

## **CITY SOUP PHILADELPHIA**

### **A JOURNEY TOWARD A HUNGER-FREE PHILADELPHIA**

#### **HUNGER: A DEFINITION OF THE PROBLEM**

##### **HOW DO WE DEFINE HUNGER?**

Hunger has been defined as “an uneasy or painful sensation caused by a recurrent or involuntary lack of food” (Anderson, 1990). It is the biological manifestation of food insecurity, which is the lack of access to enough food for an active and healthy lifestyle.<sup>1</sup>

##### **HOW MANY PEOPLE ARE HUNGRY IN THE U.S.? IN PHILADELPHIA?**

Hunger and food insecurity are difficult to measure. Many suffer from hunger silently. Many others suffer from hunger sporadically as their wallets expand or shrink over the course of a month. Food insecurity numbers have been free-falling due to the economic downturn and according to current documented sources:

1 in 6 persons in the US<sup>2</sup> -- 49.1 million people are food insecure.

**More than 1 in 4 persons in Philadelphia, double the national and state levels,  
over 440,000 people, 130,000 of whom are children.**

##### **WHO IS HUNGRY?**

Anyone can fall upon hard times, and too often, hard times mean hunger. In these times of unprecedented economic hardship, layoffs, and under-employment, unexpected circumstances are increasing the ranks of those in need of food support. Recent research identifies the role of specific events that stress household budgets, such as job loss, increase in household size, loss of food stamps, and their effect on the dynamic nature of hunger.<sup>3</sup> The three largest growing groups<sup>4</sup> of food challenged people are:

- 1) Working families with children
- 2) Seniors
- 3) Immigrants

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<sup>1</sup> USDA 2007, food insecurity is “being certain of having, or unable to acquire enough food for all household members because of insufficient money and other resources for food.

<sup>2</sup> USDA Household Food Security in the US, 2011

<sup>3</sup> Conference of US Mayors Report, Hunger and Homelessness, 2009

<sup>4</sup> Conference of US Mayors Report, Hunger and Homelessness, December 2009

## WHAT ARE THE CAUSES OF HUNGER?

Hunger exists when food is:     Unaffordable  
  Unavailable  
  Inaccessible

In America, food is overwhelmingly available and accessible. However, for many people, **food has become increasingly unaffordable**. In 2011, according to the American Farm Bureau, food costs were up 10% over the previous three- year period. Some staple items such as bread, eggs and dairy products doubled in price during that same time period. In poorer neighborhoods, nutritious food is often unaffordable and inaccessible due to lack of supermarkets and fresh produce selling businesses.

## HOW DO HUNGRY PEOPLE GET HELP?

**Federal/State Food Programs.** The first line of defense against hunger is the use of SNAP (food stamps). Currently, about **440,000 Philadelphians** are beneficiaries of this program. However, another 150,000 are estimated to be eligible, but are not participants. The average food stamp benefit for a resident of Philadelphia is \$200 per month. Other federally funded hunger defense programs include:

The National School Lunch Program

The School Breakfast Program

The Summer Food Service Program for Children

The Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants & Children (WIC)

The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP). TEFAP provides USDA commodities to states, which distribute the food through local emergency food providers.

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The State of Pennsylvania provides some hunger defense through its State Food Purchase Program. Philadelphia receives four million dollars (\$4 million) of the eighteen million dollars (\$18 million) distributed to local emergency food providers.

**Food Cupboards and Soup Kitchens:** The second level of defense for hungry people is the use of charitable community food cupboards and soup kitchens.

Approximately **415,000 Philadelphians** are currently using this secondary level support. Most charitable cupboards are housed in church basements and managed by elderly volunteers who have difficulty providing the level of service that they recognize as being needed in their communities. Many of the most economically depressed neighborhoods in the city are

underserved with adequate food cupboard or kitchen access. Food cupboards and soup kitchens provide their clients food free of charge and therefore rely on donated food. The charitable food system gets donated food from many sources including industry, individuals (food drives) and from what Federal and State programs provide. Donations are never adequate to cover full need and recently, donations have fallen significantly. **The resulting shortage affects the very nature of food distribution itself.** Cupboards and pantries ration what food is available directly and indirectly. Directly, by limiting the amount of food they will distribute to any one client and limiting the number of times per month that clients can receive assistance. Indirectly, by limiting their hours of operation to a few hours per week, restricting those they will serve to a small geographic region or by not announcing or advertising their existence beyond word of mouth.

## **CITY SOUP: PHILADELPHIA HUNGER FACTS**

### **DID YOU KNOW THAT . . .**

- **Food insecurity** means one's limited ability to secure adequate and nutritious food for an active and healthy lifestyle.
- With Philadelphia poverty rates running at double the national and state levels, surveys suggest that: **More than 1 in 4 Philadelphians or 440,000<sup>+</sup> people are experiencing food insecurity. 130,000 are children. 440,000 persons currently receive SNAP benefits; with an additional 150,000 persons eligible but not participating.**
- 30% of food-insecure households skip meals, cut portions or otherwise forgo food. 70% choose cheaper, less nutritious options.
- Food-insecure persons are three times more likely to suffer from activity-limiting impairments, poorer overall health, depression and psychosocial dysfunction.<sup>5</sup>
- Obesity can occur as a consequence of hunger due to consumption of cheaper, higher-calorie foods
- Supermarkets and businesses selling fresh food produce are absent in many of the poorest neighborhoods in the city. These areas are referred to as food deserts.
- **The largest single daily feeding program** is the Philadelphia School District breakfast/lunch program. Challenges to this program are participation rates (especially for breakfast) and food quality.
- **415,000 Philadelphians** were assisted in our local community food cupboards during 2011, a number that has **more than tripled** over the past five years. The numbers of those assisted in the Greater Delaware Valley (Philadelphia and surrounding suburbs)

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<sup>5</sup> Rose, Donald. The Economic Detriments and Dietary Consequences of Food Insecurity in the U.S.

stands at **1 million persons**.

- Philadelphia had **25 food cupboards** in 1985; 25 years later, that number stands at **over 700** charitable cupboards and soup kitchens. This food cupboard system is a volunteer, under-resourced and highly used distribution network... a **network never intended or designed to supply food at current levels**.

On **February 4, 2009** Philabundance, the area's largest food bank was charged by its board to develop and deploy an "Emergency Hunger Response Plan" for Philadelphia and the region. **The Food Bank declared a Food Emergency.**

*We are now over three years into a "Food Emergency" in Philadelphia!*

### **IMPORTANT NUMBERS FOR THOSE NEEDING FOOD ASSISTANCE**

#### **Emergency Food Number: 1 800-319-FOOD (3663)**

To locate an emergency food cupboard, call Philabundance

#### **SNAP hotline: 215-430-0556**

For assistance with food stamp enrollment, call the Greater Philadelphia Coalition Against Hunger

#### **Share Food Program: 215-223-2220 or [www.sharefoodprogram.org](http://www.sharefoodprogram.org)**

To buy discounted groceries by exchanging volunteer time for affordable food

#### **Summer Meals Sites: <http://www.hungercoalition.org/summer-meals>.**

### **ORGANIZATIONS WE SHOULD KNOW ABOUT**

1. City Soup Philadelphia: [www.hungercoalition.org/citysoup](http://www.hungercoalition.org/citysoup)
2. Bread for the World: [www.bread.org](http://www.bread.org)
3. Lutheran Advocacy Ministry of Pennsylvania, <http://www.lutheranadvocacy.org>
4. Feeding America, <http://feedingamerica.org/get-involved/advocate.aspx>
5. Food Research and Action Council (FRAC): [www.frac.org](http://www.frac.org)
6. The Greater Philadelphia Coalition Against Hunger: [www.hungercoalition.org](http://www.hungercoalition.org)
7. Philabundance: [www.philabundance.org](http://www.philabundance.org)
8. The Food Trust: [www.thefoodtrust.org](http://www.thefoodtrust.org)
9. SHARE: [www.sharefoodprogram.org](http://www.sharefoodprogram.org)
10. Witnesses to Hunger: [www.witnessestohunger.org](http://www.witnessestohunger.org)
11. City Harvest: [www.pennsylvaniahorticulturalsociety.org/phlgreen/city-harvest.html](http://www.pennsylvaniahorticulturalsociety.org/phlgreen/city-harvest.html)

## WHAT IS THE VISION?

*Every Philadelphian has affordable access to nutritious food, or knowledge of and access to services to reach that level of security*

*All have access to enough safe and nutritious food.*

## KEY ITEMS FOR FUTURE FOCUS: HOW DO WE GET THERE? (ADAPTED)

**Maximize participation in all federal nutrition programs** through a combination of removal of obstacles to participation, close work with social service agencies, and outreach;

**Strengthen public-private food partnerships:** educate the public and key stakeholders both to the stark reality of hunger's existence in Philadelphia and to solutions that are already at hand;

**Improve public policies to end hunger,** reduce poverty, and promote nutrition.

## THINGS OUR CONGREGATION/COMMUNITY CAN DO!

- Gather together and acknowledge the hunger in our midst
- Learn the facts of hunger, its challenges and opportunities
- Pray for a new spirit of cooperation and inspiration
- Act — As individuals and as a community, continue learning, and reach out to any of the organizations or persons presented in the City Soup guide for information, volunteering, or donating.
- Let your vocations, your talents, your interests come into play by walking with, engaging in the type of activity that appeals to you
- Eat simple, healthy meals. Contribute your savings.
- Walk with prayerful intention around your neighborhood. Move toward strategic, systemic efforts to reduce hunger and foster fresh food access and nutrition for all.
- Raise a *Voice for Justice* through advocacy efforts
- Call for better coordinated *Plans and Policies*
- Stay connected!

**ADVOCATE: RAISE THE VOICE OF JUSTICE NOW!**



## **Preaching and Justice**

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### **Basics about Preaching:**

1. learn how to read a passage of scripture or other sacred text and marinate on it a while to allow it to be part of your being before talking about it
2. learn how to exegete a passage to get at the original meaning and intent
3. learn to select the appropriate sermonic form or style for a particular passage
4. learn how to create a sermon that “lifts people off the ground”
5. learn to discover and then to use your own, authentic, unique voice
6. learn the best method of sermon delivery for you
7. learn that the activity preachers are to engage in – preaching – is of paramount importance in the life of the church -- and act accordingly
8. learn to create a sermon with the people at the core of the process - context, context, context

### **Preaching Essentials:**

1. Whether the sermon is from lectionary/text/other sacred documents or a topical sermon – it must preach a word of love, grace and justice.
2. Where does that come from?
  - a. congregational, community or world context
  - b. topic or text
  - c. study process or exegesis
  - d. analysis of the theological claim of the text
  - e. creating a living document (regardless of style, etc)
  - f. re-evaluating the entire process to refine the message and moving to practice of the delivery
3. Importance of multiple meanings – being careful to remain open to multiple meanings of whatever text you are using is important, however in some traditions this is quite problematic. Some Sundays using a different text is important.
4. The key to treating a text or topic with integrity is to make sure what you are saying about them is plausible and that you are interpreting from a historical, literary and theological context.
5. Exegete your congregation/audience/community – who are they? What is going on in their lives? What is going on in the world? How do current events seem to affect them? What is their age, gender, socio-economic, and cultural make-up? Is this a social justice oriented group or one basically maintaining their existence by a miracle? Is this an open or closed congregation? Etc.

Ron Allen, *Preaching: An Essential Guide* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2002), 23-24, 31.

## **EPIC Preaching:**

Leonard Sweet, in *Postmodern Pilgrims*, describes the importance of EPIC elements in preaching (and in worship) as being an imperative for the 21st century church.

- **E = Experiential** preaching is interactive and creates an opportunity for the people in the pews to experience God/Allah/Jehovah in fresh and profound ways.
- **P = Participatory** worship allows as many people as possible to help plan, lead, and participate in worship. It gets people out of their pews and into a reality often new to them. This type of preaching is invitational.
- **I = Image-Rich** worship honors the visual nature of our culture and of many of our people. Often, metaphor and image are more important than words.
- **C = Connected** worship creates a place and an opportunity for people to belong. It is about helping people feel connected to God, to each other, to the Earth, and even to themselves.

**Justice and the many wells of faith** -- Matthew Fox, a former Dominican priest, in *One River, Many Wells*, quotes the Christian mystic Meister Eckhart: “Divinity is an underground river that no one can stop and no one can dam up.”<sup>6</sup>

Fox elaborates: “There is one underground river—but there are many wells into that river: an African well, a Taoist well, a Buddhist well, a Jewish well, a Muslim well, a goddess well, a Christian well, and aboriginal wells. ... To go down a well is to practice a tradition, but we would make a grave mistake (an idolatrous one) if we confused the well itself with the flowing waters of the underground river.”<sup>7</sup> The acknowledgment of the different wells is an important part of our faith experience in an interfaith world.

## **Texts:**

Micah 6:8 – every faith tradition has an element of justice as a core value – and I grew up with this one as a core of my family’s faith. Text compels us to do justice, love kindness and walk humbly with God. Community is important. We are not called to live our faith in isolation.

In the God who asks us to:

*Do Justice*

*Love Kindness, and*

*Walk humbly with God and with each other...*

“We need to do all three of these, because they are truly seamed together.

- If we seek justice without kindness, we fight ardently for the day when things are made right, but we fail to show God’s love for one another along the way.
- If we love kindness, but don’t work for justice, we will help only those whose names we know and we will sometimes unwittingly perpetuate their need for help.

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<sup>6</sup> Fox, Matthew. *One River, Many Wells*. Tarcher/Putnam, 2000, pp. 4-5.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

- If we do justice and love kindness, but fail to walk with God, we will lose our way and we will lose heart.”  
– Jill Schumann, Lutheran Services in America

**Other Texts: 7**

Lectionary texts for the day – October 16, World Food Day:

Exodus 33: 12-23; Psalm 99; 1 Thessalonians 1: 1-10; Matthew 22: 15-22

Or Isaiah 45: 1-7; Psalm 96: 1-9; 1 Thessalonians 1: 1-10; Matthew 22: 15-22

Amos 5:21-24

Isaiah 58:6-11

Quran, Sura 107

**Preaching using Micah 6:8:**

- Help the listeners to understand the vision the prophet is painting of the courtroom and the testimony about the faithlessness of the people of God.
- Help the listeners understand that this is a prophetic text – what does that mean in your context?
- Help the listeners understand that Micah and other texts calling for justice are part of a tradition of texts relaying God’s desire for how we are to live together as humans. But this is more than desire – this is what God requires of us.
- Help the listeners to understand that talking about hunger is a justice issue.
- Help listeners to understand that God/Creator/Allah/Jehovah expects better of us than 1 in 4 Philadelphians dealing with hunger. Be sensitive to the fact that some of those sitting in your space may be dealing with the issues of hunger and poverty. Assuming that no one in “your community” is part of these experiences of hunger would be a mistake.
- Help listeners to understand the difference between compassion ministries and advocating for/working for justice.
- Help listeners to understand their options to help their neighbors in concrete ways.
- Help listeners to be encouraged, challenged and moved to work on the issues of justice and hunger. To do this they need to relate to what you are saying and see/hear concrete options for their participation.
- Help listeners to get a clear understanding of the experience of hunger and poverty beyond the numbers – tell a story and help with concrete examples of the impact of hunger and poverty on the lived lives of their listeners.
- Help listeners to understand that they can make a difference by participating in the options given by LAMPa and others envisioned by you and your congregation/community as active ways to engage the world around these issues.
- Help listeners to see what the realities of hunger and poverty look like. You might use the City Soup video shown earlier or other resources shared today.

- Help listeners to feel connected to the stories and to the world around them, around their block and in their midst. This can be done through story, language, imagery, example, and action plans.

### **Matthew Text –**

Using the lectionary Gospel text might seem on first reading to be an unhelpful text regarding hunger and poverty since it relates to taxes and questions allegiance to the state. However, the truth is that the text can bring important opportunities to share images of a system that provides for the care of our entire society through its tax system.

But this text is about an attempt to trap Jesus by his detractors. However he answers shrewdly by turning the question back on them and in a way that did not jeopardize him for the moment but his enemies will return.

The interesting thing about this text is that taxes during that time period were often extremely unfair and involved dishonest tax collectors and government officials. We need to recognize this in the text and advocate for justice for those oppressed systemically and socially. This is a great opportunity to do that.

Another thing about this text is that we are reminded about divided loyalties – giving to our governmental systems and being socially/religiously/morally conscious in our giving as well to those in need.

Justice is not about everything being fair – and taxes often do not feel fair – it is about doing what God calls us to do for and with one another. Justice is doing what is right in God’s eyes.

Bread for the World has some insights on this text – found at [http://www.bread.org/help/church/bread-sunday/bread-sunday-2011-reflection.pdf?\\_utma=1.156740535.1276093239.1276093239.1276093239.9.1&\\_utmb=1.4.10.1315855539&\\_utmc=1&\\_utmz=1.1315411197.2.1.utmcsr=\(direct\)](http://www.bread.org/help/church/bread-sunday/bread-sunday-2011-reflection.pdf?_utma=1.156740535.1276093239.1276093239.1276093239.9.1&_utmb=1.4.10.1315855539&_utmc=1&_utmz=1.1315411197.2.1.utmcsr=(direct))

Many of the same elements for the message from above related to the Micah text can also be used for this text.

### **Plan for the Message/Sermon:**

Introduce topic with a story of poverty and hunger.

Your listeners need to be educated about the realities of hunger but do not share a large amount of data and numbers orally – use an insert, video, or slide/powerpoint. Share enough to tell the story but do not go overboard with numbers.

Share the power of the text and its meaning for our lives regardless of what text you use. There is grace, love and justice from God/Creator/Allah/Jehovah.

End with a call to action and offer opportunities for involvement as individuals and for congregations.