

World Food Day 2008: Worship Resources

The Hungry Must be Fed

All of us have noticed the increase in food prices this year. For some, food that was once part of the weekly shopping basket has now become a rare treat while for others there is quite simply not enough to satisfy the family's needs. Pressure on food banks and those providing emergency supplies has increased and there is growing support for a campaign to remove the GST component on food in an effort to enable families to spend more on food. Media reports suggest a renewed interest in growing home gardens as a means to stretch the family budget.

Making different choices about food is a reminder of how much food means to us - as sustenance but also as pleasure. Without food there is no life - quite literally. This year hunger has made headlines and the global food crisis has seen food prices spiraling out of sight for the 967 million people who already do not have enough to eat. The high price of food (it has doubled in the last three years) suggest that there is insufficient food to feed the world but that is not the case. The problem is as always the lack of a just distribution mechanism. Underlying the food crisis are some serious economic issues that if not addressed appropriately, will lead to even more devastating shortages in the future compounded by the far reaching affects of climate change and the growth in agrofuels as an alternative to fossil fuel dependency.

World Food Day is marked by the United Nation's Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) on October 16th, the day of its founding. It is immediately followed on the 17th by the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty. This year the FAO focuses on the effects climate change is having on food supply. The theme is World Food Security: the challenges of Climate Change and Bioenergy. More expensive food and less desirable growing conditions can only increase the pressure on those seeking to guarantee that all people every where have enough to eat. The words of Jesus, "Give us our daily bread", remind us of our responsibility to share what we have so that everyone has the food that they need to live.

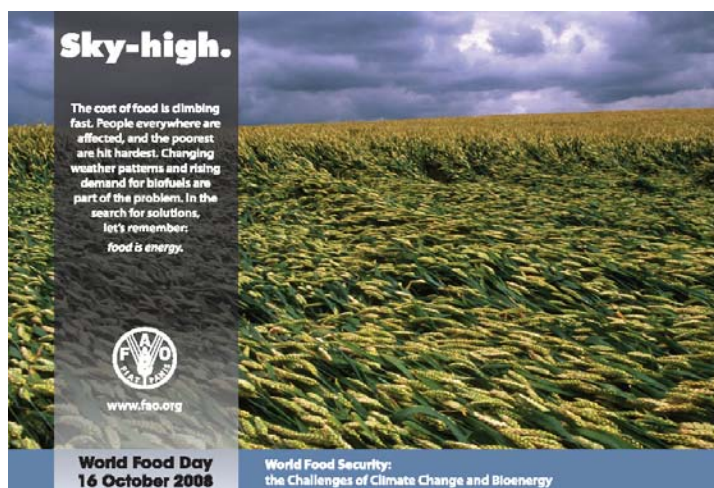
World Food Security: the challenges of Climate Change and Bioenergy

There is no escape from climate change. It is dramatically reshaping our planet in lifechanging ways. In places like Sudan vast areas of arable land have become desert, in Bangladesh rivers keep rising, washing away land and Kiribati will soon be submerged by the Pacific Ocean. The greatest affects of climate change are felt most severely by the poorest people who tend to live in the most marginal places and whose food supply has always been precarious.

Small scale farmers are threatened by changing growing conditions, the cost of inputs, the priority given to large scale industrial farming practices and extreme weather patterns. According to the United Nations Development Programme's 2007/8 Human Development Report, people living in developing countries are 79 times more likely to be hit by a climate-related disaster than those living in rich countries like Aotearoa New Zealand.

At the same time, land that once grew food has been diverted into producing crops like corn, sugar cane or palm oil that can be processed into ethanol. The drive to increase fuel production is often at the expense of food. Land and water that once contributed to local food security is now being requisitioned to provide energy for those dependent on fossil fuels. The rising price of corn (up 31% in the year to March 2008) contributes to a dramatic rise in poverty in countries like the Philippines/Mexico that were once almost self-sufficient in corn and are now heavily dependent on imported corn. Hunger was a problem before the current food crisis but the 47% increase in food prices over the last year has significantly lowered the livelihood of poor people everywhere.

More than anything the current food crisis has affirmed the importance of the approach taken by CWS partners seeking to guarantee that poor people have enough food by promoting improved traditional approaches not based on expensive inputs and addressing the root causes of poverty. The importance of organic home gardens and the development of rainwater harvesting systems have enhanced the livelihood of many people who would not survive if they were dependent solely on the market for sustenance. Enabling people to feed themselves and using their collective strength to demand changes in the global economic system are two ways of helping to ensure that those who are hungry will be fed.



“They cried to the Lord, and he answered them.” Psalm 99:6c”

Call to Worship

Loving God
Creator and Sustainer of Life
We come together
In praise and thanksgiving
For the earth on which we live
A world where seeds grow and bring forth fruit
Where people share their joys and sorrows
Where there is always the possibility of new hope.

You have written life into the very fabric of creation -
Painted with the blue of the sky and the water, the brown of
the soil, the green of the trees and the red of the blood that
flows through our veins.

**Help us to find light in the darkness, compassion in the
selfishness and strength for those who struggle for the
food they need.
Amen**

Prayer of Approach

Symbol: Earth with Seeds

God of Life
Your creation is precious
Yet we have treated it with contempt -
We have polluted the airways
We have damaged the land and the waterways
We have held on to more than our fair share of resources.

Forgive us for our selfishness

You have given each person life and dignity
Yet we have allowed violence and injustice to prevail.
We could have done more to help those who are hungry
and in need
But we have been too preoccupied with our own comfort
and concerns.

Forgive us for our selfishness

You have given us a community
Yet we have not always believed
Enough to show concern when others are hurting or
Spoken out when your world has been raped and abused.

Forgive us for our selfishness.

Loving God
We know that your will is for justice and your heart is filled
with compassion
Awaken us to what is happening,
Encourage us into action even when what we have to do is
costly
And bind us together as we seek the healing of ourselves
and of the world.
Amen

Children's talk

You will need a pot for each child, a seed or two for each
child, a small watering can filled with water, a large bucket
of potting mix and a coin.

Invite them to look at what you have in front of you. Ask
them what is the odd one out? (Hopefully they choose the
coin). Then ask them what you might use all the other
things for. Now show the picture accompanying this
resource and talk about the importance of seed for
vulnerable people who have been forced from their homes
by fighting like this woman from Darfur.



Displaced woman near Bilel, Darfur ACT/Paul Jeffrey



*I saw a child today, Lord, who will not die
tonight, hurried into hunger's grave. She was
bright and full of life because her parents have a
job and feed her, but somewhere, everywhere,
10,000 life-lamps will go out, and not be lit again
tomorrow.*

Lord, teach us the way.

Amen

*Prayer of an African Christian from
With All God's People, WCC*

Bible readings

Exodus 33:12-23

After the incident with the Golden Calf, Moses interceded with Yahweh on behalf of Israel, saving them from annihilation. Yahweh sent the Hebrew people into the wilderness of Sinai, promising to 'drive out' those who live there already (v 2) promising them a land of milk and honey (v 3). Yahweh accused them of being a 'stiff-necked people' (v3) which understandably upset them.

The section read today came from this intimate dialogue between Yahweh and his friend Moses (v 11). Moses is the only person in the Bible to whom God said, "I know you by name" in v 12. In the spirit of friendship Moses began by asking for understanding and knowledge (v 12-13). Moses argued not for himself but for all the people - he did not see himself as separate from them. God promised to accompany the people (v 14) and Moses unsure of the future sought Yahweh's assurance (v16) and asked to see God's glory (v18). Yahweh showed that he was no longer angry with the people, declaring that he would be gracious and show mercy (v 19). However God did not allow Moses to see Yahweh's glory - only his back (v23). Yahweh cannot be seen directly (20), rather we must rely on seeing what God has created and the difference Yahweh's presence makes.

Psalm 99

This is a hymn of praise and was used in the temple to remind people that God's presence is universal (v 2), that God loves justice (v 4) and that God is consistent, both offering forgiveness and avenging wrongdoing (v 8). There is no differentiation between rich and poor or powerful and powerless. God is the king and the people shall tremble! (v 1)

I Thessalonians 1:1-10

The letter to the Thessalonians was written by Paul, Silvanus (known as Silas in Acts) and Timothy and is the oldest book in the New Testament. The early church in Thessalonica faced intense Jewish opposition (Acts 17:1-10). Most of the converts were not Jewish. The letter is warm and pastoral, addressing them as brothers and sisters (v 4) in the same way that one would have addressed members of one's family in first century Mediterranean communities. The early Christian communities lived different lives from those around them (using idols - v 9) and suffered persecution and distress (v 6) because of this allegiance. Faith, hope and love, the hallmarks of the Jesus movement are first mentioned in v 3. They believed in "a living and true God" (v 9).



Matthew 22:15-22

In the ancient world the patterns of living were much simpler - some things belonged to the world of kinship while others of politics. Much of what we consider as economics was based in the family or kinship structure. This domestic economy was largely outside the political economy which controlled the movement and distribution of goods. Religion was not separate; rather it provided the overarching meaning. The Temple was part of the political institution and so therefore it is important to read the text differently than has been traditional. There was no separation between the political and religious institutions of Jesus' time.

Note that Jesus engaged with both Pharisees and Herodians (v 16). Jesus asked for a coin (v 19) is the one used for tax, a Roman denarius. On it was an image of Caesar and the words, "Tiberius Caesar, Augustus, son of divine Augustus". Effectively probably it was the Herodians who produced an unholy Roman coin, setting them at odds with the Pharisees who would want to have avoided contact with such an idolatrous object. Jesus emphasized the importance of paying God what is due to God (v 21) which would explain why his audience marveled at his answer (v 22). As usual Jesus is not caught out; rather he offered a different way of living. He appeared to support the state but the political implications of his life and teachings based on love and compassion ultimately proved too revolutionary. Hence his crucifixion by the Romans.

Take Action

- Using a bowl of seeds as a focal point, ask people to share something that they can do to make sure more people have food. You might support the Darfur Appeal to enable ACT International (Action by Church Together) and Caritas to meet the most basic needs of those people uprooted by the continuing conflict in the Sudan.
- Grow your own food. Many CWS partners have made helping people meet their basic needs for food a high priority through the establishment of home gardens.
- Advocate for the rebuilding of the global food system so that nations and communities have the right mix of policies and capacity to feed everyone.
- Commit to taking positive actions to slow climate change. CWS will be launching a climate change early next year but in the mean time there are many personal examples from walking more and using the car less to doing an energy audit of your home or church.

Intercessory Prayer

Sometimes God we are overwhelmed by the magnitude of need:

Children dying because there is no food,

Sick people without hope because there are no medicines

Families who struggle to survive amidst the violence of war.

This is not the world as you want it and so we pray for your mercy.

We pray for healing and hope.

Daily we hear reports of financial crisis: banks threatened with collapse, sharemarkets falling and more people out of work. It becomes easy to forget about the people in places like Darfur, Sudan, longing for peace or Zimbabwe where money is in very short supply. We pray for those caught up in the strife, facing ruin because of the financial markets and those who may not survive the night because of the lack of food.

This is not the world as you want it and so we pray for your mercy.

We pray for healing and hope.

Sometimes God it is hard to see beyond our own immediate needs

We struggle to cope with the challenges we can see: the people who we know need special care and concern, and the daily necessity to make ends meet. There are so many people who need a special touch from you. There are others who need the hope that can be found together, when we all work to make the world more compassionate and caring. A world where people's voices are heard, their longings met and everyone has more than the food they need.

This is not the world as you want it and so we pray for your mercy.

We pray for healing and hope.

In Jesus' name we pray for the redemption of the world from greed and indifference.

Amen

Benediction

God of Life

We give thanks for this time together

May your spirit empower us to turn our hope into action

So that the hungry may be fed

The homeless may find shelter

And those who are in need of comfort your love

We go in your name seeking the sustenance of the whole of creation

Amen.



Food facts

- 967 million people do not have enough to eat.
- High prices threaten to increase malnutrition, an underlying cause of death in over 3.5 million children a year.
- Wheat prices are up 120%.
- Rice prices are up 75%.
Poor families spend up to 80% of their budget on food.
- Prices are expected to stay high through 2015.
- 21 of 36 countries facing food insecurity are in sub-Saharan Africa. The region imports 45% of its rice and 84% of its rice.
- A 2 kg bag of rice now costs half the daily income of a poor Bangladeshi family.
- In Indonesia a 10% increase in rice prices means more than 2 million people will live in poverty. Weather related shocks and conflict make the situation worse in many of the world's poorest countries.
- (<http://www.worldbank.org/html/extdr/foodprices/>)

Definitions

The FAO states that *food security* exists when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life.

Food Sovereignty is the democratic right and power of all countries and communities to determine the production, distribution and consumption of food, according to their own preferences and cultural traditions.

Further information:

Food and Agriculture Organisation

www.fao.org/

World Food Day resource including images:

<http://www.fao.org/getinvolved/worldfoodday/en/>

Institute for Food and Development Policy:

www.foodfirst.org

CWS on Darfur: <http://www.cws.org.nz/what-can-i-do/emergencies/darfur-crisis>

Borrow documentaries: *The Global Banquet* (on the food system) *Water Who Owns it?* (on Sri Lanka) or *Lauru our Land* (on the Solomon Islands) from CWS .

Invite a CWS person to speak to your group about the work that partners are doing to meet the current challenge.

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