

Feed My Sheep John 21:18

A Newsletter of the Hunger Task Force or the Southern Ohio Synod

January-February, 2013

2013 - A TIME FOR HUNGER RESOLUTIONS?

Isn't it ironic that almost globally the number one personal New Year's resolution, is the plan to lose weight, while almost half of the world's population is hungry and/or in danger of starvation?

Many people wonder how hunger and obesity can co-exist. Yet the truth is that poverty can make people more vulnerable to hunger as well as obesity. The budget constraints that low-income households experience for many and varied reasons often lead to hunger. The problem exists not only in the USA, but in other nations as well. Hunger and malnutrition continue to plague the world's poorest populations. At the same time, an obesity epidemic is fueling diabetes, cardiovascular ailments, and other chronic diseases in developed and developing countries alike, straining healthcare systems and public finances.



With widespread hunger continuing to haunt developing nations, and obesity fast becoming a global epidemic, any number of efforts on the parts of governments, scientists, non-profit organizations, and the business world have taken aim at these twin nutrition-related crises, but have failed to make a large dent in the problems. How can 21st century society do a better job of translating the benefits of agricultural and industrial growth into improved nutrition?

That is the core question addressed by the researchers in the [*Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*](#), recently published. The researchers argue that overcoming the many barriers to achieving healthy nutrition worldwide will require an unprecedented level of joint planning and action between academia, government, civil society, and industry. They propose an ambitious plan to remake the ways food is grown, processed, distributed, sold, and consumed. The plan focuses on innovations that simultaneously take into account the needs of farmers, the complexity of nutrition-related human biology, and decision-making, and the power of profit incentives in the commercial sector.

The result is “a roadmap for a trans-disciplinary science to support change of sufficient scale and scope” to carve out “an alternative path from tradition to industrialization”—one that “promotes healthy lifestyles and environments rather than undermining them.”

These papers represent a significant contribution to the growing debate over the obesity epidemic, the globalization of food markets, and the role of food companies in addressing health and nutrition problems. The PNAS grew out of a 2008 conference hosted by the McGill World Platform for Health and Economic Convergence (MWP) with support from The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. The MWP has been researching these problems for almost a decade. For more information and news on this issue, visit McGill University: www.mcgill.ca/newsroom

CONGREGATIONS IN ACTION

Lutheran Church of the Resurrection, Cincinnati

Pastor Henry Zorn reflects on the epiphany of a recent mission trip to New Orleans:
"...but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more..." Romans 5:b

As Cindy and I drove to New Orleans on our way to the disaster relief trip there were many confounding questions stirring in my mind. How can there still be Hurricane Katrina work to be done more than seven years after the storm? Will we be working on homes flooded by Hurricane Isaac and is it possible that these might be some of the same homes that were destroyed by Hurricane Katrina? Why do these people continue to build their homes near the water and in harm's way? Will the St. Bernard Project have their act together and provide us with meaningful work? Why aren't we driving east rather than south; aren't we needed more in New York and New Jersey than in New Orleans?

Our first day of work took us to the home of Miss Lucille in Plaquemines Parish. She lived in her home for sixty-two years and got flooded out by Hurricane Isaac in August. It was the first time she had ever gotten flooded in her life. The likely reason was that after Katrina the Army Corps of Engineers built a new levy to protect St. Bernard and other areas from flooding. The new levy worked; St. Bernard was spared the wrath of Isaac, but the unintended consequence was that all of the water was retained in Plaquemines Parish! More questions began to swirl in my head. How must this frail old woman feel about her government? Does she have any recourse? Does the government have the right to tell her that she might not be able to move back into her home? Why does such devastation keep assailing these people living in Plaquemines Parish; Hurricane Katrina, the BP oil spill and now Hurricane Isaac? (I have seen the Parish President, Billy Nungesser, on television so often that I feel like I know the guy...and that is not a good thing for them!)

The remainder of the week we worked on the home of Miss Sande in St. Bernard Parish. She was flooded out by Hurricane Katrina. Since August 2005, her life has been one act of suffering followed by another. She and her husband lost their furniture business because the insurance company did not come through. Her house was under-insured (unknown to her) and the proceeds were not sufficient to repair it so she and her husband had to go it on their own with help from family and volunteers. Two years into the work, her husband died of a heart attack; clearly a result of the stress upon his life. Five years into the work, when the house was seventy-five percent complete, she discovered that the sheetrock was made in China and was contaminated. It all had to be ripped out! More questions! Was I meeting a modern-day Job? Why don't insurance companies live up to their obligations when disaster strikes? Are the levies on Lake Ponchartrain high enough now or will our efforts have been wasted when the next storm, stronger than Katrina, strikes New Orleans?

With each wheelbarrow full of personal possessions that we hauled out of Miss Lucille's home and with each screw that spun into a new panel of sheetrock in Miss Sande's home, the Word of God spoke to me. It was a single, solitary Word, but it seemed to be the response to all of the questions that my doubting, skeptical mind could conjure up. God kept whispering the words that God must have whispered to St. Paul two thousand years ago as he reflected upon the human condition, *"...but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more..."*

At the end of the day, looking upon all of her life's possessions thrown in a huge garbage heap on her front lawn, and with tears in her eyes, Miss Lucille addressed the crowd of about twenty volunteers and said (my paraphrase), "Thank you for caring about me. You have helped me to take the most difficult step in the process of restoring my life! Now I will be able to move forward with the next steps." Sin (brokenness in a variety of forms) had assailed this frail, old woman, but God's grace abounded in the presence of four volunteer groups from Cincinnati, Cleveland, Virginia and Texas!

I suspect that Miss Sande, if all goes according to plan, will move back into her home in a month or so...*seven years after Katrina!* Each volunteer, there with no agenda but to help a troubled soul, was a sign that God's grace abounds! God's light was shining into sin's darkness. My abundant questions were not answered. Maybe the answers don't matter. Or maybe the answer was simply the epiphany of God's abundant grace and my good fortune to be a witness to it!

I cannot express how deep and Holy Spirit-filled these disaster relief trips are. They are prayers with nails. They are the spiritual retreat of Mary combined with the servant energy of Martha. The face of Jesus, suffering *and resurrected*, always seems to make itself manifest. Virtually every volunteer that I have worked with sings the same old adage, *"I received far more than I gave!"*

I am humbled and gratified that these disaster relief trips have become such an integral part of our mission. Thank you LCR. Your faith inspires me! We are beginning to think about our next (12th) trip since Katrina; likely to the east coast next summer. Skilled or unskilled, I commend it to you highly! There is work for every member of a team and Jesus desires to be made known to all. Reading the words "where sin increased, grace abounded more" from two thousand years ago is one thing. Seeing "grace abound more" with your own eyes is yet something much greater!

SOUPER BOWL OF CARING

Souper Bowl of Caring is a national movement of young people working to fight hunger and poverty in their own communities around the time of the Super Bowl football game. In the weeks leading up to or on Super Bowl Sunday, young people take up a collection (many use a soup pot), asking for one dollar or one item of food for people in need. They give 100% of their donation directly to the local hunger-relief charity of their choice.



tacklehunger.org

A simple prayer: "Lord, even as we enjoy the Super Bowl football game, help us be mindful of those who are without a bowl of soup to eat" is inspiring a youth-led movement to help hungry and hurting people around the world.

This prayer, delivered by Brad Smith gave birth to an idea. Why not use Super Bowl weekend, a time when people come together for football and fun, to also unify the nation for a higher good: collecting dollars and canned food for the needy? Youth could collect donations at their schools and churches in soup pots, and then send every dollar DIRECTLY to a local charity of THEIR choice.

That was 1990. Since then, ordinary young people have generated an extraordinary \$81 million for soup kitchens, food banks and other charities in communities across the country. In addition, hundreds of thousands of youth have experienced for themselves the joy and satisfaction of giving and serving, inspiring people of all ages to follow their generous example.

On Sunday February 3, 2013, 140 million Americans will tune in to the Super Bowl football game. There will be parties with abundant food, friendship and fellowship. At the same time, there will be people worrying about staying warm, finding shelter and a warm meal. Please join young people around the country as they demonstrate God's love by loving their neighbors through the Souper Bowl of Caring. It's a simple, yet significant act of caring for others. Our young people are developing hearts for giving that can last a lifetime. Please support their efforts.

Encourage youth in your congregation to join Souper Bowl Sunday. For more information, registration application, and other resources, visit the Souper Bowl website, www.tacklehunger.org.

LENT AND HUNGER

The Lenten season begins early this year. Ash Wednesday is February 13.

Lent is a time of prayer, service, and self-examination. During this time, many of us choose to live simpler lives, remembering those who do not have the food, money, or resources to simply live. During this time, many congregations host potluck dinners or Lenten meals.

Why not consider hosting a meal from another country? The ELCA Website has resources to help your congregation remember those who are hungry this Lenten season. Enjoy global cuisine while learning about the world and how gifts to ELCA World Hunger are making a difference. Instead of charging for the meal, collect donations to support ELCA World Hunger.



Complete plans for six meals are available on the website, www.elca.org./hunger.

- Meal One - [Nicaragua](#)
- Meal Two - [The West bank](#)
- Meal Three - [U.S. Food Stamp Meal](#)
- Meal Four - [Bangladesh](#)
- Meal Five - [Tanzania](#)
- Meal Six - [U.S. 100 Mile Meal](#)
- Meal Seven - [Haiti](#)
- Meal Eight - [India](#)
- Meal Nine - [Mexico](#)
- Meal Ten - [Malawi](#)
- Meal Eleven - [Nepal](#)
- Meal Twelve - [Ethiopia](#)

If meal planning and hosting is not something your congregation is into, consider some of these other fundraising ideas.

Lenten Fast and Give

A popular Lenten activity, refrain from engaging in certain items or activities - meals, coffee, soda, desserts, movies, etc., during Lent. [Give the money you saved](#) to ELCA World Hunger.

Noisy Offerings

Children, youth, or adults can decorate plastic milk jugs with paint, stickers, and fabric. They can collect coins from congregation members during the offertory. The coins will make plenty of noise. Coins can be stored in a public place, so that everyone can see the progress.

Build a Barnyard

A display is created to house animals in a barnyard. This can be a barnyard on a poster, bulletin board, a swimming pool as a fish pond, or an actual barnyard area. As animals are purchased from God's Global Barnyard, they are added to the physical barnyard at the fund-raiser--a great way to display the progress of the fundraiser.

Bread Display

Bake a loaf (or loaves) of bread. Place the bread on display in your narthex, fellowship hall, or other common space as a reminder of hunger in the world. Put a sign indicating the purpose of the bread if it is not obvious or explained elsewhere. If you host a breakfast or lunch, leave one table empty/open and place the bread on it.

REMINDER: PLAN AHEAD TO ATTEND THE HUNGER LEADERS DAY

Does your congregation have a hunger ministry? Does your congregation **not** have a hunger ministry, but would like to develop one? Help is on the way for both types of congregations.

Plan now to attend the Southern Ohio Synod's Hunger Leaders Day **to be held at Messiah Lutheran Church in Reynoldsburg on Saturday, March 9, from 9:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.** Bring your ideas, concerns, questions, and people to share and learn about the issues of hunger and how to address them on a congregational level. More information is available on the synod website. Together we can help solve one of the world's most pressing problems.

Hunger Task Force Members: Rev. Henry Zorn, chair; Nicholas Bates; Rev. Glen Bengson; David Drumm; Rev. John Eilert; Rev. Joene Herr; Linda Hall; Rev. Donald Moeser; Rev. Mary Molnar; Rev. Mike Poole; Rev. Monte Stevens; Rev. Jeff Wick, synod staff; Susan Truchses, newsletter editor

Please note: New email address to send information and articles: srtruchses@gmail.com.