

## Food Security

When I think about food security and our response as Christians to the fact that many people around the world do not have enough food to sustain them, my mind immediately goes to several scriptural passages:

“Is this not the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of injustice, to undo the thongs of the yoke...? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into your house...? If you offer your food to the hungry and satisfy the needs of the afflicted, then your light shall rise in the darkness, and your gloom be like the noonday” (Isaiah 58:6-7, 10).

Jesus said, “I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink.... Just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me” (Matthew 25:34-40).

“What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if you say you have faith but do not have works? Can faith save you? If a brother or sister is naked and lacks daily food, and one of you says to them, ‘Go in peace; keep warm and eat your fill,’ and yet you do not supply their bodily needs, what is the good of that? So faith, by itself, if it has no works, is dead” (James 2:14-17).

“How does God’s love abide in anyone who has the world’s goods and sees a brother or sister in need and yet refuses to help? Little children, let us love, not in words or speech, but in truth and action” (1 John 3:17-18).

These biblical admonitions should challenge those of us who live rather comfortably. And many of us do in fact try

to respond as we can to the hunger needs of people in our own communities and around the world. By contributing to local ministries such as food pantries or to international organizations like Mennonite Central Committee and World Vision that respond to famine in various parts of the world, we demonstrate that we care for our brothers and sisters in need.

Unfortunately, however, genuine and lasting food security consists of more than providing emergency food assistance in times of particular hardship or famine. The fact is that the world produces enough food to feed everyone on the planet; the problems lie in access, distribution, political self-interests, wars and other conflicts. This edition of *Shalom!* highlights some of the ways various organizations address these problems. While food security issues plague many people around the world, the focus of this edition is mostly on Africa, and within Africa, mostly on Zimbabwe. This happened somewhat accidentally but also very appropriately, given that the largest number of Brethren in Christ anywhere in the world live in Zimbabwe. We have the opportunity and the obligation to do what we can to help in whatever ways we can, including influencing public policies that promote the just distribution of food resources around the world.

For some time I have been intrigued with the idea of sponsoring a congregational hunger banquet to raise consciousness about food security issues. Oxfam America, an organization working

to find long-term solutions to poverty, hunger and social injustice, promotes a Fast for a World Harvest, with one activity being a “hunger banquet.” Such an event is an excellent means of demonstrating the unequal distribution of resources in the world. Oxfam provides a free Hunger Banquet Planning Kit, available on their website, which outlines the basic premise of a hunger banquet: “Each guest draws a ticket randomly assigning them to the high-, middle-, or low-income tier and is served a corresponding meal. The 15 percent in the high-income tier are served a sumptuous gourmet meal. The 30 percent in the middle-income section eat a simple meal of rice and beans. The majority 55 percent in the low-income tier waits in line for small portions of rice and water.” The “banquet” is a graphic demonstration of the inequalities in our world and offers a greater understanding of global hunger and poverty. For free materials to plan a hunger banquet, check Oxfam’s website at [www.oxfamamerica.org](http://www.oxfamamerica.org) or call 1-800-597-FAST.

In my congregation, our Missions, Peace and Service Commission is tentatively planning to sponsor a hunger banquet this fall. I’d be glad for other ideas as we try to find ways to match our actions with our faith when it comes to meeting the needs of hungry people. ☺

Harriet S. Bicksler, editor



**Mennonite  
Central  
Committee**

# The Changing Face of World Hunger

By Willie Reimer and Marla Pierson Lester

I cannot forget Mary's plea. One of thousands in a dusty camp of displaced people outside Soroti, Uganda, she along with an estimated 1.2 million others in northern Uganda left her home because of the rebel Lord's Resistance Army and their violent sweeps through villages and countryside.

On a sunny November day, she sat before me on a log, telling me how the rebels came to her village, killing four of her children as she fled with the remaining two. Now, she waits with them in this crowded camp where food is increasingly scarce — all three growing hungrier as rebel forces continue the devastation they've been wreaking for some 18 years.

The fields that she planted are a short walk away. Her crops are ripe and ready to harvest. But the journey is too dangerous.

She said to me, "Please tell the international community what's happening here and ask them to help us." I want to keep that promise — to tell that story, which unfortunately happens in too many places throughout the world and contributes to the changing face of hunger.

When we talk about "food security," we mean that every person should have access to enough nutritious food to live an active, healthy life — access that is denied to many across the globe. And that access requires more than good rains and the tools for a decent harvest. It demands that we petition for more favorable political climates as well.

Politics plays an important role in why Mary and her children are hungry. Uganda, supportive of western policies in the region, has strong connections with the western world. So the Lord's Resistance Army is labeled a terrorist organization, and there is little political pressure from the international community to seriously negotiate an end to the war. The Ugandan government bills this as an internal local problem, despite the 1.2 million displaced people and 20,000 abducted children. Force, seen by the government as the solution, has only increased the atrocities and suffering. The conflict receives little press or public attention. One consequence is that the United Nations World Food Program, a major actor in food distribution, does not have adequate donations to feed the people. Distributions are missed and rations are woefully inadequate.

Unfortunately this lack of political will happens not only in Uganda but in many other areas of the world. MCC Uganda is supporting interreligious leaders' efforts to highlight the plight of the displaced. MCC, through its offices in Ottawa and Washington, is appealing to our governments to take these low profile situations more seriously.

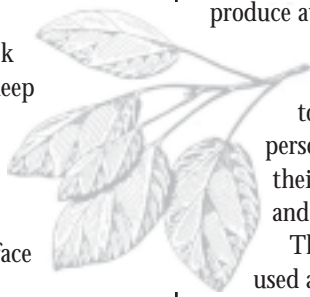
Politics also helps explain why the drought that devastated southern Africa in the last three years continues to mean hunger for millions of people in Zimbabwe. At the height of the famine, 13 million people were at risk in the region and over half of these were in Zimbabwe. Under government policy farmers must sell their produce at controlled prices and thus find it difficult to recoup their costs.

Commodities become scarce or too highly priced for the ordinary person. Most people spend much of their time in line waiting for food and fuel.

The food situation continues to be used as a key political means by the ruling party for ensuring continued political support. In many places in Zimbabwe, supplies of food to opposition areas are restricted, distributions suspended for "unknown reasons" and people who voted for the ruling party are favored. The government has also threatened to control all import and distribution of food but fortunately to date agencies and churches have been able to operate even if under certain restrictions.

Another factor in the changing face of hunger is the high infection rate of HIV/AIDS in many places, including southern Africa. In Africa, where 80 percent of the population depends on small-scale agriculture for livelihood and food, some 7 million agricultural workers have died of AIDS over the last 19 years. Families not only lose the major breadwinner. Their already meager resources are stretched to care for those who are ill. In Zimbabwe, more than one in four adults is infected with HIV. With comparable numbers across southern Africa, the crisis of HIV/AIDS cannot help but compound the effect of other obstacles to food security.

Globalization and trade aren't always friendly to those who are hungry. The backbone of agriculture in Africa, Asia and Latin America is the small-scale farmer.



## SHALOM!

*Shalom! A Journal for the Practice of Reconciliation* is a quarterly publication of the Brethren in Christ Church. Its mission is to educate and stimulate Christ-like responses to the needs of society by providing biblical, theological, sociological, denominational and personal perspectives on a variety of contemporary issues.

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With a glut in world agriculture markets and with trade liberalization, the small farmer has been asked to compete against cheap imports, many of which are heavily subsidized. In Kenya a few years ago one could buy apples imported all the way from Canada more cheaply than one could buy local apples. Kenyan orchards were laying off workers as a result. Unemployment meant more hunger. Trade and globalization have made products and food available in more places around the globe, but access to that food for those who are hungry is a major concern. A number of years ago in Northern Sudan the markets were overflowing with vegetables. But two bags of them cost the equivalent of two weeks' wages for a top civil servant. Available yes, accessible no.

In the midst of this global picture, MCC is partnering with local agencies and churches to address the food security situation. As in Zimbabwe and Uganda, MCC partners with local churches and agencies. Relief is the first step in food security. It is often needed to protect what assets people have. Relief then needs to be combined with longer term food security projects so that the shame of hunger can be prevented. While disasters such as earthquakes cannot be prevented, hunger can be.

MCC believes strongly in assisting people to feed themselves. This means working with people and not for or on behalf of people. This means not being afraid to talk to those in power in our own countries and to work together with our partners in Africa, Asia and Latin America on relief and food security projects. This means taking their gifts and strengths seriously.

In many cases, it is appropriate to ship food and protect what assets people have. In other cases sending money and buying locally available food, seeds and tools supports the local economy, improves food security and allows people in the future to feed themselves.

Without the hard work of our local partners, our response would not be complete. To stand alongside, to listen and to respond is the call of Isaiah — a call that remains so very relevant in a world of 15 million refugees and asylum seekers and an estimated 20 million internally displaced and persecuted people, a call that still

promises to bring hope and healing to us all:

“Is this not the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke? Is it not to share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter — when you see the naked, to clothe them and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood? Then your light will break forth like the dawn, and your healing will quickly appear.” (Isaiah 58:6-8)

As Henri Nouwen points out in *Road to Peace*, it is easy to become so overwhelmed by the enormity of the problem that we fail to consider the concrete, daily pains of people affected. Jesus understood the

problems of the world but wherever he went he responded to the individual needs of the people. A blind man saw, a woman was healed, and thousands of people received bread and fish to eat. May our friend Mary from Uganda experience the joy of one day returning to her small farm and harvesting her crops in freedom and peace. ☺

*Willie Reimer, Winnipeg, Manitoba, is director of Food, Disaster and Material Resources for MCC. Marla Pierson Lester is a writer for MCC Communications.*

## Facts About World Hunger

- More than 840 million people in the world are malnourished. 799 million of them are from the developing world. More than 153 million of them are under the age of 5.
- Six million children under the age of 5 die every year as a result of hunger.
- Of the 6.2 billion people in today's world, 1.2 billion live on less than \$1 per day.
- The proportion of people living on less than \$1 a day has fallen from 29 percent to 23 percent in the past 10 years, although that masks significant regional differences. East Asia has seen a drop from 28 percent to 14 percent. South Asia has seen a drop from 44 percent to 37 percent. Africa has seen a drop from 48 percent to only 47 percent.
- One person dies every four seconds as a direct or indirect result of malnutrition.
- Of the 12 million child deaths each year, 55% are related to malnutrition.
- Around 1.1 billion people, roughly a sixth of the world's population, lack access to safe drinking water.
- The amount of money that the richest 1 percent of the world's people make each year equals what the poorest 57 percent make. The richest 5 percent of the world's people have incomes 114 times that of the poorest 5 percent.
- Virtually every country in the world has the potential of growing sufficient food on a sustainable basis. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations has set the minimum requirement for caloric intake per person per day at 2,350. Worldwide, there are 2,805 calories available per person per day. Fifty-four countries fall below that requirement; they do not produce enough food to feed their populations, nor can they afford to import the necessary commodities to make up the gap. Most of these countries are in sub-Saharan Africa.
- We have the means. The financial costs to end hunger are relatively slight. The United Nations Development Program estimates that the basic health and nutrition needs of the world's poorest people could be met for an additional \$13 billion a year. Animal lovers in the United States and Europe spend more than that on pet food each year.

Sources: Bread for the World and United Nations.

# Sharing Food in Suffering and in Joy

If you've heard anything about the Mennonite World Conference Assembly 14, held in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe in August 2003, you know about what has been dubbed "the miracle of the feeding of the 7,000." For six days in August, the Zimbabwe Brethren in Christ Church prepared two delicious meals a day for conference attendees, cooking everything over open fires in large black cast-iron pots.

In the months preceding the conference as North Americans considered whether or not to attend the conference, one of the issues for debate was whether it was right to ask the Zimbabwe Brethren in Christ Church, living under extremely poor economic conditions and with their own hunger issues to deal with, to prepare to feed so many for one week. With that question and my own unforgettable experience of attending the assembly in Bulawayo in mind, I talked recently with Danisa Ndlovu, bishop of the Zimbabwe church and vice president of Mennonite World Conference, while he was visiting in North America.

## Preparing for the conference

Danisa acknowledged the difficult circumstances in which the Zimbabwe church agreed to host the MWC assembly. He noted that access to food is often a greater problem than the availability of food, meaning that as long as one has cash and the right connections, one can find food. Many people simply don't have the cash or the connections or don't belong to the right political party. Plus, many shortages, especially of staple items like maize and cooking oil, are often of human creation because some enterprising people purchase large quantities and conduct a brisk business selling them at inflated prices.

With a clear understanding of the obstacles they would face, the church started early to purchase supplies and store them for the conference. There was some fear that the government would accuse them of hoarding food while people were starving. At the same time, people knew what it would take to make the conference happen, and it is not an unknown practice to store food for an upcoming event (for example, a wedding feast).

When I asked Danisa about the frequent concern in North America in the months preceding the assembly about the ethics of spending so much money when there were shortages of food and other necessities, he commented, "That's where our cultures clash." For Zimbabweans, it was not a question of food, but what was important for the church. For them, coming together is important, and they always do it over food. Feeding so many people is very common—for example, at their own General Conferences. In addition, he pointed out, the food that was stored in advance and then served was actually for them as well (between 4000 and 5000 Zimbabweans attended the conference).

As they planned for the assembly, there were also other considerations. They ordered and stored fuel, some of it from neighboring Botswana. Another challenge was to minimize wasting food, knowing that non-Zimbabweans wouldn't be used to the kind of food that was served twice a day. And finally, they thought about how to keep up the spirits of the volunteers. There were fears about whether they could sustain the pace for six days of cooking, serving and cleaning up after 7000 people, so they tried to arrange for shifts of workers.

## Post-conference reflections

When I asked Danisa for his reflections on the assembly six months after the fact, he commented, "This was wonderful... a once-in-a-lifetime event." All of a sudden the week was over, and now they wish that something like this would come again; some are even thinking about how they can attend Assembly 15 (to be held somewhere in the Americas). For older Zimbabweans, the assembly was especially meaningful, as they experienced the relaxed atmosphere in worship and had opportunities to talk to one another and renew relationships. Among the Zimbabwean attendees at the assembly were some Brethren in Christ folks who had not recently been seen in church or who are now members of other churches and came back for this event. All of the effort and expense that went into

planning and carrying out the conference was well worth it.

## The current situation

According to Danisa, the current situation is "bad." There has been some improvement in supplies available in stores, but the prices are very high. Cornmeal prices have risen at least 100 percent. The government announced salary increases for civil servants, which means that production costs will go up, sending prices even higher. Rains this season have been patchy so far, and the dams have not filled; it is difficult to imagine that there will be much of a harvest again this year, and some areas may not have anything at all. Schools are struggling to get food for their children, and some may have to close early. To make matters worse, some relief agencies cut back their programs in the belief that by this time the problems would be over.

## Possibilities for the future

Danisa has a vision for what the Zimbabwe church could do to help themselves through future drought situations—if funds were available. He believes that the Mtshabezi and Wanezi Mission farms are under-used. Both have good dams with a good supply of water available for intensive irrigation and the capacity for raising more cattle than they currently do. The potential is there for the missions to raise their own food but they need a lot of capital to improve the irrigation system.

One of the most important results of the Zimbabwe church's having hosted the Mennonite World Conference so successfully is the recognition they received. As has been said by various people, the assembly "put them on the map" of the world-wide Brethren in Christ and Mennonite community. Now it is important that we in North America not forget them, but continue to support and pray for them as they continue to joyously live out their faith in the midst of hardship and suffering. ☺

-Harriet Sider Bicksler

# Menonite World Conference Issues Statement on Zimbabwe

At the conclusion of Menonite World Conference Assembly 14, the General Council issued a statement regarding the political and economic situation in Zimbabwe. The statement was another way to express the assembly theme of "Sharing Gifts in Suffering and in Joy," by standing in solidarity with our Zimbabwe brothers and sisters. It was published simultaneously as a purchased advertisement in newspapers of different persuasions in Zimbabwe. It was also released to MWC member churches and international church media.

## Menonite World Conference General Council Statement on Zimbabwe

The Menonite World Conference (MWC) is a communion of Menonite, Brethren in Christ and related Christian churches in 54 countries. The General Council, the governing body of the MWC, composed of delegates of member churches, met in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe, August 2003, together with more than 6,200 participants in the every-six-year Assembly. Representing members worldwide, we reaffirmed our unity in the body of Christ, and our solidarity with one another, using as the Assembly theme "Sharing gifts in suffering and in joy" (1 Corinthians 12).

As believers in God who wills the well being of all, and as followers of Jesus, the Prince of Peace, we lament situations of poverty, oppression, injustice, violence and war that exist in many parts of the world.

Recognizing Zimbabwe's resilient people and rich natural resources, and having experienced the warm welcome and gracious hospitality of the hosting Brethren in Christ Church, we especially grieve and deplore the current situation of suffering in this country:

- The fear and brutality that result from political oppression and conflict, excessive police powers and arbitrary arrests, and legislation that curtails democratic expression and free assembly.
- The hardship and exploitation that result from economic breakdown, profiteering and corruption, shortages of all kinds, unemployment and endemic poverty.
- The malnutrition and death that result from a humanitarian crisis of major proportions, caused by

mismanagement of the economy, drought, massive shortages of food, medical supplies and services, and the scourge of HIV/AIDS.

- At the same time, as a global community of faith, we affirm with great joy and deep gratitude:
  - o The commitment of all parties to the current mediation talks, trusting they will address the key issues of concern, including people's needs, fears and hopes.
  - o The prophetic voice of the church for justice and peace and the courageous role of its leaders in efforts to resolve as well as to transform the crisis.
  - o The tenacity, passion, endurance and non-violent action of Zimbabweans in the face of deep distress.

"Sharing gifts in suffering and joy," we will carefully monitor developments in the next weeks and months, and together with the local Brethren in Christ churches will continue, with increased commitment, to support ongoing advocacy for justice and reconciliation, to provide emergency food resources to the hungry, assistance to the generations at risk from HIV/AIDS, and fervent intercession before God that justice will flow like a river to bring healing and hope to a weary land (Isaiah 58; Amos 4). ☺

*Signed in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe on August 17, 2003 by Dr. Nancy Heisey, President (2003-2009); Dr. Larry Miller, Executive Secretary; and Dr. Mesach Krisetya, President (1997-2003)*

# Called to Ministry to the Whole Person

by Daphne Krabill Hollinger

Date palms and acacia trees are among the few living things dotting a landscape dominated by wind-swept hills of sand. In Mauritania, a nation of north-west Africa, it is the great Sahara desert that determines the livelihood of her inhabitants. Once nomadic peoples largely dependent on their animals for economic and nutritional stability, many Mauritians are now settled in communities where agriculture must provide at least a portion of their food. A desert seems an impossible environment for agriculture: what of regular rainfall, and nutrient-rich soils? Hunger, defined as transitory food insecurity, runs rampant in Mauritania, for urbanization and increasing pressures on the environment (such as deforestation) have only made access to food more difficult, especially for those unable to purchase imported goods. If ignored, food insecurity leads only to further degradation of natural resources and to chronic hunger, or famine.

It is in such places where hunger seems an impossibly vast problem to overcome. And yet, changes can and are being made. During a summer internship with World Vision's National Agriculture Program in Mauritania, I saw and experienced means by which malnutrition and food insecurity are being tackled through the collaborative efforts of local communities and development workers. There is dried leaf powder made from the "amazing" moringa tree that provides adequate protein for mothers and children; nutrient-rich chaya (a green leafy shrub rich in iron, calcium and protein) that grows with only a few drops of water; watermelons and pigeon peas thriving in sandy soils under a blazing sun. There is hope, and it is this hope in God's provision and restoration that persuades me to pursue a life devoted, in some small way, to helping nourish his children.

My interest in the areas of global food security and international justice developed out of a gradual accumulation of knowledge about this world and my experiences in it.

No booming voice announced to me that I should be a missionary, nor did my Bible ever mystically open to Isaiah 58. As inexplicable as my calling sometimes feels, I have long felt compelled to serve God through cross-cultural missions in some capacity. I do not know the specifics of the ministry I will one day work with, but I do know I want to be involved in holistic ministry. I feel as strongly about issues of justice, peace and equity as I do about evangelism; however, too often these facets of evangelical Christianity are, consciously or not, pitted against each other. The great commandment to love people and the great commission to tell of Christ's saving love cannot be separated; nor do I believe that one can be used as a mere means to the other. I believe they are to be pursued simultaneously, in ministry to the whole person.

Thus said, there is still much left to be discerned. I must continually seek God's will and glean from the wisdom of others, for my questions so often outweigh solid answers and solutions: How do we distinguish between the felt needs and perceived needs of those in "developing" nations? How are poverty and development defined in the first place? In a world full of ethnic and religious tensions, how can Christ's example of peace be reconciled with his singular claim to Truth? What is *my* place in all this? And to this latter question there are but two primary

answers: I can either sit back and watch the world go by, or I can allow the Lord to involve me in walking alongside his people.

Going to Mauritania was a step in my journey. Four years of studying Biology and Community Development at Gordon College gave me time to begin exploring my interests both academically and experientially. During that time God most graciously blessed me with opportunities to explore the world and try to understand the needs of his people, whether through a single mom working at a thrift store in Pennsylvania, or a malnourished orphan listlessly seeking affection in Haiti. These experiences with missions and development have enabled me to develop a lens through which I now view the world: rich in beauty and diversity, longing for restoration.

At present, I am working as an agriculture intern at ECHO. ECHO (Educational Concerns for Hunger Organization) is a non-profit organization working to provide simple solutions for world hunger. Operating a demonstration farm, seed-bank and nursery out of North Fort Myers, Florida, ECHO's mission is "to network with community leaders in developing countries to seek hunger solutions for families growing food under difficult conditions." Through networking with thousands of missionaries and development workers, sending trial packets of seeds all over the world, and offering opportunities for study and training,

ECHO is devoted to glorifying God in very practical ways.

As part of the internship program, I will spend one year living and working at ECHO, followed by three months at a partner organization in the Central Plateau of Haiti. My primary responsibilities include caring for the "semi-arid tropics" section of the Global Village (ECHO's demonstration farm), and working in the seed-bank. Although a recent arrival to ECHO (as of January 2003) I have already learned more than I could ever have imagined—from caring for pregnant goats and running seed germination trials, to using appropriate technologies and learning to cultivate mushrooms.

ECHO is one more step in preparing me for what is to come. Though I may not know what God has in store, God remains faithful in illuminating for me one step at a time. For now I will do my best (and fail and fail and try again) to remain rooted in Christ's call to emulate himself: to make disciples of all peoples and to bring wholeness and healing to a hungry, hurting world. ☺

*Daphne Hollinger recently graduated from Gordon College and is serving in an internship with ECHO in Fort Myers, Florida. She is a member of the Grantham (PA) Brethren in Christ Church. To find out more about ECHO, check their website at <http://www.echo.net.org/>.*

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## Food Aid and Food Security

By Carol Jenkins

Late last year I was in Zimbabwe visiting one of our food distributions funded by USAID's (United States Agency for International Development) Office of Food for Peace (FFP) when I was reminded that what we were doing was so very "right." Approximately 6,000 people had gathered for the monthly World Vision food aid distribution of maize, pulses, and oil. It was a combination of U.S. Government support and private voluntary work that made such a large-scale food distribution possible. A frail, sun-weathered, elderly woman approached me, shook my hand, and began to tell me her story. She was caring for eight orphaned children – her daughter and son-in-law had died of AIDS and she was left to care for her

grandchildren and for the children of her neighbors. "Without your support," she said with tears welling up in her eyes, "I simply don't know what we would do. Look around; we have nothing. But, now, we have hope. If we can just make it through for a few more months, we have hope for a harvest and perhaps a better future. Thank you for bringing us hope."

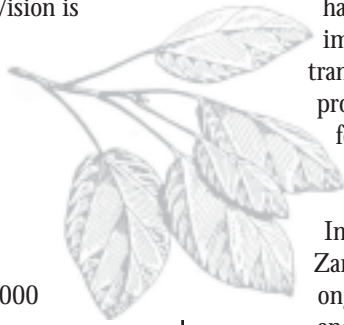
With the "war on terrorism" well underway, and the ever-present discontent and resentment toward all that is "American" which I experience whenever I travel abroad, it is not often that I find something so "American" overseas for which I can be so proud. But when I see the U.S. government logo on the food aid bags and vegetable tins, for which so many non-

Americans are so grateful, I can see the face of the U.S. in a positive way clearly and openly displayed.

Having worked in food aid programming for over ten years, I have come to recognize that it is a highly political, very visible, and often difficult resource to program. Despite its problems, however, I continue to believe that when used appropriately and when evaluated properly, the long-term benefits of this resource can be overwhelmingly positive in assisting the food insecure throughout the world to reduce vulnerabilities and to enhance coping mechanisms.

World Vision has more than 20 years of food aid experience, beginning with its first large-scale food responses in Poland

and Ethiopia in the 1980s. In 2003, World Vision handled over 725,000 metric tons of food aid. Currently, World Vision is working with Catholic Relief Services and CARE in the implementation of the three-year C-SAFE (Consortium for Southern Africa Food Security Emergency) program in Zimbabwe, Malawi, and Zambia, handling over 300,000 metric tons.



World Vision believes that “food is an important resource in the struggle against hunger, malnutrition and poverty. Although food self-sufficiency is a goal for every nation and region, it is recognized that for some nations and regions achieving this goal will require many years of intensive effort. Therefore, there is a need to seek short-term and long-term solutions to the problems of food deficits in developing countries, through both relief and development programming.”<sup>1</sup>

World Vision has an integrated private/public resource base incorporating funding from child sponsors, private donors, foundations, bilateral donors, and multilateral donors. These diverse resources allow World Vision to develop and replicate models comprising synergistic, integrated food security initiatives in agriculture, nutrition/health, microenterprise development, and education designed to impact the lives of

children and communities. Over the past five years in particular, World Vision has been successful in implementing integrated<sup>2</sup> relief, transitional, and development programs using USAID FFP food as evidenced in some of the relatively newer programs in Bangladesh, Indonesia, Haiti, Zimbabwe, Zambia, and Malawi, and the ongoing programs in Ethiopia and Mozambique. World Vision

believes there is enormous potential for linking food resources with cash resources to develop rural communities, particularly in addressing the HIV/AIDS pandemic that is plaguing many of the countries where World Vision is currently working.

The recent timely response of the entire humanitarian community in southern Africa and World Vision’s programs specifically, including the USAID/FFP C-SAFE program, have been able to limit large-scale death as a result of starvation. The convergence of HIV/AIDS, chronic poverty, climatic challenges, and poor governance, however, have meant that proper responses necessitate “profound shifts” in the way humanitarian and development activities are undertaken. Aid agencies and governments, including the U.S. government, must explore creative ways to make these shifts and begin to target the vulnerabilities of the food insecure populations.

More and better-targeted assistance, focused on those countries where HIV/AIDS and chronic food insecurity plague urban and rural households, is needed and appropriate. Food shortages in Lesotho and Swaziland are again on the rise, and there appears to be little aid available to assist. Organizations such as World Vision have a responsibility to act, but all of us, as Christians, have the responsibility to serve as representatives for issues of hunger and poverty. I fear that many impoverished countries and the lives of rural Zimbabweans, for example, will fall low on the priority list, far behind Afghanistan and Iraq, for much-needed support from countries around the world who can and should make a difference. ☺

Notes:

<sup>1</sup>WV International Policy Governing the Use of Food Resources, adopted 1993.

<sup>2</sup>Integrated refers to both sectoral integration as well as financial integration in which multiple donor resources, private and public, come together for programming.

*Carol Jenkins received a B.A. in political science from Messiah College in 1987, and has been working for World Vision since 1993, based in South Africa and in Washington, DC. She currently resides in Alexandria, VA with her husband, Robert Jenkins, who works for USAID’s Office of Transition Initiatives in Washington, DC.*

## Famine, Food and Taxes

By Eric Mann

I would like to ask two questions and discuss one answer that often gets overlooked: What causes famine and why does Africa seem so much more susceptible to this tragedy than other regions throughout our world?

The usual list of suspects includes drought, poverty, war, corruption, the legacy of colonialism, and maybe even Western neglect. I would like to point a light on a much-ignored corner of national government policy that may result in seriously unintended consequences—taxes. As a case study I would like to use Ethiopia. (To be honest, I would have preferred to look at Zambia, but the information I am highlighting in this article was not as

readily available for Zambia as it was for Ethiopia.)

Let’s start with excise taxes. An excise tax is a special sales tax for certain products that the government would like to control or limit such as gasoline or cigarettes; or excise taxes can be placed on items or services for which the government incurs direct expenses for administrating, such as airline tickets. In the U.S. and Canada, the list of goods with excise taxes is fairly limited and generally rational. In most underdeveloped nations, however, the list is long and seemingly random. In Ethiopia excise taxes include: 100% sales tax on gasoline, 75% on cigarettes, 80% tax on soft drinks, 40% on mineral water, 150% on beer, 40% on wine,

80% on dishwashers, 30% on carpets, 20% on dolls and toys, 110% on cars, 40% on televisions and the list goes on and on. This list of taxes begins to illustrate the political intrusion into the economics of Ethiopia.

Another political intrusion is the taxes levied on agricultural profits. A farmer begins to pay 10% of his profits after earning 600 Ethiopia birr (about \$68). The tax rate continues to step higher and higher until his earnings hit 36,000 birr (less than \$4,100). At this point marginal tax rates pop out at 89%! That means that the theoretical farmer, who earns 50,000 birr, would pay about 30,000 birr to the government and 890 birr for every 1,000 birr after that.

Unfortunately, these taxes do not include

personal income taxes and value added taxes. By the way, the value-added tax is better known as the VAT and is imposed in Canada and most of Europe. It's similar to a national sales tax, except it's collected at every stage of production, not just the final sale.

Notice that these taxes are based on the local currency. That means that as inflation depletes the value of the currency, the tax is imposed on lower and lower effective income. While this is not a significant problem in Ethiopia, it does affect other African countries such as Zambia and Zimbabwe, as recent reports from our missionaries there attest.

Also important to understand is the communal nature of farmland in Ethiopia. All land is government owned and farmers are allotted one-hectare plots with no guarantee of renewal from year to year. How can a farmer afford any equipment, which is burdened with its own rate of excise taxes? Why would anyone lend any money to a farmer—how and when could they pay it back?

The combination of all these taxes makes it next to impossible for the Ethiopian economy to escape famine. And then you have the perverse reality that international organizations provide no-cost food to Ethiopia. While there is no question that this is needed, it can't help but compete against the helpless Ethiopian farmer.

Ironically, Ethiopia's best export is coffee—an agricultural product. While there are lots of reasons why that is the case, it does illustrate that the Ethiopian farmer is capable of farming profitably, given the right set of circumstances. There is nothing to prevent the Ethiopian government from reforming the rest of the agricultural industry to making it a net gain through taxes, just like coffee. It probably will never be as much a tax gain as coffee, but there is no reason for famine to be an ongoing problem for Ethiopia, or any other African country.

The sad reality is that the United Nations, the World Bank, and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) are silent on the specific taxes levied by a nation so as not to interfere with the sovereignty of that country. While these international organizations will encourage a country to enforce its own tax laws and collect as much tax as possible, even that is only when its own loans are part of the picture. The World Bank and IMF are always disappointed when a country can't

collect at least 20% of GDP (gross domestic product) in taxes. That is the benchmark of most developed nations. Most underdeveloped nations collect less than 10%.

While this information is specific to Ethiopia, each African country seems to find its own unique combination of taxes that seems to discourage its farmers from helping to feed their own citizens. It never occurs to this group that simplifying and lowering taxes might end up collecting more money. This group includes the international organizations, the country's own government, assistance organizations, or even the press when they report about famine.

When we look at the causes of famine, and famine in Africa in particular, we must begin to include national tax systems. As part of our dialogue we need to find ways to raise the issue with national governments that restrictive taxes will result in an unproductive agriculture sector, which can then lead to hunger and famine. This past October, I came upon

this information and this perspective and felt an urge to try to do something. Then in November our congregation received reports from two different sets of missionaries, one couple in Zambia and another in Zimbabwe, and both reports focused on food. Finally, when I learned that an upcoming issue of *Shalom!* was going to focus on food, I knew I had to write this article. I fervently pray that God can use our denomination in some of the countries where we have a presence to begin the conversation with people who are in a position to affect these changes. ☺

*Eric Mann works for Delta Dental, doing actuarial work, and is a member of the Elizabethtown BIC (PA) congregation where he serves as treasurer. He also serves on the denominational Board for Stewardship Services. He is married with two children.*

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## Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger

Review by Andy Saylor

**Book review editor's note:** Ron Sider's *Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger* was first published in 1977. A revised addition was published 20 years later in 1997. Today, it is still a book that challenges people to evaluate the Biblical perspective on the poor, material possessions, and the Christian response. John R. W. Stott says, "The publication in 1977 of *Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger* was something of a sensation... His critics need to read him again, and all of us need to face his challenge." We hope that this review will encourage you to read this classic in the revised edition for the first time or to read it again as *Shalom!* explores the issue of food and security.

At this writing, Amazon.com says the "sales rank" of *Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger* is 26,093. That's well ahead of the *Prayer of Jabez Devotional*, at 72,775, but trailing the original *The Prayer of Jabez: Breaking Through to the Blessed Life* at 5,605.

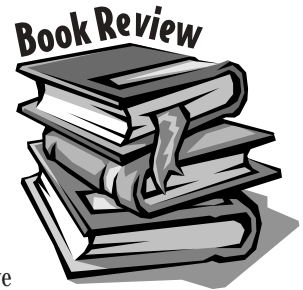
And way behind *Think and Grow Rich* by Napoleon Hill at 246. I wasn't familiar

with this book, so I went into the "Look Inside This Book" feature and read this:

"More than five hundred of the most successful men this country has ever known told the author their greatest success came just one step *beyond* the point at which defeat had overtaken them." I have not read the book, but I think "success" is probably meant in the financial and business sense.

By that standard, the rich person Jesus talks about in Luke 16 was a success. He was "dressed in purple and fine linen and lived in luxury every day." But Ron Sider says Jesus didn't consider him a success! What's up with that? Ron explains:

In the story of the rich man and Lazarus, Jesus does not say that the rich man exploited Lazarus. He merely shows his lack of concern for the sick



beggar lying outside his gate... Such sinful neglect of the needy infuriates the God of the poor. When Lazarus died, God comforted him in Abraham's bosom. When the rich man died, torment confronted him. The meaning of the name Lazarus, "one whom God has helped," underlines the basic point. God aids the poor, but the rich who neglect poor neighbors go to hell.

Ron, how do you expect your Amazon.com sales rank ever to climb when you go around saying things like that? Which reminds me – let's get back to Napoleon Hill:

*Wishing* will not bring riches. But *desiring* riches with a state of mind that becomes an obsession, then planning definite ways and means to acquire riches, and backing those plans with persistence which *does not recognize failure*, will bring riches.

Ron talks about failure too. He writes, "Past failure, however, is no reason for despair." Sounds a little like the advice in *Think and Grow Rich*, doesn't it? Don't let it get you down when you're not succeeding. But the "failure" to which Ron refers is this:

We have allowed our theology to be shaped by the economic preferences of our materialistic contemporaries rather than by Scripture.

And I am doubtful Mr. Hill says anything like this:

The foundation of Christian concern for the hungry and oppressed is that God cares especially for them.

I am a politically conservative type, someone who gets wistful at the name of Ronald Reagan. I share this to let you know that one might not expect me to be a person who gets excited about *Rich Christians*. But I think it's hard to overstate the importance of the message Ron Sider has for us. Perhaps I should let others share their thoughts. One need only flip over the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary edition to the back cover.

"The most pivotal book in my Christian journey," says Robert A. Seiple, President of World Vision. A remarkable statement. (What's the most pivotal book in *your* Christian journey?)

"The most persuasive presentation of the biblical case against hunger that I have ever read," says Arthur Simon, founder of Bread for the World.

Amazon.com lets you post your own reviews. Here are a few excerpts from those personal reviews (each excerpt from a

different reviewer). You'll notice that some are not so favorable.

"I first read this book five years ago, and have not been able to look at the world through the same eyes ever since."

"I can sincerely call this book 'life-changing.' It led me to reconsider my relationship with the poor and what that said about my relationship with God. The book should challenge anyone calling themselves a Christian into thinking deeply about materialism and greed. I doubt that anyone living in the U.S. could read this book and not find areas of their lives that need to change."

"Please, this book is so misleading and out of touch with the realities of poverty and economics that it should be ignored."

"The central messages of this book are really uncontroversial in light of scripture: God loves the poor. We should give generously and effectively. We should love the poor. That's really what this book is saying."

"We focus on so many aspects of the Christian life, but we forget about our responsibility to the poor. We kind of skim right over it in the scriptures. Sider reminds us that God is on the side of the poor, and that our active faith should reflect this truth in the activity and concern of our lives."



"This book is challenging to the lifestyle of a materialistic, get all you can, culture. Not only did it challenge me to think about Sider's ideas, but it has caused me to reexamine my own lifestyle and priorities."

"Ronald Sider's anti-Scriptural book seems to have the power 'to deceive even the elect, if that were possible.'"

"This book is not an easy read, in that I was convicted of my own failings as I read each chapter."

"Reading this book has helped me to see that this world does not revolve around me or the west. Mr. Sider goes through and gives practical, challenging ways to implement loving the poor. This book has helped reshape the way I see and think about Jesus. It has helped to show me the Lord is not just concerned with the western world, but also for the majority of the world that does not live in the west. He came to set the prisoners free. This book challenges readers to do the same. I loved this book. It has the potential to change your life, if you let it."

These reviews, including the harsh ones, are a testimony to the importance and – I've tried to avoid the P word, but here it comes – prophetic spirit of *Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger*. I am grateful Ron Sider listened when he was called to remind us of God's definitions of success and failure. ☺

*Andy Saylor is a lawyer and member of the Elizabethtown Brethren in Christ Church. He reviewed Ronald J. Sider's Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger, 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary edition, Intervarsity Press, 1997.*

## MCC Resource on Food Security

The March/April 2004 edition of *a Common Place*, the award-winning magazine of Mennonite Central Committee, focuses on "Food for All" by profiling the country of Ethiopia in the horn of Africa. The lead article on Ethiopia highlights some of the causes of ongoing hunger in that nation, and is an excellent supplement to Eric Mann's article on "Famine, Food and Taxes." The magazine also includes information about MCC's work in Ethiopia since 1946 and other resources. For a copy of *a Common Place*, e-mail [acp@mcc.org](mailto:acp@mcc.org) or check the website at <http://www.mcc.org/acp/index.html>.



# Food Security In a Hungry City

By Megan Scott

Running out for eggs and bread late last night, we prepared for the storm. We waited in line for 20 minutes as the neighborhood bought their essentials, milk and lunchmeat just in case the city shut down. No one is really worried that they won't be able to access food tomorrow, but why trudge to the market through the snow when you can get the job done tonight.

Sometimes when I let myself think too much about war and terrorist threats, I remember that I live in the city. If we were attacked and our ability to truck food in was impeded, how would we eat? We can't grow enough food for everyone to survive. I did grow a few tomatoes in a pot in my backyard last summer, but my "yard" is actually concrete.

Still, I have little need to worry. I possess food security.

That is not true for everyone in Philadelphia. The City of Brotherly Love has an estimated 475,000 people suffering from hunger and malnutrition. Over 200,000 of them are children.

For many it is just too hard and too expensive to get to a supermarket. Supermarkets are built in neighborhoods that can support them financially. So if your neighborhood is by and large low-income, there will not be a SuperFresh coming to your block. The vast majority of the low-income population of Philadelphia does not drive. Car insurance is ridiculously

expensive in the city making it impossible for individuals to own and maintain personal transportation. And lugging groceries home on the bus is tedious at best.

Corner convenience stores supply locals with essential items, like milk, eggs and bread. Dinner options include white Wonder Bread and Kraft Macaroni and Cheese. Produce at these shops is typically expensive and old.

Farmer's Markets and vegetable trucks pop up throughout the city from June to September, giving opportunity for some to access fresh produce. These markets support a sustainable food system by offering regionally-grown produce. They ensure that family farms stay in business, that rural land (throughout Eastern Pennsylvania) is protected from development and that the food we eat in the city does not have to travel too far.

The Farmer's Market Nutrition Program (FMNP) provides fruit and vegetable checks to low-income families and senior citizens. Like WIC (Women Infants and Children), which provides milk and formula, the FMNP helps individuals access the fruits and vegetables they need to maintain their health.

Such programs recognize that there are direct links between hunger and peace, or at least direct links between hunger and crime.

Ethical questions like, "Would you steal a loaf of bread in order to feed your child?" are answered in grocery stores every day. Infant formula is the item to shoplift. Not only is it expensive, but it is life-giving. (Of course, drug dealers also use this powdery substance to beef up their cocaine supply, which may account for its high rate of disappearance from supermarket shelves.)

Hunger is painful. And pain forces you to concentrate solely on it. When we have a headache or back pain, we are reduced to concentrating only on the source of our

pain. We lie down. We search for ibuprofen. We pull out the heating pad. All else ceases until we can relieve the pain.

Until hunger is addressed, those who suffer from it cannot manage to care for the issues that caused their hunger. To find work one must eat. To go to school one must be well nourished. To get up and get dressed in the morning one must be motivated by the possibility of a piece of buttered toast and a cup of hot coffee.

In this city, with its 500 food cupboards and 200 soup kitchens, people can generally find a place to get their next meal, if they are willing to admit their need. But how can we who do not suffer from hunger, help get Philadelphia to a place where it is easier to access food, where living wage jobs are abundant and quality education is free?

Jesus knows that without sustenance we will not be able to know him. In John 6, Jesus feeds the 5000, because they are hungry and will have to go into the town to find food if he does not provide for their needs. He chooses to miraculously nourish them. And he provides his disciples with a lesson on hunger. Jesus is the ultimate source of our nourishing. We live in spiritual hunger, lives of fear and anxiety, overconsumption in worldly endeavors. We live in pain, and only Jesus can nourish us. In verse 35, Jesus says to us, "I am the bread of life. Those who come to me will never go hungry, and those who believe in me will never be thirsty."

We must root out the hunger that we face before we can address the evil that surrounds us. We must find security through food and through Jesus before we can find peace. ☺

*Megan Scott lives in Philadelphia with her husband and daughter, is a member of Circle of Hope Brethren in Christ Church, and the director of Circle Venture.*

# Update on the 2004 *Shalom!* Subscription Campaign and Plans for the future

As you know by now, Brethren in Christ Cooperative Ministries is no longer able to provide any funding to support the publication and distribution of *Shalom!* Starting this year, if *Shalom!* is to continue, we have to raise all our own funding.

The annual subscription letter was mailed in January, and as this first edition of 2004 goes to press, I am pleased to report that we have received more than half of what we need to continue as usual this year. We still need \$2500-\$3000. If you haven't already mailed in your renewal contribution, please do so as soon as possible. You can use the form below. And thank you so much for the affirmation that your generous contributions provide. We welcome additional contributions at any time; gifts beyond the \$15 basic subscription fee are tax-deductible. If you are not already a subscriber, please consider becoming one; use the form below to send in your subscription request.

We have also received 45 responses to the survey about the future of *Shalom!* that was in the fall edition (a fairly high response rate as surveys go). More than 80 percent of those responding consider *Shalom!* to be "very important" or "important" as a Brethren in Christ

publication. About a third prefer that we continue to publish and distribute as usual, while about half recommend some combination of distributing only to paying subscribers, publishing shorter and/or less frequent editions, or distributing only an electronic piece. Four people recommend discontinuing the publication if Cooperative Ministries won't fund it.

The most common reason given for why *Shalom!* is important and should be continued is that it is the only publication of its kind and fills a unique need in the church. Below are a few representative comments:

- *Shalom!* focuses on issues that are crucial to our Christian stance and our BIC identity in particular.
- I consider *Shalom!* to express the heart and soul of the Brethren in Christ.
- There's presently no other instrument dedicated to the message and emphasis of *Shalom!* That message should not die.
- You get through to people's minds and hearts one at a time. Congregations cannot do that.
- I believe you are meeting a need for expression of viewpoints on peace and

justice issues which may not fit the popular mindset of most evangelicals.

- It's important to have a magazine format for the BICs that is not a public relations arm, but that gives us opportunity to look at BIC issues objectively.
- *Shalom!* keeps me in touch with my theological roots and how we are fleshing out those roots in the larger church context.
- I like the single topic addressed in each issue. The variety of opinions/viewpoints is refreshing to read. I read each issue thoroughly.
- *Shalom!* is a medium where grassroots BICs can express themselves. To me, this is an integral component of being "brethren."
- No other publication in the denomination addresses peace and justice on a consistent basis.

There were also several suggestions for partnerships with other agencies and publications, and we are exploring some of those options. Thanks for your input, and we'll keep you informed! ☺

## HERE IS MY GIFT TO HELP SUSTAIN *SHALOM!*

\_\_\_\_\_ \$15 U.S./\$20 Can (basic subscriber)  
 \_\_\_\_\_ \$25 U.S./\$30 Can (contributor)  
 \_\_\_\_\_ \$100 U.S./\$125 Can (supporter)  
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Please copy or detach this form and mail it with your check, payable to Brethren in Christ Ministries, to Harriet Bicksler, 127 Holly Dr., Mechanicsburg, PA 17055. Payment in U.S. funds is preferred, if at all possible.

Address Service Requested  
127 Holly Drive, Mechanicsburg, PA 17055-5527

## Helping Hands

By Karen Zagol

Reaching the community for Christ is what we try to do at Ontario Brethren in Christ Church with a weekly food program called "Helping Hands" where we feed the body as well as the soul. Every week free groceries are given out to approximately 50 families. While the food is being put in bags, the people wait and listen to God's word in the sanctuary. Spanish songs are led

## Contribute to the World Hunger Fund

If you have been moved by the articles in this edition of *Shalom!* to do something about food security and hunger issues around the world, one thing you can do is contribute to the Brethren in Christ World Hunger Fund. For more than 30 years, the World Hunger Fund has supported food and development projects in various parts of the world. Seventy-five percent of contributed funds go to Mennonite Central Committee for work like Willie Reimer and Marla Pierson Lester describe in their article on pages 2-3, and 25 percent supports specifically Brethren in Christ projects. For example, in 2003, the World Hunger Fund supported food relief, seed distribution, and well-drilling among BIC folk in southern Africa.

You can send your gift, designated for the World Hunger Fund, to the Brethren in Christ Church, P.O. Box A, Grantham, PA 17027, or 416 North Service Road East, Suite 100, Oakville, Ontario L6H 5R2.

and a short message is shared. When the invitation is given we see several families come to know Christ.

It all started years ago with "World Share"—a food co-op partnership that enabled people to purchase a box of food worth \$30-50 for the low price of \$15.00. Church and community volunteers meet once a month at 3:00 a.m. on Saturday morning to sort the food. At one point, 13 churches participated with us. When "World Share" went out of business, we felt compelled to start another food ministry. In partnership with MCC, the Helping Hands ministry was birthed. Our church decided we wanted it to be an outreach program rather than just another charity. So we work side by side with the participants in this ministry. Church volunteers and participants work together in translation, registration, and assembling the packages.

We not only want to provide for the people's physical needs, but their spiritual needs as well. We arranged for a Hispanic pastor to come on the day we distribute food to hold a short service. Many of these people have never heard God's word presented like this before.

It is awesome to see God at work. Every week people are giving their lives to Christ. God is great! God is good! Blessed be the name of the Lord! ☺

*Karen Zagol and her husband Scot are the senior pastoral couple at the Ontario (CA) Brethren in Christ Church. Recently, the church experienced a devastating fire caused by arson. In the midst of this distress, the congregation went ahead with their food distribution for the week. This was noted by the local news and made a strong statement about the witness and ministry of the congregation.*

## MCC Washington Office to Hold Spring Seminar

The MCC U.S. Washington Office will offer its annual Spring Seminar for 2004 on the theme, "No One Shall Make Them Afraid: A Biblical Response to U.S. Security Policy." This seminar will explore Biblical alternatives to the current U.S. "War on Terrorism."

To be held March 28-30 in Washington, D.C., the seminar will ask from an Anabaptist perspective the question: "What are the policies and practices that lead to true security?"

The registration fee is \$75 which includes all materials and two meals. Lodging costs are extra. Scholarship money is available for those with limited income.

For further information or to register, contact the MCC Washington Office (phone: 202-544-6564; email: [mccwash@mcc.org](mailto:mccwash@mcc.org)).