

ECONOMIC JUSTICE: HUNGER & POVERTY

What does the Bible say?

- Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of injustice, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover them, and not to hide yourself from your own kin? Then your light shall break forth like the dawn, and your healing shall spring up quickly; your vindicator shall go before you, the glory of the Lord shall be your rear guard. (Isaiah 58:6-8)
- God has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly; God has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty. (Luke 1:52-53)
- Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? .. Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me. (Matthew 25:37-40)

What does The United Methodist Church say?

- Today is the day God cries with the masses of starving people, despises growing disparity between rich and poor, demands justice for workers in the marketplace. *And so shall we.* (Companion Litany to the Social Creed) In order to provide basic needs such as food, shelter, education, health care and other necessities, ways must be found to share more equitably the resources of the world. (Social Principles ¶163.E)
- It is especially important to note that the causes of hunger are intricately related to the problems of poverty and greed. Hunger cannot be dissociated from people and systems that keep people in poverty. (2016 Book of Resolutions, #4051, "The United Methodist Church, Food, Justice and World Hunger")
- As a church, we are called to support the poor and challenge the rich. To begin to alleviate poverty, we support such policies as: adequate income maintenance, quality education, decent housing, job training, meaningful employment opportunities, adequate medical and hospital care, humanization and radical revisions of welfare programs, work for peace and efforts to protect creation's integrity. (Social Principles, ¶163.E)

What do the facts say?

- Every 33 seconds a baby is born into poverty in the United States.
- 14% of households - over 48 million men, women and children - experience food insecurity in the US.
- Despite progress in cutting extreme poverty rates around the world, the number of people living on less than the equivalent of \$1.25 per day remains nearly 1.2 billion.
- 21% of all US children live in homes with income below the federal poverty level.
- In 2016, over 43 million US residents received Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits.
- *17.9% of WV household live below the poverty rate and 14.9% of WV households are food insecure!

Take ACTION for justice...

- Learn about hunger and poverty in your area - visit the Food Research Action Center (frac.org) or the Coalition on Human Needs (chn.org) for updated information and educational opportunities. See West Virginia poverty and hunger statistics can be found at http://www.frac.org/research/resource-library/state-of-the-states-profiles?post_type=resource&p=4483&state=West%20Virginia
- Discuss with your church and conference leadership ways you can expand justice ministries to tackle the root causes of hunger and poverty.
- Speak truth to power! Tell Congress to put those living on the economic margins at the center of our vision of a new just economy. Take action at www.umcjustice.org.
- Connect with other United Methodists and the church-wide focus on eradicating poverty: www.ministrywith.org

Hunger and Poverty in the US

<https://www.umcjustice.org/what-we-care-about/economic-justice/hunger-and-poverty-in-the-united-states>

Despite a growing economy and the immense wealth of the United States, many communities, families and individuals continue to struggle with poverty and hunger. Every 33 seconds a baby will be born into poverty. And 13 percent of American households- over 42 million men, women, and children- are experiencing food insecurity right now. The persistence of poverty and hunger in the shadow of glorified riches lies in stark contrast to a faithful vision of our common life together.

While churches respond to immediate needs by providing food, clothing and shelter, we are called also to challenge the systems and practices that have led to economic inequality, poverty and hunger. In relationship with people impacted by our broken economic system, we can together give life to a new vision – one that embraces God’s economy of abundance and ensures that all God’s children have the opportunity to thrive.

Three Things You Can Do:

- Learn more about the economic realities of your community and discuss with your church and conference leaders how to expand justice ministries that not only meet the immediate needs of your neighbors but together tackle the root causes of hunger and poverty.
- Connect with other United Methodists who are engaged in our church-wide focus on [Ministry with the Poor](#) and journeying together with our neighbors struggling in poverty.
- Tell your elected officials to put the needs of those living on the economic margins at the center of our agenda for a just economy.

As Christians we understand our call to feed the hungry. As United Methodists we recognize this call “not simply as a matter of charity, but of responsibility, righteousness, and justice.” ([Book of Resolutions, 4051](#))

Our churches provide direct support to countless individuals and families every day. We also know that churches and charities alone cannot meet the vast need of the 42 million men, women and children who live without the resources to adequately feed themselves and their families. In fact, charities- including churches- provide just 5% of food assistance each year. The rest is delivered through federal nutrition programs- programs that are critical to the health and well-being of our neighbors and our communities.

This year, Congress will consider legislation to reauthorize nutrition assistance programs as part of the farm bill. The largest and most effective of these programs is **SNAP** – the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. As people of faith, we must raise our voices and defend nutrition programs as an important lifeline for our most vulnerable neighbors. Our elected officials should support policies that strengthen these programs and put us on a path to eliminating hunger in the United States and around the world.