



breadfortheworld
HAVE FAITH. END HUNGER.

Bread for the World Sunday

2008 REFLECTION RESOURCE

Bread for the World Sunday is an opportunity for churches to renew their commitment to overcoming hunger and poverty in God's world. On October 19 and other Sundays this fall, worshipping communities across the country will join together in lifting up their voices on behalf of hungry people. This year's observance of Bread for the World Sunday takes place at a time when soaring prices for food and fuel have created an urgent hunger crisis—both in our own country and overseas. An additional 100 million people have fallen into poverty and are at risk of hunger and starvation. (For the latest news about the global hunger crisis, please visit www.bread.org.)

In the midst of this global hunger crisis, our nation is electing a new president and new Congress. Living in God's grace in Jesus Christ, we have received a great inheritance: the gift of citizenship—a resource to use on behalf of those in need. As citizens, we have the *privilege* to elect our nation's leaders as well as the *responsibility* to use our country's abundant resources to make sure people have enough to eat—and the opportunity to make a living and feed their families.

This Reflection Resource offers suggestions about how your church or faith community might observe Bread for the World Sunday this year. Sample prayers

and announcements are included, along with information about where you can retrieve additional resources.

The Bible study on page 2 by Pastor Heidi Neumark offers insights that will be useful for both sermons and adult education forums. The Parable of the Prodigal Son calls us to repent of our own squandering of our inheritance of God's grace—and invites us to return to our gracious Father and place our faith in the Faithful Son who creates an abundant feast for all in need.

Am I a careful steward of the gift of citizenship?
—see page 2

Ten Tips for Bread for the World Sunday

1. Make Bread for the World Sunday part of your worship service

Mount Teman African Methodist Church in Elizabeth, New Jersey, used both the worship bulletin inserts and the Call to Worship. During the reading of the lessons, there was a short presentation about the challenge of world hunger.

Williams Memorial Temple (Christian Methodist Episcopal) in Shreveport, Louisiana, found Gospel music with hunger and justice themes—and made hymn singing the focus of Sunday worship.

2. Get the word out in as many ways as possible

St. Mary's Roman Catholic Church in East Islip, New York, publicized Bread for the World in their Sunday bulletin and in the parish's quarterly magazine. Following Mass on one Sunday, tables were set up outside with information about hunger advocacy. Almost 2,000 letters were written to Congress and the following week the letters were part of the offertory.

Continued on back page...

A Prodigal Feast *A reflection on Luke 15:11-24*

By Heidi Neumark

The story Jesus tells begins with abundance. A family's careful stewardship gives the next generation a good foothold for their future. This gift might give rise to great thanksgiving and continued generosity, but that's not how the story goes. *The younger son gathered all he had and traveled to a distant country, and there he squandered his property in dissolute living.* There are many ways to squander an inheritance.

The parable provides varied angles for reflection. Are we thankful, caring stewards of all that has been given to us? Are we complicit in consumeristic patterns of dissolute living that leave many destitute? Am I a careful steward of the gift of citizenship, exercising my right to vote? Will I squander the opportunity to influence the choices of a new Congress and a new administration? Or will I use my voice and vote to demand policies that work to radically reduce hunger and poverty? Is the church using the inheritance of past generations for institutional maintenance or to advance the mission of Jesus to "bring good news to the poor"—not only through works of charity but also through public advocacy and organizing to change the conditions that breed poverty?

He traveled to a distant country and squandered his property in dissolute living. The squandering done by the younger son in our story seems like small potatoes compared with the vast inheritance at stake in our coming national election. Will we seek to secure our national security at the expense of the needs of poor people here and around the globe? Or will we elect a different way, governed by compassion and hope? There are many ways to squander an inheritance. In a distant country or in our nation's capital or at our own kitchen tables and church meetings.

Jesus' parable is ultimately a story of compassion and hope. After the younger son squanders his property, a famine strikes. A time of reckoning. The younger son *began to be in need. He went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country who sent him to his fields to feed the pigs. He would gladly have filled himself with the*

pods (the corn husks) that the pigs were eating, and no one gave him anything. He tried to satisfy himself with the husks.

In times of economic distress, it's tempting to settle for the leftovers. It's tempting to conclude that, given our own diminished harvest, we have little left to share. We imagine that our giving must be cut back, our expectations curtailed. We convince ourselves that we must be resigned to the husks of justice. That we can't really change anything. This, of course, is not good news.

But then we read that *he came to himself.* And here's where our story turns. Our story turns wherever people are coming to themselves. They are beginning to recognize the consequences of governmental choices that leave many at death's door. Our story turns even as more people are feeling their own famine of loss, suffering their own gnawing emptiness. It's a terrible thing, yet as more people come to themselves and feel the famine of justice and peace, the story begins to turn.

The moment the prodigal son came to himself was the moment he realized that there was an alternative, that the far country in which he found himself was not a place he had to remain. There was another possibility—a place with bread to spare where no one need die of hunger. For while he was still far off, his father sees him and is filled with compassion. He runs and puts his arms around his son and kisses him. He covers his son's shame with a beautiful robe, places the ring of inheritance back on his finger and sandals on those wayward feet and prepares a feast to celebrate this homecoming!

Do we deserve another chance? Do we deserve another opportunity to turn away from dissolute policies that leave even the poor of our own nation nothing but the crumbling husks of democracy?

Perhaps we don't deserve a second chance—not any more than the prodigal son of the story was worthy of his glorious return. But our faith tells us we have another chance. That is the gospel. Because of Jesus, the Son faithful unto death, God extends to us another chance.

The famine of justice and mercy can become a prodigal feast. We are offered the ring as a sign of our renewed role as

stewards of God's good gifts. We are given the sandals to remind us that we are not barefoot slaves bound to the status quo. We are invited to the thanksgiving feast spread out so that all God's children, in every corner of the globe, may know the abundant life intended by their Creator.

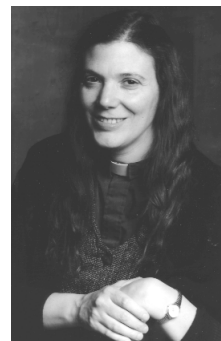
It is a feast where we can thank God even while we are still far off—far from where we need to be as a nation, far from where we need to be as a church, far from where we need to be in our work for justice. Yes, even while we are still far off, God is running towards us to gather us into the feast where bread abounds.

It is not too late to come to our senses and turn towards that welcome table. It is not too late to truly cherish our citizenship by vigorously exercising our rights to vote and to call our representatives to accountability regarding poverty and hunger.

It is not too late to leave the husks behind and recommit ourselves and our churches to work for justice. It is not too late to put on the rings and shoes of our inheritance and step into the halls where decisions are made. It is not too late to seek changes that will not only feed the hungry but that will also eliminate the conditions that generate hunger and grieve our God. In fact, the time is now!

We may still be far off, but the thanksgiving table that awaits us is well within sight. Jesus gives us a good glimpse of it in this gospel story: bread for the soul, bread for the world, a prodigal feast indeed.

The Rev. Heidi Neumark is pastor of Holy Trinity Lutheran Church in New York City. Pastor Neumark's ministry for 19 years in South Bronx was the basis for her award-winning book, Breathing Space: A Spiritual Journey in the South Bronx (Beacon Press).



Resources for Worship



Bulletin or Pulpit Announcement

Today we join with churches across the country to observe Bread for the World Sunday. Moved by God's grace in Jesus Christ, we pray for all of those who suffer from hunger and want, and we rededicate ourselves to ending hunger in God's world.

Call to Worship or Greeting

LEADER: Happy are those whose help is the God of Jacob,

PEOPLE: whose hope is in the Lord their God.

LEADER: When the Israelites hungered in the desert, God gave them bread from heaven,

PEOPLE: and for their thirst God brought water out of the rock.

LEADER: Arise and cry out! Pour out your hearts like water to the Lord.

PEOPLE: We lift our hands to God in prayer for the lives of all in need.

LEADER: We gather together in worship this day as a people longing to be fed,

PEOPLE: so that we may go out to feed the hungry, work for justice and be good stewards of the gifts we have received.

Hymn Suggestions

- As Saints of Old
- As Those of Old Their First Fruits Brought
- For the Fruit of All Creation
- Here Am I
- Send Down the Fire
- Take the Word of God
- The Church of Christ in Every Age
- We Are Called
- When I Needed A Neighbor?

Prayer of the Day

O God, you have given us the inheritance of new life in Jesus Christ. May your grace move us to see that the abundance of your creation is used to overcome hunger and poverty in our world.

Amen.

Prayer after Communion

O God, our provider, you nourish us with holy food and drink, and you open our hearts to the needs of others.

Refresh us with your Spirit, so we might proclaim your loving kindness and share your abundance with all in need, as we feast on Jesus Christ, the Bread of Life.

Amen.

Benediction

May the God of love, who loves us freely, strengthen us in our love for others; may Jesus Christ, who is the true bread from heaven, grant us grace to speak out for those who have no voice; may the Spirit, who dwells in us, empower us to go out into the world to work for change, bringing God's justice and hope to all.

Amen.



Woodcuts by
Helen Siegl

Additional worship resources can
be found at www.bread.org/sunday

Prayer of Thanksgiving

By Ileana Garcia Soto

Bread for the World's 2008 Evangelical Covenant Church Intern

Amantísimo Dios y Padre celestial,
Dios de infinita bondad y
misericordia,
Glorificado sea tu bendito nombre.

Loving and compassionate God,
God of infinite goodness and mercy,
your blessed name be glorified.

Tuya es la gloria, Eres dueño de
toda la tierra y de todo lo que
hay en ella;
También del mundo y de todos
sus habitantes.

Yours is the glory, You are the ruler
of all the land and everything
on it;
You are the ruler of the world and
all its inhabitants.

Dios nuestro enséñanos a vivir
como tú siempre has querido.
Tú eres nuestro Dios y salvador,
y en ti siempre confiamos.

God of all of us, teach us to live the
way you have always wanted.
You are our God and savior,
and our trust is always in you.

Te damos gracias por las bendiciones
que nos das cada día.

We thank you for the blessings
that you give us every day.

Te damos gracias por la provisión de
alimento y por permitirnos dar
de comer a los que necesitan.

We thank you for providing food
and for allowing us to provide
food to those in need.

Te damos gracias por bendecirnos
con el deseo de Tu justicia hacia
aquellos que son pobres.

We thank you for blessing us with
the desire for your justice for
those who are poor.

Te damos gracias por bendecirnos
con la voz para hablar por los
que no tienen voz.

We thank you for blessing us with
the voice to speak for the
voiceless.

Te damos gracias por permitirnos
ser tus manos y pies en el mundo,
Por la bendición de ser parte de la
gran familia que es tu Iglesia.
Escucha nuestra oración y ayúdanos
a recordar siempre tu llamado
de justicia.

We thank you for allowing us to be
your hands and feet in the world,
For the blessing of being part of the
great family that is your Church.
Hear our prayer and help us
remember always your call to
justice and compassion.

Dios nuestro, tú vencerás la
injusticia; ¡con tu ayuda
saldremos victoriosos!

Our God, you will conquer all
injustice; with your help we will
be victorious!

Amen

Amen

Litany

Remembering the lavish generosity of our God, who welcomes us into new life through Jesus Christ, let us pray:

You have given to us for our inheritance the fruit of your creation. May we cherish the gifts of food, water and natural beauty, sharing freely with all your people.

Lord, hear our prayer.

You have given to us for our inheritance a family as big as the earth. May we cherish our mothers and fathers, sisters and brothers, both near and far, knowing that whatever happens to them affects us, too.

Lord, hear our prayer.

You have given to us for our inheritance an unbroken procession of witnesses in every generation. May we cherish our forebears in faith, take risks for the gospel as they did, and honor them in lives that honor you.

Lord, hear our prayer.

You have given to us for our inheritance this nation, in which each one of us can make a difference. May we cherish the gift of citizenship and use our voices and our votes to bring an end to hunger, here and throughout the world.

Lord, hear our prayer.

You have given to us for our inheritance your own promises that a great banquet table awaits us, and that when we turn toward you, even from far off, we will find you running out to meet us. May we cherish your forgiveness and steadfast love, trusting that you will bring about that day of peace and plenty, when your people will hunger no more.

Lord, hear our prayer.

ONE Sabbath

Observing Bread for the World Sunday is a good way for your church to participate in ONE Sabbath 2008. The ONE campaign is encouraging Christian, Jewish, and Muslim communities to respond to the challenges of global poverty and disease between September 5 and November 2 for study and action. An array of worship, preaching, education, and youth activity resources are available at www.one.org/faith.

Ten Tips *From front page*

3. Offer education and information

Glendorado Lutheran Church in Princeton, Minnesota, formed a study group to consider how the church could get more involved. The Sunday school children formed a “Kids Against Hunger” group.

Hope United Church of Christ in St. Louis, Missouri, created a special display in the narthex to inform worshippers about Bread for the World and what they could do to end hunger.

4. When possible, use Bread for the World staff and board members

Vincent United Methodist Church in Nutley, New Jersey, asked Bread for the World staff member Derrick Boyken to speak about the Farm Bill. After his presentation, the congregation wrote letters to their senators.

Reconciliation Episcopal Church in San Antonio, Texas, invited Eleanor Crook, a long-time Bread for the World board member, to speak to the parish. Letters to Congress were written following the service.

5. Reach out to other churches in your community

St. Mark Presbyterian Church in Rockville, Maryland, held a regional ecumenical forum on hunger. Bread for the World Founder Art Simon and regional staff person Elise Young hosted a discussion with a staff member from Congress.

6. Involve children and youth

At John Calvin Presbyterian Church in Annandale, Virginia, the Sunday School held a poster contest with a world hunger theme. The coffee hour following the worship service was devoted to discussing the farm bill.

First Presbyterian Church of Phoenixville, Pennsylvania, held an intergenerational Sunday school focused on world hunger. They used several activities from “Make Hunger History” to encourage advocacy.

7. Make bread baking part of the mix

Christus Rex Lutheran Campus Ministry in Grand Forks, North Dakota, baked bread before and after worship. The church sponsors a coffee shop, where the baked goods were sold. Posters and other Bread for the World materials were on display.

The communion table at Christ Evangelical Lutheran Church in Athens, Ohio, held a large basket with different types of bread. The youth group had recently returned from a trip to Washington, D.C. Their experiences were used in the sermon, which talked about hungry people as “the face of Jesus in our world today.”

8. Look for creative ways to communicate

At Capitol Hill United Methodist Church in Portland, Oregon, a puppet skit was created to talk about world hunger. The church’s Web site was also used to advertise Bread for the World Sunday.

The children of Trinity Lutheran Church in Redondo Beach, California, received a half a cup of rice to help them understand how much food of the world lives each day. The adults of the congregation discussed the Millennium Development Goals.

9. Be flexible and respond to your local situation

Christ the King Lutheran Church in Fallbrook, California, had to postpone its Bread for the World Sunday until early December because of fire storms that evacuated the area. A canned food drive helped 200 families who lost their homes in the fires.

With a busy fall schedule, Euclid Avenue Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) decided to combine Bread for the World Sunday with World Communion Sunday. The older children of the Sunday school presented the children’s message during the worship service.

10. Provide financial support to Bread for the World

Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church in Petersburg, Michigan, gathered a special offering on two Sundays. Contributions were divided between Bread for the World and the community meal program.

At both services on Sunday, a member of the Peacemaking Committee of First Presbyterian Church of Columbia, Missouri, urged individuals to become members of Bread for the World.

Offering Envelopes and Bread Bags

Offering envelopes are available free of charge to use if your congregation or parish wishes to have a special offering or collection to benefit Bread for the World. “Bread Bags”—white paper bags 7 x 11 inches—with the Bread for the World logo can also be ordered by visiting www.bread.org/sunday.



breadfortheworld
HAVE FAITH. END HUNGER.

50 F STREET NW, SUITE 500
WASHINGTON, DC 20001
1-800-822-7323
WWW.BREAD.ORG

Bread for the World is a collective Christian voice urging our nation’s decision makers to end hunger at home and abroad. God’s grace in Jesus Christ moves us to help our neighbors, whether they live in the next house, the next state or the next continent. By changing policies, programs, and conditions that allow hunger and poverty to persist, we provide help and opportunity far beyond the communities where we live.