went back the next week, and the next, and I helped Tony get a job (it wasn’t easy, but it turned out all right, if I do say so), and I scolded Joanie for giving away what little she had, and I passed out cake to the many beautiful children who came in. That was a year ago. Thursday is my favorite day of the week now.

They come in and pat me on the back and call me “Wall Street Man.” I really don’t know why. But I love it.

I love that place.

And I only went down there to pass out some sandwiches. ■

A Different Kind of Handout

an idea for responding to street people

by Katie Cook

All across the country one runs into people—usually homeless people—standing at highway intersections holding signs that say “Will work for Food” or some such message—or standing on busy streets, asking for money.

Many of us believe, after looking at the twenty-fifth chapter of the gospel of Matthew, that something should be done to help such people. But we don’t know what, exactly, that we should do. Is there a “right” thing to do? If so, what is it, and is the “right” thing always the same?

I know—from years of experience in emergency assistance to the poor—that sometimes those people are in earnest, and sometimes they are not. In one town, I know many of the street people by name. I know that fourteen or so of them are running a well-organized and successful scam; they sometimes bring in sixty dollars or more in one day, and they spend it on alcohol and other substances.

But I also know several street people—in that same town—who honestly want to work and earn their meals. I have worked directly with them to help them find day labor or odd jobs. In that town, I know who is “legit” and who is not.

But what if you don’t know them? And what about the ones you know are “conning” you, but you also know they’re hungry?

Do you go ahead and help them, with the conviction that deciding whether someone is “worthy” or not is a pietistic, self-serving attitude? The agency where I worked embraced a policy that said, “We should never turn away someone if there is any chance they really need assistance. If we are to err, we should do it on the side of being too generous.”

That is a good policy—and, I think, a moral and biblical one. But what about substance abuse? If I give money to an alcoholic or crack addict, don’t I become an enabler of that chemical dependency? In that case, it would seem that I shouldn’t give someone money unless I am well-enough acquainted with that person to know for sure that there is no substance abuse.

But how can you tell the difference, when you don’t have time to work several years in a feeding program and get to know the local poverty population personally? Is there something else you can give? Something you can do that you know won’t be destructive?

Several years ago, when the Seeds of Hope staff were in New York City, we talked with friends about this question. One

of them, Mark, had an agreement with the owners of a local coffee shop in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, where he lived. His practice was to instruct street people to go to this coffee shop for a meal and tell them Mark sent them.

Another of the friends, Doug, suggested that we give our “doggie bag” to one of the beggars in the Village. (We did, and he was profuse in his thanks: “Oh, wow! Chinese food! And it’s still warm. This is wonderful!”)

I mentioned that I usually suggested to people in Central Texas that, if they really want to help, they can go around to a fast food place and get a hamburger or go home and make a sandwich—and then bring it back to the person.

I told them about a woman I know in Fort Worth who prepares several reclosable bags filled with soap, toothpaste, and other toiletries—and keeps them in her car to give to homeless people asking for money. Her feeling is that, if the person is running a scam or is an addict, the toiletries won’t do any harm. “And, after all,” she says, “I’m not out very much.”

My friends and I discussed all these things as we walked around the city, literally stepping around people sleeping in the subways and huddled on street corners. We had begun to feel powerless; there was no way to respond to all the people we saw. We finally, however, came up with what I think is a good idea. Here it is:

How about giving gift certificates to a coffee shop or fast food restaurant? Many of those establishments regularly produce booklets of certificates. They would be easy to obtain, and you could carry them in a pocket.

If you really want to help the hungry without being exploited, and without becoming a chemical codependent, try this idea. If the person refuses it and only wants money, that gives you a pretty good idea as to his or her motives. If he or she is really hungry, the certificates will be welcome. If he or she asks for money instead, simply say you have no money (which for me is usually the bald truth), just the certificates.

Since we ran a story with this idea in *Seeds Magazine* in 1992, I have heard from a number of people who have tried some variation of these ideas. One seminary student never left her apartment without taking a piece of fruit to give to the first street person she saw.

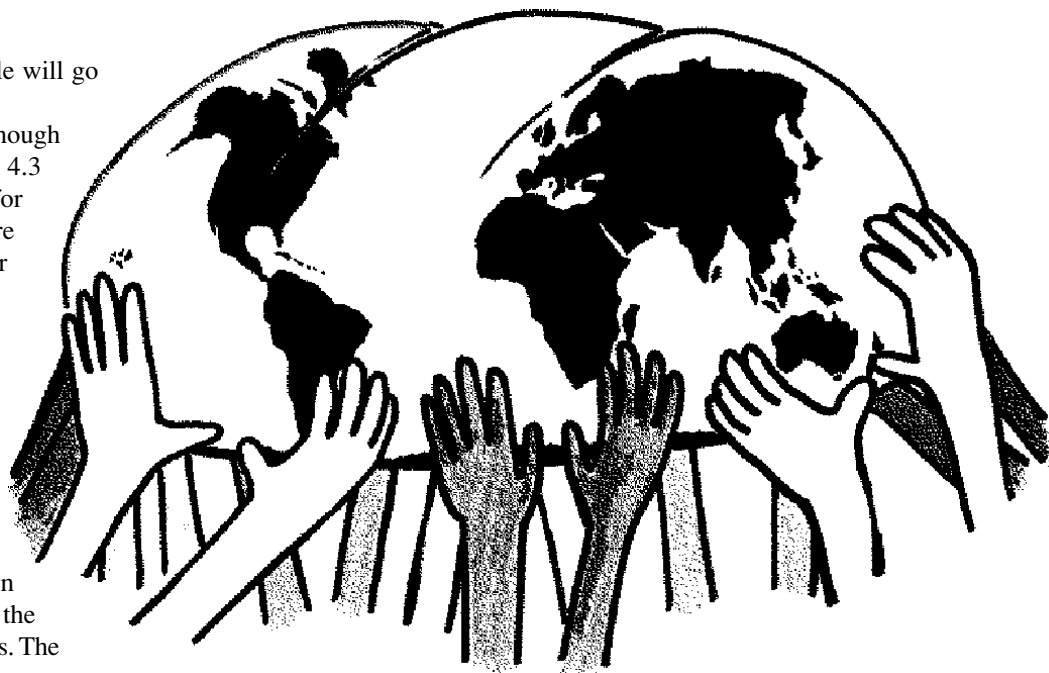
Another student keeps a supply of granola bars in her car. One man goes by a hamburger place before he gets to the intersection where the panhandlers stand.

Another woman socks away all the bread that comes to her table in restaurants, and then goes off to find someone to give it to. A church group on mission in Chicago drove around with “to-go” boxes of food, looking for people who looked hungry. A pastor stops and volunteers to drive the person to the emergency assistance agency.

There’s the idea. It’s worth a try. Maybe these people are “on the make,” and maybe they’re not. But they’re hungry. And these ideas are better than taking another street (yes, I admit; I’ve done it) in order to avoid the eyes of a hungry person.

Global Hunger in the Year 2000

There is enough food for every person on the planet, and yet...



- More than one billion people will go to bed hungry tonight.
- The world's farmers grow enough food to provide at least 4.3 pounds of food per day for every person. This is more than enough food for everyone on the planet.
- Worldwide, there are 2750 calories available for each person. The Food and Agriculture Organization has set the minimum daily requirement at 2350.
- The wealthiest 20 percent of the world's population consumes 86 percent of the world's goods and services. The poorest 20 percent consumes one percent of the goods and services.
- More than 50 countries fail to produce the minimum caloric requirement for their citizens. Most of these countries are in sub-Saharan Africa.
- About 31,000 (some say 24,000) people die every day from hunger or hunger-related causes. This is down from 35,000 ten years ago, and 41,000 twenty years ago. Three-fourths of the deaths are children under the age of five.
- Today 10 percent of children in developing countries die before the age of five. This is down from 28 percent fifty years ago.
- About 30,500 children die each day from preventable diseases such as diarrhea, acute respiratory infections, or malaria. Half of these deaths are associated with malnutrition.
- 32 percent of the people in the developing world live on below \$1 dollar a day.
- Seven out of 10 of the world's hungry people are women and girls.
- Educated girls usually grow up to have smaller families and healthier pregnancies. A ten-percent increase in enrollment in girls' primary schools can be expected to decrease infant mortality by 4.1 percent.
- Famine and wars cause 10 percent of hunger deaths. The majority of hunger deaths are caused by chronic malnutrition, which is caused by extreme poverty.
- Besides death, chronic malnutrition also causes impaired vision, listlessness, stunted growth, and greatly increased susceptibility to disease. Severely malnourished people are unable to function at even a basic level.

- It is estimated that some 800 million people in the world suffer from hunger and malnutrition, about 8 million actually die from it each year.
- Almost 200 million children below the age of five suffer from malnutrition.
- 2.6 billion people lack access to basic sanitation.
- 880 million people lack access to adequate health services.
- Many hunger experts agree that ultimately the best way to reduce hunger is through education. Educated people are best able to break out of the cycle of poverty that causes hunger.
- Often it takes just a few simple resources for impoverished people to be able to grow enough food to become self-sufficient. These resources include quality seeds, appropriate tools, and access to water. Small improvements in farming techniques and food storage methods are also helpful.
- The financial costs to end hunger are relatively slight. The United Nations Development Programme estimates that the basic health and nutrition needs of the world's poorest people could be met for an additional \$13 billion a year. Animal lovers in the United States and Europe spend more than that on pet food each year.

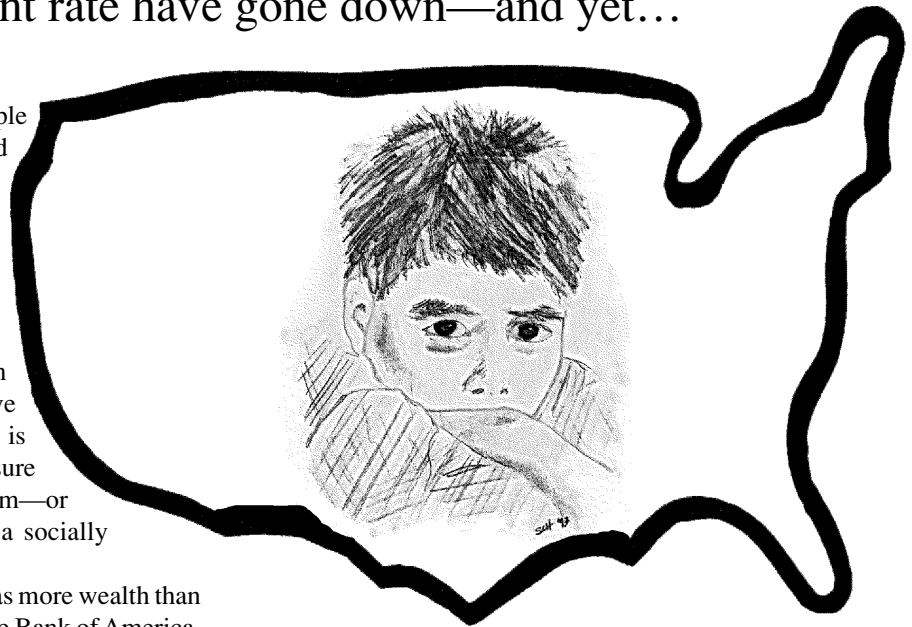
—compiled by the Seeds staff from the UN Development Programme, World Health Organization, UN Food and Agriculture Organization, UNICEF, Bread for the World, Food First Institute, Heifer Project International, Brown University Hunger Program

—The art on this page is by Sharon Rollins.

U.S. Hunger in the Year 2000

The United States economy is booming, the poverty rate and unemployment rate have gone down—and yet...

- In the last five years, 11 percent more people went to churches and charities for food assistance. In some cities, the increase was 14 percent. These agencies have run out of food (some for the first time ever) and have had to turn people away.
- 34.5 million people in the U.S. live below the poverty line. More than 31 million are victims of food insecurity. (They live in a situation in which access to food is unstable—they are either hungry or unsure of where the next meal will come from—or in which they must acquire food in a socially unacceptable way.)
- The top one percent of U.S. households has more wealth than the bottom 95 percent. According to the Bank of America, there are 11 million millionaires in the U.S. today. While trillions of dollars are passing between generations, one out of five children in the U.S. still lives below the poverty line. (That's 14.5 million children in poverty.)
- Children in the U.S. are more likely to be hungry now than anytime between 1967 and 1980.
- U.S. children are nearly twice as likely as adults to be poor.
- More than 12 million U.S. children go without food at least once a week because there is none in the house. 8 million suffer every day from chronic hunger.
- One in three U.S. children will be poor at some point in their childhood.
- One in 12 U.S. children lives at less than half of the poverty level.
- Children who are undernourished consistently perform poorly on standardized tests. Early inadequate performance is a major risk factor for dropping out of school in later years.
- Approximately one quarter of the children in the lowest income range—about 7 million—are without health insurance.
- The average age of homeless people in the U.S. is seven.
 - A report from the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities shows that food stamps can raise a low-income family above the poverty level. However, the number of people receiving food stamps has dropped by 9 million (one-third) since 1995.
- In the last five years, the number of people receiving food stamps has dropped five times faster than the number of people in poverty.
- Nearly three out of four poor children live with a family member who worked at least part of the year. 4.3 million at-risk children live in households where someone is



- employed. This is the highest number of families categorized as “working poor” in more than 20 years.
 - Of the 26 million people who seek food assistance at agencies across the U.S. each year, 38 percent are under the age of 17. Forty-seven percent are Caucasian, 32 percent are African-American, 15 percent are Hispanic or Latino, and three percent are Native American.
 - 36 percent of people who seek food assistance have a high school diploma. Only five percent have ever attended college.
 - 90 percent of low-income people in the U.S. live outside of urban ghettos. The low-income population of suburbs is growing faster than that of inner cities or rural areas.
 - Poor children grow up to be less educated and less productive workers. For every year a child lives in poverty, his or her lifetime contribution to the economy is severely diminished.
 - Poverty is a greater risk to a child’s overall health than any other factor (such as having a mother who is unmarried, who is a high school dropout, etc.).
 - A study of siblings (in families who have moved in and out of poverty) shows strong new evidence that poverty itself, not ingrained parental flaws, damages a child’s chance to succeed, prosper, or contribute to society.
- compiled by the Seeds staff from *Bread for the World, America’s Second Harvest, World Hunger Year, More than Money, Children’s Defense Fund, Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, Catholic Charities USA, and the U.S. Conference on Mayors, Food Research and Action Center, Institute for Children and Poverty. The art on this page is by Susan Hansen.*

A Profile of the U.S. Working Poor

from America's Second Harvest

In the last decade, hunger-relief agencies have found that the greatest increase in hungry Americans has been among the working poor. Despite the strong economy and their own hard work, they cannot always make ends meet. And increasingly, they are turning to charities for hunger relief. Taken from recent studies, the following is a statistical snapshot of the working poor Americans seeking emergency food assistance from the local soup kitchens, food pantries, and emergency shelters served by America's Second Harvest food banks.

- 14,812,000 people in the U.S. are members of “working poor” families.
- 39 percent of emergency food recipient households (those served in soup kitchens, food pantries, and emergency shelters) have at least one adult working.
- Of emergency food recipient households with at least one person working, 49 percent are those employed and working full-time (40 hours or more per week).
- According to the U.S. Conference of Mayors, 37 percent of people requesting emergency food assistance in American cities are employed.
- Of the 21 million needy people seeking emergency food assistance in the U.S., more than 8 million are children.
- 70 percent of poor families with children in the U.S. include a person who works.
- 8,659,000 children in the U.S. live in “working poor” families.
- Over the past two decades, the poverty rate among working families has increased by nearly 50 percent.
- In U.S. cities, 61 percent of people requesting emergency food assistance were members of families with children.
- According to recent Census estimates, two-thirds of parents with low earnings work in retail or service trades.
- Nearly half of all employed emergency food recipients work in unskilled occupations.
- One fifth of employed emergency food recipients work in skilled occupations (clerical/secretarial, skilled craftspeople, skilled workers, and the self-employed).
- Between 1973 and 1988, families headed by high school dropouts increased their annual work effort (hours worked) by nearly 12 percent and ended up with 8 percent less annual income.
- 40 percent of emergency food recipients have less than a high school diploma or the equivalent, including 16 percent who completed grade school or less.
- According to the Census Bureau, average yearly earnings for high school graduates in the U.S. was \$22,154 in 1996.
- 60 percent of emergency food recipients have a high

school diploma, compared to 80 percent of the general U.S. population.

- 43 million Americans have no health insurance, even in an emergency.
- Nearly half of all parents in “working poor” families lack health insurance.
- 81 percent of emergency food recipient households have no private medical insurance.
- 29 percent of emergency food recipient households delayed getting medical treatment or filling a prescription in order to buy food within a 12-month period.

—compiled by America's Second Harvest from “Poverty Despite Work Handbook,” the 1999 report of the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities; “Hunger 1997: The Faces and Facts” from America's Second Harvest 1998 National Research Study; “A Status Report on Hunger and Homelessness in American Cities 1998: A 30-City Study” from the United States Conference of Mayors; “Overworked and Underemployed: Unraveling an Economic Enigma” by Barry Bluestone and Stephen Rose; the 1997 update of the U.S. Census Bureau; and the 1999 report of Aetna US Healthcare.

—America's Second Harvest is a national network of food banks and food rescue programs. You can contact them at 116 S. Michigan Ave., #4 ; Chicago, IL 60603; Phone: 800/771-2303; www.secondharvest.org.

