

The

Food Policy

Working Group

History of Commitment and Involvement of the Religious Community in Ending Hunger

1960-2003

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HISTORY OF COMMITMENT AND INVOLVEMENT OF THE RELIGIOUS COMMUNITY IN ENDING HUNGER

1960-2003

During the **War on Poverty**, the religious community came together to support legislation which led to the creation of the Food Stamp Program, the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), other child nutrition programs, and feeding programs for the homeless. During the early years of the Food Research and Action Center (FRAC), the National Council of Churches and other religious bodies often signed on to litigation intended to enforce federal nutrition program policy, and require the implementation of the programs in non-discriminatory ways and for the greatest possible number of people. For example, a lawsuit filed during this period resulted in millions of dollars being released from the federal treasury to fund the WIC and elderly nutrition programs.

The **Washington Interreligious Staff Council** (WISC) was formed in **1968** by Washington representatives of the Catholic, Protestant and Jewish community. Antipoverty and anti-hunger legislative policy constituted the main part of its activity. Eventually, WISC created a **World Hunger Task Force** to educate members of Congress and the Administration upon the need to increase government funding for anti-hunger programs in famine-ravaged Africa. By 1973, this issue had become a high priority for many major religious groups. Several denominations conducted fund-raising appeals nationwide and made funds available to their Washington Offices for anti-hunger education through advocacy.

In **1974** the Washington and denominational headquarters offices joined together to create the **Interreligious Task Force on U.S. Food Policy**. It had a staff, office, and budget separate from WISC, and had its own Board of Directors, chaired by George A. Chauncey, Presbyterian Church in the USA. Initially, the Task Force focused on development assistance abroad. **Domestic hunger concerns** continued to be addressed by the **WISC Task Force on Health and Human Services**.

The Food Policy Task Force and the Health and Human Service Task Force merged in **1983** to form **Interfaith Action for Economic Justice**, which was funded by denominational contributions. Interfaith Action for Economic Justice conducted its advocacy through direct lobbying with Congress and through grassroots lobbying. To activate the grassroots, this group utilized the services of **IMPACT**, an interreligious organization that grew out of WISC in **1968** to provide mailings of action alerts and background papers on public policy issues of interest to the religious community. **IMPACT** had a nationwide mailing network composed of activists recruited from the religious groups that funded it. One of its largest networks was the one devoted to hunger issues.

IMPACT also had an annual legislative briefing for about 300 grassroots activists from all over the nation. For four days each spring they gathered in Washington to be briefed by issue experts, do grassroots networking, and educate members of Congress on issues of concern to the group. Hunger issues were always featured prominently on the agenda.

About **1990**, the Interreligious Task Force on U.S. Food Policy and IMPACT merged into a single organization called **Interfaith IMPACT for Justice and Peace**. Although the agenda was broader than that of Interfaith Impact, most of the issues, apart from hunger, did not receive additional denominational funding.

By the mid 1990s, denominational funding had decreased significantly, and Interfaith IMPACT was closed down, with all staff being terminated, and the issues turned back to WISC task forces for future work. The WISC community continued to conduct Interfaith IMPACT annual Briefings through the spring of 1998, through the generosity of the Graymoor Ecumenical Institute, which provided a person to staff the Briefings, with help from a committee drawn from the WISC community.

The domestic anti-hunger advocacy education work of the religious community in Washington has been conducted by the Food Policy Working Group since the early 1990s. The balance of the domestic anti-poverty agenda is handled by the Interreligious Working Group on Domestic Human Needs.

FOOD POLICY WORKING GROUP

In 1996 **The Food Policy Working Group** developed a statement of principles for the common work of the group. The statement of principles appears below as well as the list of thirty-five endorsing organizations.

Statement of Principles for the Common Work of the Food Policy Working Group:

The Food Policy Working Group is a coalition of religious and other anti-hunger advocacy organizations concerned with the development of a comprehensive food policy to end hunger in the United States.

We share the following understandings:

- The right to food is a basic human right; therefore, every human being ought to be entitled by law to have access to a nutritionally adequate diet.
- As individual human beings, we have a responsibility to do what we can to feed ourselves and our families; as part of an interdependent community, we have a responsibility to prevent and/or alleviate the hunger of our neighbors.
- The federal government has an obligation to ensure that all people have access to an adequate diet.
- Religious organizations and the non-profit sector will continue to play an important role by helping to meet the nutritional needs of hungry people. However, these providers have neither the resources nor the sole responsibility to satisfy all those needs. Such organizations also have a duty to be advocates for hungry people.

Therefore, we believe that a U.S. government food policy should:

- Determine national standards, compatible with religious dietary laws, and support programs that achieve nutritional security for all U.S. residents. U.S. government policy should pay particular attention to the more vulnerable populations of children, the elderly and low-income people.
- Provide sufficient funding for current, proven programs and new initiatives to provide a nutritionally adequate diet for hungry people.
- Support programs that build community efforts to move beyond the need for emergency assistance by ensuring access for all residents to a culturally acceptable, nutritionally adequate diet at all times.

Endorsed by:

American Ethical Union, Washington Ethical Action Office
American Friends Service Committee
America=s Second Harvest
Association of Farm Worker Opportunity
Bread for the World
Catholic Charities, USA
Center for Poverty Solutions
Christian Children=s Fund
Church of the Brethren, Washington Office
Church Women United
Coalition on Human Needs
Congressional Hunger Center
Episcopal Church, Office of Government Relations
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Office for Governmental Affairs
Feed the Children
Food Research and Action Center
Jesuit Conference U.S.A., Office of Social Ministries
Jewish Council for Public Affairs
Lutheran Services in America
Maryknoll Society Justice and Peace Office
Mennonite Central Committee, U.S.
National Council of Churches
National Ministries, American Baptist Churches USA
NETWORK: A National Catholic Social Justice Lobby
Presbyterian Church (USA) Washington Office
RESULTS
The Capital Area Community Food Bank
The United Methodist Church - General Board of Church and Society
Union of American Hebrew Congregations

Unitarian Universalist Service Committee
United Church of Christ - Hunger Action
United Church of Christ Office for Church in Society
United Jewish Communities
United States Catholic Conference
Volunteers of America

Members of the **Food Policy Working Group** work together to:

1. Develop information packets on food and nutrition policy,
2. Hold policy briefings for Congressional staff, and
3. Educate individual nutrition and budget policy staff in Congress and the Administration on current hunger issues and needed improvements to current policy.
 - The Food Policy Working Group’s educational efforts were instrumental in the restoration of food stamps to legal immigrants.
 - The Food Policy Working Group’s organizational efforts resulted in important meetings on Child Nutrition Reauthorization with staff from the White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives, the Domestic Policy Council, the Office of Management and Budget, and the Under Secretary for Food, Nutrition, and Consumer Service at USDA.

Each organization individually sends education materials and “Calls to Action” to their individual constituencies. Many of the members of the faith community who participate in the Food Policy Working Group also support Bread for the World, through financial contributions as well as encouraging their members and congregations to join “Bread” and participate in their “Offering of Letters”.

The Food Policy Working Group is chaired by staff of the Lutheran Office for Governmental Affairs of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

BREAD FOR THE WORLD

Bread for the World (BFW) is an important partner in the anti-hunger movement within the religious community. BFW has endorsed the Food Policy Working Group’s statement of principles, and collaborates with denominational Washington based staff on direct advocacy and policy work through the Food Policy Working Group. A staff person from Bread for the World currently serves as vice-chair of the coalition.

In October of 1972, a small group of Catholics and Protestants met to discuss how persons of faith might be mobilized to influence U.S. policies that address the causes of hunger. Under the leadership of the Reverend Arthur Simon, the group began to test the idea in the spring of 1974.

By year's end, more than 500 people had joined Bread for the World as citizen advocates for hungry people.

After 30 years of seeking justice as a Christian voice for ending hunger, BFW has a membership of 50,000 people of faith, including 2,500 congregations. BFW members help hungry people by educating our nation's decision makers on legislation that addresses hunger in the United States and around the world. BFW is supported by more than 45 denominations and church agencies – Roman Catholic, mainline Protestant, Evangelical, Pentecostal and Orthodox.

BFW members are organized by congressional district into local networks nationwide. These members write, call, and visit members of Congress and the President, and generate media attention about national legislation and other efforts to address hunger. BFW staff keep members up-to-date on hunger-related issues and pending decisions.

Individual BFW members may volunteer in social ministry efforts and give donations to their church's hunger appeals, but they know that a single decision by Congress or the president can outweigh or multiply any of these efforts.

Every year tens of thousands of BFW members and others acting out of faith, offer letters during worship which they have written to members of Congress on legislation that is important to hungry people. Many people of other faiths also join in this high-impact work. Such Offerings of Letters have proven to be very effective.

Bread for the World Institute, a partner organization of BFW, carries out research and education on hunger. Its annual hunger report strengthens the anti-hunger movement through analysis on the causes and solution of hunger.

Many national religious bodies have established special hunger programs to work on the eradication of hunger in the United States and the rest of the world. These programs contain components of direct service, development, advocacy, and education.

EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA

The **Evangelical Lutheran Church in America** (ELCA) a 1988 merger of three Lutheran church bodies, continues a World Hunger Appeal that began in 1974 by its predecessor church bodies. The ELCA established such a program because: 1) the Holy Spirit calls us to share in God's continuing care for all people and for the entire creation; 2) God asks us to love our neighbors as Christ loves us; and 3) God places us in a global neighborhood, with neighbors near and far who suffer hunger and oppression. In 2003 the World Hunger Appeal distributed \$16 million – 7.2 percent for administration, 10 percent for education and advocacy, 11.2 percent for domestic development and relief, and 71.6 percent for international development and relief.

Domestic development grants were provided to organizations that increased access to food and sustainable livelihood through means such as sustainable agriculture, appropriate technology, adequate housing, jobs, primary health care and disease prevention, job training, child care, elder

care, nutrition education, literacy training, sanitation, safe water supplies, below-market loans, and just land use and distribution.

Domestic relief grants were given to organizations that provided immediate access to food, shelter, clothing, medical supplies and care, and the means to deliver and sustain these (transport, storage, supplies, etc.) so that the basic needs of people could be met.

Domestic organizing grants were provided for community organizing which brings together men and women with common values, complementary interest, and shared concerns to build and maintain an environment that empowers all persons to obtain justice, affirm their dignity, and gain access to the goods of the earth (where possible these activities are congregation-based and help to overcome the irresponsible use of power in economic, social, and political arenas through a process that demonstrates a deep respect for the rule of law and democratic principles).

An organization does not have to be affiliated with the ELCA to receive a grant nor do they have to be faith-based.

Hunger funds are also used to fund Advocacy Sustaining Grants provided to such organizations as the Food Research and Action Center, the Coalition on Human Needs, Bread for the World, and the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities.

Internationally the ELCA works with Lutheran World Relief, the Lutheran World Federation, Church World Service, the World Council of Churches, and several other ecumenical agencies and companion churches and institutions.

The ELCA also responds immediately to disasters that occur across the nation through Domestic Disaster Response. The disaster may be weather caused such as a hurricane or tornado, or human-caused such as a school shooting or gas explosion. The responses to urgent needs be they spiritual or physical most often come through congregations and social ministry organizations in the community, but Lutheran Disaster Response also cooperates with other secular and ecumenical partners. Frequently Lutheran Disaster Response, a partnership between the ELCA and the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod, provides desperately needed material and supplies such as food, medicine, and drinking water. Sometimes in a large disaster, LDR might rent a warehouse to receive supplies and lease trucks to distribute them as well as coordinate volunteers.

Domestically the ELCA works closely with Bread for the World, the Food Policy Working Group, and other organizations with common goals. The public policy office of the ELCA – Lutheran Office for Governmental Affairs – is a leader within the anti-hunger advocacy community in Washington, DC where staff serves as chair of the Food Policy Working Group. The ELCA World Hunger Program funds this office for anti-hunger advocacy work as well as many state public policy offices for their work on developing and supporting policy that would reduce and eliminate hunger.

In addition to the anti-hunger work done through the World Hunger Appeal, individual ELCA congregations run food pantries and soup kitchens, provide volunteers to the local food bank and

Meals on Wheels programs, join other faith groups in operating a food pantry, participate in food collections for the hungry, join with other faith groups in “Souper Bowl Sunday” activities, conduct hunger retreats for youth, and provide information on how to access the Food Stamp Program when individuals come to their food pantries for assistance.

The ELCA as well as others from the faith community also access the various child nutrition programs as well as The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP), Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP), and the Emergency Food and Shelter Program to assist with their provision of food and services. Faith-based child care centers in low-income communities participate in the Child and Adult Care Food Program as do family shelters, congregations running summer activities programs in low-income areas may participate in the Summer Food Service Program, WIC may be housed in churches or synagogues with space available, and parochial schools participate in the School Breakfast and School Lunch Programs.

Marilyn Stalheim directs the Westwood Lutheran Early Childhood Center in St. Louis Park, MN. Ms Stalheim cares for about 70 children everyday at her center, where she is able to serve breakfast, lunch and an afternoon snack to the children because of the **Child and Adult Care Food Program**. Although the paperwork requirements are high, there are benefits to having the reimbursement. It allows them to offer nutritious meals to all enrollees, and helps the center to maintain the highest possible quality experience. These benefits are offered to all the families with the deep appreciation that no parent has to make impossible choices about nutrition for their child. Without the reimbursement for meals, the center would be compelled to reduce the enrollment of the neediest families in the community.

Ms. Stalheim remembers a young woman who had two children enrolled in the child care center a few years ago. As a single mother, she was struggling to gain a college degree and thereby improve her family’s life. The food program and scholarship assistance were critical factors to her success. Years later, Marilyn received a letter from this woman telling her about her graduation from college and that she was now gainfully employed. The young mother went on to comment on the importance of a program which offered breakfast, snacks and a hot lunch. Her thank you included a \$1,000 check which she wished to have used to support another young parent, who could only accomplish this radical change in her family’s fortune if given assistance.

LUTHERAN SERVICES IN AMERICA

Lutheran Services in America (LSA) members provide services to over 6 million people in 3,000 communities with combined budgets of \$8.2 billion. LSA is an alliance of national Lutheran church bodies and their nearly 300 health and human service organizations in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and the Caribbean. Through the dedicated work of over a quarter of a million staff and volunteers, the network of health and human service organizations serves the elderly, children and families, people with disabilities, refugees, victims of natural disasters, and others in great need.

Forty LSA health and human service organizations provide short-term food assistance. In 2000-2001, these organizations received a total of \$4.8 million from the U.S. Department of

Agriculture for the Child and Adult Care Food Program and The Emergency Food Assistance Program.

In 2000-2001, more than 5.2 million meals were served to over 277,000 clients in soup kitchens, congregate dining facilities, and meals-on-wheels programs. Lutheran Services in America service organizations also sponsor food-related programs ranging from summer meal programs for children to urban community garden projects.

An additional 125 million meals are served annually to the 113,714 people living in Lutheran sponsored 24-hour residential programs.

THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH

The **Roman Catholic Church** is active in anti-hunger work. **Catholic Charities USA** agencies around the country run food banks, soup kitchens, deliver meals to shut-ins, and provide other emergency food services, serving people of all faiths, races, ethnic backgrounds, etc. In 2000 (most recent year for which there is aggregate data), Catholic Charities agencies provided food services to 3,929,387 people - both prepared food and food distribution services. Agencies that run adult and child day care programs may participate in federal food programs. Some agencies are sponsors for federal food programs such as CACFP.

The **US Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB)** supports and promotes Bread for the World's annual Offering of Letters. Catholics are a major part of BFW's constituency. USCCB plays a large role in the annual "Souper Bowl of Caring" timed to coincide with the football Super Bowl. Souper Bowl participants are young people in church groups who organize service projects at and collect money on Super Bowl Sunday for food banks, soup kitchens, and other charities.

USCCB and CCUSA advocate in Washington DC for hunger-related food programs-both to ensure funding and to improve the programs, and are active participants in the Food Policy Working Group. Dioceses and parishes also get involved in federal, state and local advocacy on hunger issues.

Other Catholic organization like **St. Vincent De Paul**, a parish-based charity visits low-income families and helps connect them with food, furniture, clothing, and sometimes refers them to other social service agencies. They may also run shelters and stores similar to the Salvation Army or Goodwill.

The **Catholic Campaign for Human Development (CCHD)** helps people to overcome hopelessness, renew spirit and build a sense of community through its support of community-based projects that work together to break the bonds of poverty. Through neighborhood empowerment and economic development projects, CCHD fights poverty and promotes self-sufficiency. CCHD gets its support from Catholic parishioners whose financial gifts become the tools of self-reliance, self-sufficiency, and self-determination for people who are motivated to break out of the cycle of poverty.

Catholic Relief Services was founded in 1943 by the Catholic Bishops of the United States to assist the poor and disadvantaged outside the country. Food aid programs are among CRS' many activities. As part of its Emergency Response efforts, CRS provides food for the general population and malnourished individuals when people's normal ability to access food is disrupted by disaster. Maintaining sufficient nutritional status is especially important during the acute stage of an emergency when people have little or no access to food. CRS' food aid programs address immediate food security needs while promoting activities that support sustainable livelihood. Over time, the agency's relief and development projects have moved beyond simply distributing food to supporting individuals' capacity to meet their own food needs. CRS' food security programming objectives aim to ensure that people can access the food they need to live healthy, productive lives today and in the future.

UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

The **United Church of Christ (UCC)** has long been involved in anti-hunger work at the national and local levels. At the national level, Justice and Witness Ministries, one of the four covenanted ministries that make up the national church, has primary responsibility for both programmatic and advocacy activities. On the programmatic side, local congregations are encouraged to participate in anti-hunger activities. Through the Neighbors in Need offering, one of the four major offerings gathered from all congregations, funds are made available to local churches, and their partners for hunger advocacy and related activities. Money is also raised through the One Great Hour of Sharing national offering. Some of these funds are directed to international hunger relief.

In a survey conducted of all 6000 congregations of the UCC in 2002, 62 percent reported participating in some aspect of hunger relief activities. The report found that 58 percent provided financial support for some hunger relief activity, 17 percent provided space for a hunger relief activity such as a soup kitchen or food pantry, 44 percent had members who volunteered in hunger relief activities, and 43 percent engaged in hunger relief activity with a secular or another religious partner. Over 3000 UCC members are part of the hunger cluster of the Justice and Peace Action Network of the UCC and share in legislative advocacy and related activities on hunger concerns.

The great majority of legislative advocacy concerning hunger is done in partnership with the Food Policy Working Group, Bread for the World, and with the Coalition on Human Needs. The national UCC views hunger as one of the several results of poverty and addresses the issues of poverty in numerous and diverse ways.

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (U.S.A.)

Combating hunger has been a priority of the **Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)** – PC(USA) since 1969. Although the original focus of the Presbyterian Hunger Program was famine conditions in Africa, domestic hunger soon became a programmatic emphasis as well. Throughout the seventies, the program focused on pockets of poverty and hunger in the U.S., including Appalachia, the rural Southeast, Native American populations, and urban neighborhoods. As the effects of the “trickle down” structural adjustment policies of the Reagan administration began to

be felt in the 1980's, the program began to respond to growing hunger all across America. The decade's ten-fold growth in food pantries and soup kitchens brought PC(USA) congregations into the front lines of hunger ministry. By the mid-1990s, over 95% of PC(USA) congregations were reporting that they either managed or supported year-round food distribution programs in their community. This is a higher percentage than those reporting having Sunday Schools, making hunger ministry one of the most universal marks of PC(USA) congregations. The denomination's 11,000 congregations annually contribute over \$25,000,000 to hunger programs plus untold numbers of non-perishable food items and volunteer hours.

At the national level, the Presbyterian Hunger Program focuses one half of its four million dollar budget on domestic activities. This includes significant grant support for direct food distribution projects, homelessness ministry, promotion of community food security, efforts directed at family self-sufficiency, sustainable agriculture, and public policy advocacy. Nationally staff located in Washington, DC work with the Food Policy Working Group to educate members of Congress and the Administration and their staff about the problem of hunger and various possibilities for its cure. In addition the Presbyterian Hunger Program supports a network of over 100 Hunger Action Enablers, who work within their region to promote education, advocacy, and effect community hunger ministries. The development and distribution of programs and resources focused on hunger education and lifestyle integrity round out the program's domestic focus.

The Presbyterian Hunger Program identifies its mission as "working to alleviate hunger and eliminate its causes." It recognizes the importance of an immediate response to hunger, but emphasizes efforts to change the structures that perpetuate the problem. It divides its work into five program areas: direct food relief, development assistance, hunger education, public policy advocacy, and lifestyle integrity.

VOLUNTEERS OF AMERICA

Volunteers of America (VOA) was founded in 1896 with a mission to: "go wherever needed and do whatever comes to hand." During the Great Depression VOA ran soup kitchens and "Penny Pantries" where every item cost a penny. During the world wars VOA operated canteens, ran lodges, and provided Sunday breakfasts for soldiers on leave.

Currently in the United States VOA participates in the Meals on Wheels program for the elderly, runs emergency shelters where both lodging and meals are provided, operates food banks, and distributes Thanksgiving and Christmas baskets to low-income families, elderly people, and persons with disabilities. VOA provides meals with many of their programs from Head Start and charter schools for families who are homeless and living in their shelters to elderly people and persons with disabilities who are in their day care programs and nursing homes.

Volunteers of America has been a strong advocacy organization. They have advocated for: increased funding for the Emergency Food and Shelter Program (EFSP), repeal of the ban on food stamps for legal immigrants and for individuals convicted of a drug felony, transitional food stamp benefits for families leaving TANF, and expansions to the child nutrition programs including the expansion of the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) homeless shelter

provision to allow children up to age 18 to be served reimbursable meals, and the expansion of the Lugar pilots in the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) nationwide and to all nonprofits. VOA works closely with the Food Policy Working Group in their advocacy efforts.

Volunteers of America also works overseas. For example in Guatemala they run a “Hands for Peacemaking” project which teaches people sustainable farming practices.

MENNONITE CENTRAL COMMITTEE

In 2002, the **Mennonite Central Committee (MCC)** provided 16,000 metric tons of food valued at \$7.44 million to hungry people around the world. Much of the MCC’s multifaceted anti-hunger work is done overseas. MCC has worked extensively in Afghanistan and Iraq. They work with grassroots partners throughout the world to determine the most effective way to buy and distribute food so that it will not undermine the economies of developing countries.

The MCC works to build food justice, advocating for changes in economic, political, military, and social relations in order to ensure everyone has access to enough food. MCC calls for domestic and global economic justice through its advocacy offices in Washington, Ottawa, and the United Nations.

In addition many MCC constituent churches, both Mennonite and Brethren in Christ, house food banks, soup kitchens, community gardens, or food distribution programs that serve their neighborhoods. MCC works to educate its constituents about hunger, encouraging “living simply, so others may simply live.”

The MCC has several successful projects. For example in their meat-canning project portable canners travel from region to region, constituents donate cows or turkeys, and volunteers come together to can the meat. In FY 2003, MCC distributed 706,000 pounds of canned meat in the U.S. and around the world. Various regions of the MCC have provided food and clothing to Native American communities in South Dakota, collected thousands of bags of groceries from rural churches for the ministries of urban congregations, and supported food banks and community gardening projects in Appalachia.

RELIGIOUS ACTION CENTER OF REFORM JUDAISM

The **Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism**, the Washington office of the **Union for Reform Judaism and the Central Conference of American Rabbis**, representing 1.5 million Reform Jews and 1,800 Reform rabbis in 900 congregations throughout North America, has had a long history of policy education to combat hunger. The Center has been an active member of the Food Policy Working Group for many years. As part of the FPWG it has worked on food stamp legislation and child nutrition program reauthorization and appropriations. As is learned from the interpretation of Psalm 118:17, “When you are asked in the world to come, ‘What was your work?’ and you answer: ‘I fed the hungry,’ you will be told; ‘This is the gate of the Lord, enter into it, you who have fed the hungry.’” (Midrash Psalms 118:17)

In 2002, the Reform Jewish Movement's youth arm, the **North American Federation of Temple Youth (NFTY)** chose "Hunger" as its year-long action theme. NFTY high school students across the country were educated about the prevalence and persistence of hunger. They participated in direct-service projects, and advocated for resources for the hungry. In 1986 NFTY established a partnership with **MAZON: The Jewish Response to Hunger**.

The Religious Action Center has also partnered with MAZON on various projects, most recently its' *Hunger No More: Decisions 2002* pamphlet used to discuss domestic hunger and encourage advocacy work.

Many of the 900 Reform Jewish congregations run programs to feed hungry people or help provide low-income families with other necessities. In many communities Jewish families are paired with local low-income families by a welfare agency during the holiday season or synagogues may run day-long social action programs. For example, congregants at one temple volunteer at a YMCA Christmas dinner serving as many as 1,500 people.

Many congregations also volunteer weekly or monthly to cook and serve a meal in a local soup kitchen. Some congregations have devised systems to give large amounts of food leftover from synagogue events to local homeless shelters.

Congregations and youth groups run many creative programs around ending hunger. A simulation experience called a "Hunger Banquet" which includes an educational piece, has been effective in providing participants from congregations a glimpse into the circumstances of those experiencing hunger. One congregation began a program called the "You CAN Help" Project. Members commit to buying one extra can of food each time they go grocery shopping for a three-month period. Members can extend that commitment. The cans are collected and then delivered to the local food bank. E-mail reminders are sent once a week along with a list of the food bank's "most needed items." In one two-month period in 2003, the congregation donated over 600 cans to the food bank. Congregants from another temple save food coupons. They bring them to the synagogue office where they are donated to an agency that purchases food for the needy. Religious schools and synagogues have planted gardens behind their buildings to raise vegetable and fruit for poor and homeless people. A small congregation in Missouri provides homeless people with food, beverages and clothing at street corners in the downtown area every Sunday.

UNITED JEWISH COMMUNITIES

United Jewish Communities (UJC) is also a leader in anti-hunger work. Each year, during the **Jewish** holiday of Passover, the liturgy teaches: "Let all who are hungry come and eat..." These words are not an annual commandment, but a daily ritual for the Jewish communities across the United States who work and volunteer to serve the hungry in their midst. Today through direct social service and advocacy, the Jewish community has heeded the prophet Isaiah's call to feed the hungry.

At least 50 **Jewish Family Service** agencies, in 25 states and the District of Columbia provide food assistance to those who are hungry and in need of social services in their communities.

Agencies that operate food pantries may also provide case management services to the individuals who access the food on-site. These clients may receive counseling referrals, food stamps, applications for Section 8 housing, WIC assistance or Medicaid information. In addition to food pantries, some agencies provide emergency assistance to individuals that can include food delivery or food coupons or certificates to local grocery stores. Jewish Family Service agencies, Jewish Federations, and synagogues may also run food drives to serve the hungry in their community around the Jewish holidays (most commonly the High Holy Days and Passover). Many Jewish Family Service agencies have found their hunger assistance programs a way to engage volunteers. For example, in Charlotte, NC, volunteers cook meals, which are then frozen and stored at a local synagogue until they can be delivered. Some agencies also participate in the Meals on Wheels program, and because of age or disability, agencies such as Jewish Community Centers serve congregate meals in senior centers providing not only food, but an increased opportunity for companionship for the older adult.

On the policy side, United Jewish Communities (UJC) was a leader in the successful effort to remove the 7-year time restriction on food stamp benefit eligibility for refugees, which had adversely impacted frail elderly and disabled refugees whose infirmities prevented them from naturalizing. UJC also worked to reduce the permanent bar against immigrant food stamp receipt, which had prevented immigrants from receiving public nutritional assistance. UJC has also strongly supported increased spending for the nutritional title of the “Farm Bill” to make access to food stamp assistance easier for the more than 28 million poor people eligible for food stamps. This number includes the more than 70 percent of eligible senior citizens not currently availing themselves of the program. UJC is part of the Food Policy Working Group. UJC serves on the National Board for the Emergency Food and Shelter Program (EFSP), a unique public/private partnership tailored to meet local needs. This program responds to urgent needs without creating dependency by providing emergency services to individuals and families so they can remain self-sufficient. Families are eligible to receive groceries and one utility/rent/mortgage payment a year.

UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Concern for poor persons and the desire to be in ministry with them has been a hallmark of Methodism since its beginnings in the early 1700s in England. John Wesley, the founder of the **Methodist Movement**, believed that every person was called to help others in need – rich and poor alike. Wesley saw that poverty was a social problem, not a problem of character. He concluded that the problems of the poor were in part the result of poor government policy, poor economic management, and various societal problems.

The mission and relief agencies of the **United Methodist Church** have long focused on poverty and hunger elimination as major parts of their work. The United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR) is a key supporter of Church World Service. Its largest public policy grant for many years was to Bread for the World in order to help it promote its network among United Methodist Churches. In the 1960’s the Methodist board of Christian Social Concerns based in Washington, DC lobbied Congress to adopt the legislative provisions related to the “War on Poverty.”

The Methodists concern for hunger exploded as a public policy issue with the severe famines in Sahelian Africa and Bangladesh. By 1976, ending hunger was made a church wide concern and every agency of the church was expected to make hunger a major priority. After 1984, ending hunger was no longer a priority for every agency and “Hunger” funding was given primarily to UMCOR.

Meanwhile the **General Board of Church and Society** continued its work on hunger policy, but from a broader definition which included such things as international development and debt, trade, national health insurance, increasing the minimum wage, justice for farmers, peace in Central America, economic and environmental justice, immigration, and promoting women’s and civil rights.

In 2001 a more traditional definition of hunger was revived. The Board of Church and Society held a denominational hunger summit in May 2002 with the co-partnership of the Potato Project/Society of St. Andrew. This was an effort to link together the many people in the church that do charity work such as that of the Potato Project with the need to do justice and public policy work. The summit devised a work plan for the United Methodist General Board of Church and Society and identified ways that charity groups could work with the board. Expanded work on hunger, to be determined at the 2004 General Conference, is at risk because of a lack of funds.

THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH

The **Episcopal Church, USA** is involved in anti hunger and poverty work through the support and ministries of 100 Episcopal Diocese and more than 7300 parishes in the United States. The Episcopal Church supports a variety of local, diocesan and national efforts to improve nutrition and stem hunger domestically. Information is not available at this time on the exact number of parishes and Episcopal service providers that participate in programs designed to end hunger; however, most known nutritional and hunger programs are supported through a network of 650 Jubilee Centers across the country. These community-based centers are dedicated to improving the lives of poor people through social, economic and community development. By an act of the 1997 General Convention of the Episcopal Church, every parish in the Episcopal Church is challenged to establish at least one direct person-to-person ministry to and with people who are poor.

At the national level, Episcopal Relief and Development (ERD) is a compassionate response to human suffering around the world. For over 60 years, ERD has worked in more than 100 countries providing emergency relief in times of disaster, rebuilding devastated communities after the immediate crisis is over, and supporting long-term solutions to challenging problems. Episcopal Relief and Development is a 501 (c) (3) non-profit which provides disaster relief and helps supply food, water, shelter, and other basic necessities. ERD also provides grants to Jubilee centers, diocese, and communities where hunger and other community needs exist. These grants are used for a multitude of programs. A survey of ERD grants made from 2000-2003 found that \$884,015 was given directly to organizations with ministries that include meals, nutritional education, food pantries, and emergency relief. This does not include additional

efforts made by parishes or diocese to the variety of ministries and organizations that support nutrition or hunger programs.

Staff from the Episcopal Church's Office of Government Relations represents the Episcopal Church before the Administration and Congress through direct advocacy in support of nutrition programs and through activation of their public policy grassroots network. They are part of the Food Policy Working Group.

THE SALVATION ARMY

Hunger issues are big to **The Salvation Army**. With staff and 400,000 volunteers in meeting hunger needs, they provide nearly 70 million meals annually in America. The Salvation Army provides meals, groceries, and snacks, builds food security and the capacity for independence, and advocates both personally and publicly.

In the over 1,000 Salvation Army centers last year, about 10 million people were provided 61 million meals. Groceries and snacks were given to an additional 5 million people. Often in partnership with USDA, meals and snacks are served to young people in after school, weekend, and summer programming. In addition two million meals were delivered to 225,000 homes by 18,000 staff and volunteers. Food is vital to residential service and rehabilitation centers where nutritious meals and snacks accompanied 10 million room nights. Last year 3.5 million meals were also served by 17,000 volunteers from emergency disaster canteens.

Service and civic clubs, churches, youth groups, fraternal organizations, business associations, schools, and municipal departments provide funds and groceries to Salvation Army units. In cooperation with the USDA and national culinary guilds, The Salvation Army receives prepared foods recovered from hotels, caterers, and banquet facilities. Community food banks are also a vital community resource to help them provide meals.

Food is a basic to component to The Salvation Army's comprehensive emergency casework program that provides so many additional services. To complement the provision of basic needs, classes and one-on-one coaching are offered to teach food purchase, preparation, and nutritional skills. Salvation Army units readily involve their constituents in community and state sponsored nutritional programs. Socialization, affirmation, and recreation also accompany youth, adult, and senior congregate food programs.

In Baltimore, The Salvation Army staff, board, and women's auxiliary have developed a new program that responds to increased demand for food, utility, and housing assistance on a revolving basis. "Hand Up" is an eight-week life skills program designed to assist individuals who desire to improve their quality of life. Funding for specialized programs such as this comes from partnerships with the United Way and with city, county, state, and federal programs; e.g., the Emergency Food and Shelter Program. However, active fund-raising by the agency and in-kind partnerships by the local Salvation Army unit account for 85% of the funds necessary to accommodate food programs.

The Salvation Army is active with local, state, and national coalitions that seek to eliminate hunger, raise issues to neighborhood and community prominence, and provide leadership for new legislative contacts.

ENDING HUNGER

As committed as the religious community is to ending hunger, we cannot do it alone. We simply do not have the resources needed to educate policy makers and our constituencies, organize them for action, and provide the emergency services that are needed. Hunger continues to increase and unfortunately there are times when people coming for assistance to our food pantries and soup kitchens are turned away. The business community and the government must step up to the plate and do more.

When the business and faith communities partner, great things can be accomplished. For example New Jersey was ranked 50th in the nation in school breakfasts. The business community in New Jersey began to realize that it was in their interest to have kids fed. If kids received proper nutrition they had less absenteeism and better learning outcomes which translated into less time off for parents and a better educated future workforce. The business community joined together with the non-profit community and faith community to educate policy makers and the community about the importance of school breakfast. Working together they were able to accomplish their goal of a government funded universal school breakfast program in New Jersey which had eluded anti-hunger proponents for some time.

If we have the will, hunger can be eliminated in the United States. The private, public, and non-profit sector must work together to accomplish the goal of adequate nourishment for all the residents of our country.

What Should Be Done?

1. The Food Policy Working Group should be funded and staffed in order for this coalition to be a more effective catalyst for change, and provide the public education needed to effect that change. Such an effort would:

- Better coordinate the various networks within the faith community,
- Identify successful community based programs,
- Share the stories and educate through the media, forums, and briefings, and
- Enable better communication among the various Washington, DC based groups working to end hunger in America.

2. There should be better coordination between successful community-based programs and the federal food assistance programs.

3. Outreach must be improved in all sectors to ensure that persons that qualify for nutrition programs know that they are available, and will choose to participate in them.
4. The food and nutrition programs must be improved and strengthened so that they provide adequate nutrition assistance to those who qualify.
5. The application process for the food and nutrition programs must be simplified so that they can be more easily accessed by organizations and individuals participating in the programs.

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