

MAKING HUNGER HISTORY:

One Person at a time!

An Occasional Newsletter
March 2010



Indiana-Kentucky Synod World Hunger Task Force Newsletter

www.iksynod.org/hunger

Food for Thought...

I am a member of St. John's in Anderson IN and I attended the World Hunger Leadership Gathering in Mexico City, 2009. A major focus of this Gathering was about family farms being absorbed by giant international agribusiness corporations. The following is the story of millions of displaced Mexican families. "This farm has been our family livelihood for over 150 years. Our yields aren't as big as some, but we live off of what the land provides and sell the surplus. We have a simple but happy life. We don't focus on possessions but on what is most important, our families."

"Corn is more than a crop for us, it is a lifestyle. It is our source for many foods and is eaten at most every meal. All the by-products are used to produce marketable goods. Nothing is wasted. This lifestyle is ending. The government is forcing us to move and is taking our land. Huge international companies are paying the government for our lands and building mega-farms. These farms produce corn from genetically altered seed corn to improve the yield. Fertilizers and pesticides are used to raise the yield even more. The market price for corn is so low that it is forcing us out of business. This is due to so much corn being produced and shipped into Mexico from the US. How are we supposed to feed ourselves, where are we to go, and how are we to survive?"

According to Dr. Ross Gandy, a professor of Sociology, Political Science & History at the Nat. Univ. in Mexico City, The N Am. Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) has opened the flood gates for Mexico to be the dumping ground for excess production of corn and several other crops. NAFTA has allowed a select few giant corporations to prosper from international deregulation of trade. Since the signing of NAFTA, wages have declined. Manufacturing operations were built & staffed with local labor. Many have closed operations and moved to Vietnam and China. Why? Because the Asian countries have a lower minimum wage than Mexico's 55 pesos per/day. The largest employer in Mexico is Walmart which pays an average of \$4.50/day. Most employees can't afford to shop there. Unemployment is 70% and 2/3 of the economy is based on an informal goods & service which are sold in the streets. Thirty-three percent of children under 15 are not in school.

As far as NAFTA is concerned, I realize that this is only one side of the story. I have not talked to someone in International agribusiness or to a farmer in the US, who may be benefiting in some way. There are always more viewpoints to consider and to understand. But I am drawn to the idea that we love to think we are always the solution and not the cause. Or, what is good for us must trickle down to the rest of the world and benefit others in some way. This makes me wonder how so few can prosper so much at the expense of so many?

This was just one aspect of a very thought provoking trip. There is not one story to tell from the experience, but probably 10 or 12. It was a blessing to go as well as a blessing to come home and be able to share this experience. God's peace to you, Tim Kean.

Get Your Toolkit!

Mix and match activities from this "program in a box" to create an hour-long session that introduces your congregation to the basics of ELCA World Hunger. You can also explore connections between hunger and climate change. The toolkits are ideal for a Sunday morning forum, Sunday school class, or a youth group meeting. The resource is practical, easy and intergenerational. Choose a theme: World Hunger Basics of Hunger, Climate Change Connections, Disease and Hunger Connections and Food and Hunger Connections. The ELCA World Hunger Appeal offers these free online education toolkits at: www.elca.org/hunger/toolkit

USEFUL LINKS:

ELCA World Hunger: www.elca.org/hunger

ELCA e-Advocacy: www.elca.org/advocacy

Bread for the World: www.bread.org

The ONE Campaign: www.one.org

Indiana-Kentucky Synod: www.iksynod.org

Haiti: ELCA's Response

ELCA World Hunger stands with our neighbors in Haiti in the aftermath of a 7.0 magnitude earthquake that rocked Haiti on January 12, 2010. It primarily impacted its capital of Port-au-Prince and its nearly 2 million residents. Over 3 million people have been affected.

The ELCA World Hunger has been on the ground in Haiti for many years by providing millions of dollars and supporting many programs through local work of The Lutheran World Federation (LWF). It's because of this work on the ground and relationships with other organizations like Lutheran World Relief (LWR) and Church World Service (CWS) that ELCA World Hunger is able to take your gifts and translate them quickly into relief efforts. Our partnering with these organizations have already provided food, clothing, medical supplies, blankets, tents and distribution of water purification systems along with pipes, filters, and pumps.

The ELCA World Hunger/Disaster Relief and its partners "will continue to work with our brothers and sisters there long after the global spotlight is cast elsewhere". Please continue your support & congregational support by giving to the ELCA World Hunger & Disaster Relief, by using World Hunger envelopes at your church or by giving on-line at www.elca.org.

Chile: I-K Synod's & ELCA's Response

The ELCA and very personally the I-K Synod stands with our neighbors in Chile in the aftermath of an 8.8 magnitude earthquake that hit central Chile on February 27, 2010. The epicenter hit about 70 miles NE of Concepcion & 200 miles south of the capital, Santiago. The ELCA Disaster Response is working through 2 historical companions; Evangelical Lutheran Church in Chile (IELCH) and Educacion Popular en Salud (EPES). Both are well equipped for earthquake response.

As part of the ELCA's Companion Synod/Church program, the I-K Synod is in a companion relationship with the IELCH. IELCH has 13 congregations and missions throughout Chile and about 3,000 members. There are 12 pastors serving these congregations & missions. Pastor Gloria Rojas serves as their Presiding Pastor, similar to ELCA Bishop Mark Hanson. Pastora Gloria preached at our 2005 Synod Assembly. We have hosted many visitors from IELCH and have sent delegations from our synod as recently as 2007.

Assistant to the I-K Synod Bishop, Pr. Bill Gafkjen, is working with Pastora Rojas to identify specific ways that our synod can help provide relief to our brothers and sisters in Chile. As he learns more, it will be posted online at www.iksynod.org. Please continue to give!

Prayer for Haiti and Chile: "God our creator, through whose providing care we enjoy all goodness and life, turn our eyes to your mercy in this time of confusion and loss. Comfort those who mourn the loss of loved ones because of these earthquakes; shine your light on those whose only companion is darkness; and teach us all so to number our days that we may apply our hearts to your wisdom; through Jesus Christ our Savior and Lord." Amen

Display...Hunger?

ELCA World Hunger is pleased to offer display kits for use at Synod Assemblies. Our display kit will be available for your use after the I-K Synod Assembly on June 4-6. Please contact the I-K Synod after this date to reserve the display kit for your churches' hunger event. You may get printed materials by ordering them from the ELCA World Hunger office. They will then pay the postage and handling costs when ordered through them. Please place your order at least 3 weeks before your event. Contact darlene.constanza@elca.org or call 800-638-3522 x 2764. The display contents that will be shipped for use at the I-K Synod Assembly will be:

- Two 11"x17" table top pull-up banners
- One large 60"x104" fair trade tablecloth from India
- ELCA World Hunger brochures (1 pkg., 50 count)
- ELCA World Hunger Top 40 Resources catalog (50)
- ELCA Good Gifts catalogs (50)
- ELCA God's Global Barnyard notecards(2pkgs.10 ct.ea.)
- ELCA World Hunger resource packet sample (2 samples)
- LifeLines newsletters (15)
- Coin boxes (1 pkg., 25 coin boxes)
- Taking Root brochures (25)
- Toolkit fliers (15)
- Contact information pads (2 pads, 50 sheets each)
- Giveaways, post-it notepads or other materials (50)

The banners and tablecloth are permanent to the kit. You will need to order materials from Darlene, see the information above.

Diakonia Institute: Hunger & Environmental Justice

This Institute was held in Oviedo, FL on Dec. 4-6, 2009. ELCA World Hunger co-hosted this event with the ELCA Poverty Ministries Networking Program, which is a network of this church of leaders in low income communities throughout the US. Diakonia is a Greek word that means "care or service". In the international Lutheran church, this term is used to describe the work of social ministry. With respect to hunger, diakonia is service that includes charitable work to respond to hunger and extends to respond to the root causes of hunger. This Institute explored the root causes of environmental injustice in low income communities, examined how it impacts hunger and then discerned how we as a church should respond. The following is a list of activities in which you can participate.

1. Hold an hour-long workshop in your congregation using the Hunger & Climate Connections toolkit. (see page one for web site)
2. Encourage members of your congregation to shop for Christmas gifts using the ELCA Good Gifts catalog. www.elca.org/goodgifts
3. Work with your pastor to incorporate environmental themes into a worship service. Many resources were developed for the 2009 Lenten season but can be adapted for any time.
4. Sign-up for e-advocacy and receive email alerts notifying you when your action would help move key legislative efforts. See pg. 1 for the e-advocacy web site.
5. Join the ELCA's World Hunger volunteers' social networking site, called The Table, to keep in touch with both ELCA World Hunger and other volunteers. www.elcaworldhunger.ning.com.
6. Make a gift to ELCA World Hunger so that the Church can continue the important work it does both in the US and around the world to address poverty and end world hunger. You can give through your congregation or at www.elca.org/hunger/donate.

"Bob" Finds a New Home!

The Tour de Rev's triplet "Bob" went to the International Bike Builders Convention & was displayed at the Craig Calfee booth. Craig, who made Bob, was to auction Bob off as seed money to build a Bamboo School Bus to assist in transporting ten children in Ghana to school. Bob's most likely home will be with Larry Black, owner of Mt. Airy Cycles, in MD. Larry is a close associate of Craig's and is passionate about Hunger/Justice issues & also unique bikes. The Revs asked that a contribution of \$7,500 be made as seed money for Craig's vision. "We pray that the work of the TdR's lives on in this unique cause and we pray that children living in poverty will get a chance to be lifted out of poverty as a result of an education made possible by Bob. God bless you in your support of the TdR, The Revs."



New Food Bank Opens

Bethel Lutheran Church combined efforts with many of the food pantries in Hamilton Co. to form a new food bank. The goal of this new venture is to provide food pantries with items when their donations are low. The new food bank conducted school holiday food drives this past fall and was blessed with over 25,000 lbs. of food by 2009 year end. Our goal was 15,000 but God obviously had different plans! This food, which is now being distributed to help out all of the 36 food pantries in our county, was graciously donated by school children and some private businesses in Hamilton Co. Many families and individuals from Bethel Lutheran have already been helped out at our home base, which is at the White River Christian Church Community Center, in Indy. Volunteers help sort and pack food for pantries to distribute. The Bethel Lutheran Church Food & Baby pantry served over 4300 people in 2009 and that number is expected to be 5000 in 2010. Through donations from the food bank and other churches in the area, God has faithfully provided for those he has continued to send to the church. Submitted by Pr. Apel.

"Bread's" Offering of Letters

Are you a Bread for the World member? Have you had an "Offering of Letters" at your congregation? Did you know that Bread for the World is an ELCA partner organization? "Bread" is a movement of Christian citizens founded by Art Simon, a Lutheran pastor in the 1970's. He had the insight that brought together 2 powerful realities. One is that Jesus has told us "I was hungry..." and has charged us to respond. We do that through contributions to ELCA World Hunger, organizing "hunger" events, working in & supporting food banks/pantries, food drives, soup kitchens, and numerous other activities. The second realization was to recognize that we need to use our voices as citizens that live in a democracy. "Bread for the World is a collective Christian voice urging our nation's decision makers to end hunger at home and abroad." Bread both informs and inspires people of faith to communicate with their members of Congress through an "Offering of Letters". "By working together to win passage of bipartisan legislation, we can help change the conditions and policies that allow hunger to persist".

This year, a series of tax cuts enacted in recent years will expire. Bread is asking Congress to protect & strengthen key tax credits that can make a big difference for low-income workers & their families by lifting them "above the poverty line". These tax credits are: Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), and The Child Tax Credit (CTC).

By joining Bread for the World in their 2010 Offering of Letters, you and your congregation can help end hunger by taking just a few minutes to write your representatives & senators in Congress. Please log on to www.bread.org to find out how you can have an Offering of Letters. You may also contact Dave Miner, Indiana's Bread for the World person at dminer145@aol.com, or me, Walda Helvie I-K Synod World Hunger Task Force chair at walda.helvie@insightbb.com.

My congregation, Gloria Dei, in Crestview Hills, KY will have its first "Offering" on May 16. I have also contacted several churches in N KY to encourage them to participate. The past I-K Hunger chair, Pastor Phil Garber, has had Offerings of Letters for many years at St. John Lutheran in Melbourne, KY. If your congregation had or will have an Offering of Letters, please contact me. I would like to know how widespread this is.