

Voices to the Capitol



Meditation

February 2015

*And the crowds asked him, "What then should we do?"
In reply Jesus said to them, "Whoever has two coats must share
with anyone who has none; and whoever has food must do
likewise."*

Luke 3:10-11

16 Million Children in the U.S. Now Live in Families on Food Stamps

This was published in a new report recently. This figure has almost doubled since 2007 before the economic crisis began. Over half of the children attending public school qualify for federal programs for free or reduced-price lunches, the highest percentage in at least 50 years (Southern Education Foundation). Giving a few more dollars for the local food pantry or packing more backpacks with food is not enough because it means hungry people in our communities continue to depend on our charitable giving. No person in our rich nation should be food insecure. What changes do we have to work for in the way we organize our lives together? What does God call us to do to ensure that each child, each family, each person has enough to eat?

Working together for peace with justice,
Andrea

Prayer

Be gentle...when you touch bread.
Let it not lie...uncared for, unwanted.
So often...bread is taken for granted.
There is such beauty in bread;
beauty of sun and soil,
beauty of patient toil.
Wind and sun have caressed it.
Christ often blessed it.
Be gentle...when you touch bread.

Discovered next to a loaf of bread, tucked in an alcove at Cartmel Priory, England; Bread for the Preacher, August 2009

Advocacy at Home: Give the 114th Congress a Nudge on Hunger

By Alex Wheelwright

2015 is underway, and with it, Bread for the World's 41st year of action. For the 74 newly elected members of Congress, the start of a new legislative session is a time to get their feet under them and outline their priorities for the upcoming session.

Some of the new lawmakers are already familiar with Bread, while others may be learning about us for the first time. Now would be a good time to ask your member of Congress how they plan to address hunger and introduce them to Bread.



Photo: Joe Moleri / Bread for the World

Bread has an ambitious slate of goals this year, including advocating for child nutrition reauthorization, food-aid reform, the Feed the Future initiative, and immigration reform. We can't make progress on these vital issues without help from Congress, and Congress will not act without a nudge from us. Now is the best time to introduce your Bread group to your member of Congress and let them know

you will be tracking their votes on key hunger issues. Developing a relationship with staffers in your local office is a great place to start.

When Marilyn Robb, Bread's Maine team chairwoman, hand-delivered her first Offering of Letters to the local office last year, the staffer looked startled and asked after the health of previous chairman, Ted Bradbury. When told that Bradbury had stepped down, the local office sent a thank-you note for his years of timely deliveries of hand-written letters and dedicated activism.

You don't need to be a millionaire donor to make an impression with local staff. Showing your face is enough to get Bread on their radar. Information about committee positions is readily available online, and your local Bread organizer is a great resource for preparing for a meeting.

Congress is in position to address hunger issues in 2015. It is up to you to point them in that direction!

Alex Wheelwright is a regional organizer at Bread for the World. He organizes in Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, and Massachusetts.

For information about the situation of children in our two states, go to

- Kansas Action for Children; Topeka, Kansas (www.kac.org) or
- Voices for Children in Nebraska; Omaha, Nebraska (www.voicesforchildren.com)

Participate in the 2015 Offering of Letters <http://www.bread.org/ol/2015/> **Bread for the World is GBGM Advance # 982325**



Well-fed children are healthier, have fewer behavioral problems, and learn more easily. This can translate into getting better jobs and being more productive when they become adults. Photo: Joe Molieri / Bread for the World

Legislative Action

Contact your senators, representatives and the White House by letter, e-mail or phone urging them to renew child nutrition programs.

Sample Letter (Bread for the World 2015 Offering of Letters)

[Date]

Dear Senator _____, or Dear Rep. _____,

As you consider renewing child nutrition programs this year, I urge you make sure children at risk of hunger can get the healthy meals they need to learn and grow.

Specifically, I urge you to protect child nutrition programs from cuts and harmful policy changes and improve children's access to these programs while not cutting other safety-net programs.

Child nutrition programs serve as a lifeline for America's vulnerable children and their families. As your constituent, I urge you to protect and improve child nutrition programs.

Sincerely,

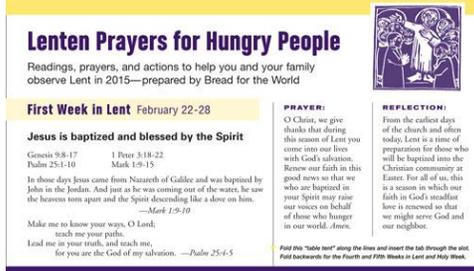
[your name]

[your address] [city, state, ZIP]

Additional Action Steps:

1. **Order Lenten Prayers for Hungry People**
(also available to print out)

<http://www.bread.org/help/church/worship/lent/>



2. **Attend a Legislative Day in Kansas or Nebraska**

Feb. 8-9 in Topeka, KS and Feb. 14 in Lincoln, NE

<http://www.greatplainsumc.org/2015legislativedays>

3. **National Gun Violence Prevention Sabbath**

The Great Plains Mercy & Justice Team is inviting Rev. James Atwood from Heeding God's Call to speak in several locations in Kansas and Nebraska March 15 - 22.

Watch for announcements in GPconnect and attend if possible. Pray for these events.



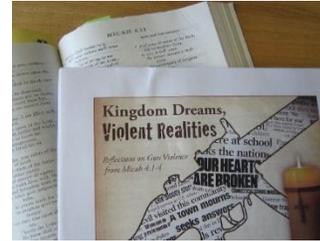
Thank you peace advocates for all you do for peace with justice! Andrea

To read past issues of Voices to the Capitol go to: <http://www.greatplainsumc.org/peacewithjustice>

Voices to the Capitol is a resource with an alternating primary focus on peace/non-violence in one issue and on hunger/food justice in the next. It includes an invitation to use the gift of our voices to speak out on these issues by contacting our representatives and senators in Washington.

Voices to the Capitol is an electronic newsletter published by Peace with Justice Ministries, Great Plains Conference of The United Methodist Church.

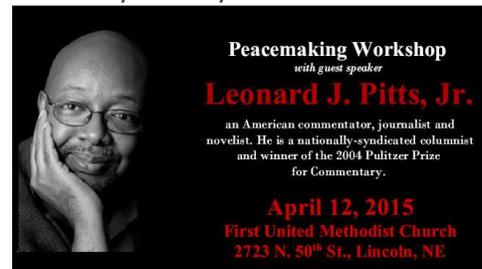
Find a group and get together and work with the 3 session bible study on gun violence from GBCS.



<http://umc-gbcs.org/faith-in-action/kingdom-dreams-violent-realities>

4. **Peacemaking Workshop at First UMC in Lincoln on April 12**

Guest speaker is Leonard J. Pitts, Jr. who will be speaking on Eating (Jim) Crow – Divisions Created by Race and Divisions Created by Poverty



To subscribe/ unsubscribe, contact Andrea Paret, Great Plains Conference Peace with Justice Coordinator, at amparet08@yahoo.com

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To look up addresses of stateside offices, go to:
<http://www.contactingthecongress.org/>