

Hunger

From the Bethany Lutheran Church
Health and Wellness Cabinet

*"For now I ask no more than the justice of eating."
– (Pablo Neruda, Chilean Poet, Noble Prize Winner)*

There is obesity in the world. It has become so common in our country that a Harris poll released this month found that a significant number of us who are overweight or obese do not even consider ourselves as having a problem. As the author of the poll puts it, obesity may be becoming the new norm in our thinking. If you are not sure about your own weight, check with your healthcare provider or use the calculators supplied by the National Institutes of Health at: <http://www.nhlbisupport.com/bmi/> .

There is hunger in the world, even in our country. We have heard this in church and in the media, and as a congregation we have regular offerings of food, time and other resources to help ease hunger in our community and elsewhere. As Christians, we understand that it is our duty to help others, but despite our charity, hunger persists. But what else can we do? Change our thinking about it.

The way we think about food and hunger can make a difference, according to “Faith and Fitness”, a book by Tom Hafer. Reading his book you learn that we are fighting an excess of food in the western world, while eight million people die each year because they do not have the means to feed themselves to stay alive. But simply feeling guilty about this fact is not the answer. The shift needed in our thinking, according to Hafer, is from a *need-to-lose-weight paradigm* to a *need-to-feed-others paradigm*. He encourages us to use love, as taught us by Christ, to change the way we think about the issue. “By broadening our mission from our personal weight issues to the health of the global community, we demonstrate compassionate wellness ...”

This perspective allows us to interpret the quote above on hunger and justice in a potentially new light. One online dictionary says, “Justice (is) the quality of being righteous or fair. Many philosophers, theologians and others define justice as the proper ordering of people and things. Behind the concept of justice lies the notion of balance -- that people get what is right, fair and appropriate.” (YourDictionary.com) If everyone has enough to eat, I think we can agree that is just, as does scripture: *“Those who are generous are blessed, for they share their bread with the poor.” – (Proverbs 22:9)*

Don’t underestimate the power of changing your way of thinking about hunger. Compassionate awareness has brought about great changes in the world. And there are little things you can do in daily life that can make a difference. There are some ideas in the box below to help feed your thinking about what one or two things you might do with a new perspective on hunger and justice. – JL



THINKING ABOUT HUNGER

- Do a little research on the Internet or at your local library. For example, October 16th is the annual World Food Day, and there are many ideas from the organizations that participate.
- Learn to choose sensible portions of nutritious meals. When out at a restaurant that serves mega size meals, ask for a smaller portion, or plan to take half home for lunch or dinner the following day.
- Write or email your legislative representatives and ask what is being done to distribute food more equitably.
- Choose carefully and thoughtfully when shopping to avoid waste and discarded food.
- Learn to recognize and control environmental cues (like inviting smells or a package of cookies on the counter) that make you want to eat when you are not hungry.
- Take a walk instead of watching television.
- Pray for guidance.
- Chat with your grocery store manager about what they are doing to cut waste or to share with those less fortunate.
- Be mindful of your eating - eat meals and snacks at a table, not in front of the TV.
- Pay attention to *why* you are eating. Determine if you are eating because you are actually hungry or because you are bored, depressed, or lonely.

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