

# Feed My Sheep John 21:18

A newsletter from the Hunger Task Force of the Southern Ohio Synod

November-December, 2011

## Food Programs Need Help After the Holidays

Churches, schools, civic organizations, and many other groups are now gathering and assembling food baskets to be donated to hungry families for the holidays. Our nation is to be commended for this kind of caring for those who suffer from the pangs of hunger and for helping to make the holidays a happy time.



But what about the rest of the year? Hunger does not go away after the holidays. Food pantries, soup kitchens, and other programs which deal with the problem of hunger are very concerned about what the future holds. The number of hungry people in our nation continues to rise during these difficult economic times, and programs which provide food assistance are being stretched beyond their resources.

Bread For the World, an organization advocating for the hungry is asking for help. Our ballooning national debt and the task of the “Super Committee” to cut our debt by at least \$1.5 trillion over the next 10 years has been in the news almost daily. The committee was to give Congress its deficit-reduction proposals on November 23, one day before Thanksgiving. At this writing, it is not known what those proposals will be. Contact Sen. Robert Portman. A sample letter can be found at [www.BREAD.org](http://www.BREAD.org).



However, now, more than ever, help is needed to strengthen government food programs. Congress must be told to protect programs that give hope and opportunity to people experiencing hunger and poverty. Reducing our nation’s long-term debt is critical, but hungry and poor people didn’t cause the problem, and cutting programs that help them won’t significantly reduce our debt. But cutting these programs will have a devastating impact on the most vulnerable members of our society. Please, urge Congress to keep our nation’s commitment to those Jesus called “the least of these.” Send a personal letter to your congressional representative today urging consideration for the poor.

As we gather around the table during these holidays, let us pray for those in the United States and around the world who are hungry and without enough food and other resources.

## Hunger Crisis Looms For Elderly Population

Hunger among our elderly population is a growing crisis—hunger rates have more than doubled for poor seniors in the United States in recent years.

According to a recent study, there are over 5 million seniors who face the threat of hunger, almost 3 million seniors who are at risk of going hungry, and almost 1 million seniors who do go hungry because they cannot afford to buy food.

Evidence suggests that in the wake of the recession, there is an increased need among senior citizens all over the country for nutritious meals programs, including home-delivered meals. For example, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) recently surveyed 125 Area Agencies on Aging, and found that almost 80 percent of them reported an increase in requests for home-delivered meals since the start of the economic downturn.

Over the past decade, the number of seniors without adequate food and nutrition has steadily risen. Thirty-eight percent of seniors who cannot get adequate nutrition have incomes below the federal poverty level—a mere \$10,890 in 2011. Millions of seniors are forced to make painful decisions such as choosing between buying food or medication.

A June 21, 2011 Report on the Older Americans Act from Chairman Bernard Sanders, states that In addition to the impact of poverty on senior hunger, several other factors play a role as well: living alone, age, gender, raising a grandchild, and renting vs. homeownership.

Also, many seniors are not able to access food resource programs for a variety of reasons. Lack of transportation, inability to travel, chronic illnesses, lack of knowledge of programs available to them, and even pride to accept “outside” help.

For almost fifty years, the Older Americans Act programs have provided individuals with the resources they need to remain where they want to be—healthy and in their own homes. This year it is up for reauthorization by Congress.

At a time when we are facing large deficits and a need to more wisely spend our federal resources, we must not underestimate the value and cost-effectiveness of relatively small investments in these programs that prevent or mitigate extremely costly expenditures in Medicare and Medicaid. This is especially true as the older population is the fastest growing segment of the U.S. population and the number of seniors who want to remain independent and age in their homes will continue to grow. Providing adequate food to elderly Americans is a vital service that will ensure that our parents and grandparents can remain independent for as long as possible. Furthermore, at a time when rising health care costs are a growing concern, funding nutrition programs is a commonsense federal investment that will reduce the burden on Medicare and Medicaid programs, leverage matching nonfederal funds, and protect our most vulnerable citizens. These vital nutrition programs have been extraordinarily successful in specifically targeting the needs of a diverse range of urban and rural communities across the country both in home-delivered and congregate meal settings and they remain the most cost-effective way to support a dignified, healthy retirement for millions of our fellow citizens.



How can the church help? Seek out the elderly in the congregation and surrounding community to make sure they are receiving adequate food and services and are being served by the proper agencies. Volunteer to work in a Meals on Wheels program, or start one in your community. Make contact with your local Area on Aging agency to find other ways members in the congregation can help. Ask your legislative representative to vote for reauthorization of the Older Americans Act. Keep in mind, sooner or later, we may need this kind of help.

## Congregations In Action

### Good Shepherd, Cincinnati

Pastor Larry Donner, reports that the Euchre Tournament to raise funds for 50,000 meals for 'Kids Against Hunger' was held at Good Shepherd Lutheran, on Saturday, October 15, at 7:00 p.m. Prizes, food, and fun were had by all. Thirty-two people attended the tournament. Several local businesses supported the event by donating prizes for the winners of the tournament. On Saturday, November 19, 65 people representing Good Shepherd joined 195 other Lutherans in packing 50,000+ meals at Kids Against Hunger in Cincinnati. Some of those helping were people who were in the euchre tournament, had seen a video about the work of Kids Against Hunger, and were moved to take part in the meal packing! The amount of money raised was \$3130, which includes a \$500 match from Thrivent.

## Redeemer, Columbus

**Kathy Zwanziger** reports that about 20 people attended the Potluck to End World Hunger on Sunday, October 23. A contest was held to see which of two teams would be first in line to eat, based on answers to 10 questions that had been in *Reflections*, the congregation's bulletin, for the previous five weeks. One question concerned the amount that each baptized member of the ELCA would have to contribute to achieve the 1999 Churchwide Assembly goal of \$25 million in income for the world hunger emphasis. (The answer is \$5 per person per year – "a quite achievable goal.")

The amount that was contributed that Sunday was \$306. An ELCA World Hunger jar will be in the Small Fellowship area for a few more weeks for additional contributions.

Following the meal, which included a Moroccan lamb dish called Sweet Lamb Tagine (with couscous) and Pilaf a la Greek, the group played a game of **Jeopardy** -- complete with the music. Although only a few answers were completely accurate, several others were amazingly close. It was a great way to learn a little bit about the mission of Redeemer and the ELCA!

## Southern Ohio Synod Youth

Gary Pecuch, SOS Youth Director, writes that on Saturday October 22, youth from the Southern Ohio Synod gathered at Abiding Christ, Fairborn for the Citizen's Tour. The tour was sponsored by the National Youth Gathering and highlighted music artists Dave Scherer and Rachel Kurtz (both of whom will appear at the Gathering in July, 2012). The afternoon was filled with food, fellowship and music. Good Shepherd, Cincinnati; Peace, Beavercreek; and Abiding Christ, Fairborn all pitched in with dollars, food, and beverages in order to ensure that all proceeds collected by attendees would go to ELCA World Hunger. \$535 was collected for ELCA World Hunger.

## Healing and Hope In East Africa

Although the people of East Africa are still in dire need of emergency assistance, sustainable development projects to help overcome the challenges to growing food and earning income will be essential for people to recover and move forward with their lives.

Help Lutheran World Relief walk with the people of East Africa through this crisis. There's so much work to be done. Farmers will need tools, seeds and other supplies to replant. Families will need to replenish their livestock. Irrigation systems will need to be repaired or improved. All of this work will help families get back on their feet and make them less vulnerable to drought in the future. LWR needs to raise \$3 million to mount such a response. Can you help?

**Donate at [www.lwr.org](http://www.lwr.org).**

## Flooding in Central America

Torrential downpours from southern Mexico to northern Panama brought flash flooding and mudslides, displacing hundreds of thousands and destroying food and crops. So far \$185,000 has been sent to ELCA Disaster Response to help provide shelter, emergency food assistance, personal hygiene kits and medical care to those most in need. All gifts designated for "Central American Flooding" will be used entirely -- 100 percent -- in response to this disaster. To learn more, visit [www.elca.org](http://www.elca.org).



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**Hunger Task Force Members** : Rev. Henry Zorn, chair; Rev. Glen Bengson; David Drumm; Rev. John Eilert; Rev. Ruth Fortis; Rev. Joene Herr; Lora Jollis; Rev. Mary Molnar ; Rev. Mike Poole; Rev. Monte Stevens; Kathleen Zwanziger; Rev. William McKee, synod staff; Susan Truchses, newsletter editor

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