

Food Crisis Response Discernment Team

1st meeting, May 7, 2008, PC(USA) - Louisville, Kentucky

Participants: Ashley Meyer (Presbyterian Women-PW), Susan Jackson-Dowd (PW), Ann Ferguson (PW), Sharon Dunne Gillies (PW), Melanie Hardison (Presbyterian Hunger Program-PHP, Enough for Everyone), Ruth Farrell (PHP), Amanda Craft (Peacemaking), Noelle Gulden (Racial Ethnic & Women's Ministries/PW), Stan DeVoogd (World Mission), Catherine Gordon (Washington Office-phone), Leslie Woods (Wash. Office-phone), Andrew Kang Bartlett (PHP), Chris Iosso (ACSWP, for a few minutes), Jud Hendrix (Pastor, Covenant Community Church)

Missing with valid notes from their doctors: Amgad Beblawi, David Gambrell (who sent in reflections, which were shared), Molly Casteel, Joel Hanisek, Chris Iosso (with us in spirit, though up against a GA deadline), Sara Lisherness, Cindy Goodman

Agenda:

- Welcome and introductions;
- Revisit meeting purpose of coming up with the first, next step(s) on if and how to respond to the food crisis;
- “Global food crisis” powerpoint (attached in English and Spanish) presented;
- People shared why they joined group and what their offices were/will be doing related to food crisis/poverty (notes below – A.);
- Jud described the ‘U’ discernment process (fruit of discussion below – B.);
- Discussion of next steps

A. What’s goin’ on already?

1. For PW, hunger is deep in our bones; first group to take on hunger in a serious way starting with advocacy with President Johnson, and continues: e.g. “We Are What We Eat” and work on Farm Bill reform.
2. One of priority foci of PW is Millennium Development Goals and hunger/poverty are core to the MDGs
3. PW is planning Horizon’s Food issue
4. PW will also raise up hunger/food issues at next Church-wide PW Gathering
5. Lifestyle integrity work of Enough for Everyone connects with poverty issues, including how we use our talents, money, time on living in a way that promotes economic and environmental justice.
6. Some of the Joining Hands networks have taken up food sovereignty and agricultural/trade justice issues, including developing grain banks in Cameroon.
7. Peacemaking Conference focuses on poverty in 2008. Incorporate hunger and food crisis issues into delegations and education about extractive industries to food crisis dynamics. Also continue to try to make connection between violent conflicts in world and hunger.
8. Hunger is a sin. National Network of Presbyterian College Women annual gathering theme is The Power of Poverty and will raise up importance of people’s movements.

9. World Mission will continue to work with country mission networks as they figure out ways to deepen their engagement for example by learning about and addressing poverty issues.
10. Washington Office is tapped into the various institutions/orgs and denominations trying to figure out how to respond to the food crisis. Seeing food crisis as an opportunity for groups usually working on separate tracks to figure out new ways to collaborate on overlapping issues and intertwined causes. But still seeing resistance to address structural roots of the trends that led to crisis.
11. ACSWP will want to incorporate food crisis issues into the Globalization report.

Why employ a different discernment process?

The problem is **too** big. The U process tries to activate all dimensions of person and group – mind, heart and spirit/will. This allows people and the group to go beyond the thinking and assumptions, which may be part of the worldview and approaches that underlie the problems.

["You can never solve a problem on the level on which it was created." –Albert Einstein]

The U process is helpful for approaching large and complex problems, as few other processes enable us to effectively perceive multiple factors and perspectives, and then to create together.

The process encourages us to drop into different types of consciousness (beyond head-based "downloading" leading us to react with head-based solutions). We acknowledge but gently set aside the Voices of Judgment, Cynicism and Fear. We are asked to tap into spirit or mystery and try to perceive what God or the future or the situation is asking of us, to do and to be.

The intention is that when a group together meets in God, not only the product will change but who we are changes as well. It is about individual, community, society, global transformation. We journey with the Spirit to discern and co-create what needs to happen.

Feelings, Images, Callings... that surfaced for people

- Finding comfort in the connections of the many relationships in the wider church; comfort in letting go to that; moving together, finding solutions.
- Walking with the poor goes beyond the Church; image of shining Jesus calling us to be in authentic solidarity with the poor and ensure everyone has enough.
- Importance of relationships. Feeling of Newness, we are getting better, not caught up in perfection, moving. Hope.
- Everyone yelling – broken relationship, followed by silence. Reaching out toward Right Relationships.
- Image of a playground. Group of boys comes and wants us to play their way, and can't be happy unless we do. Wondering whether everyone being fed is the vision that will bring happiness.
- Spirit-led work

- Image of going from dark to light. Energy and hard work can lead us toward renewal.
- Image of the Thai trucks waiting with rice on board to bring to hungry people in Burma. Feeling like a new type of vehicle, a new vehicle for moving us toward wholeness is needed? Broaden scope of how we conceive of “delivery.”
- Making room inside so something new can come. Image of holding a baby, and the irony of the Statue of Liberty singing out – “Give me your tired and poor.”

Some further reflections / first next steps

- Wondering whether our attraction to “sexy issues” out there helps us avoid the hard work of creating community/ies among ourselves.
- The hungry are among us here, too. They should be helping discern response.
- Attune to voices of oppressed and bring those into our circle.
- U process talks about developing a prototype that realizes the intention being sought; it is quickly done and therefore learning is also rapid. Do, debrief, make it better.
- Let go of “task” mentality; this touches us all; we are called to feed hungry, clothe the naked, liberate the oppressed.
- These are long term issues. We must go deeper – learn, pray, discern – because we don’t have the answers or a “fix”

Where were things left?

- A. Consensus to meet again, use U process, and take more time to learn, discern and plan (all)
- B. People will invite others/needed perspective and voices (Without whom a PC(USA) response would be incomplete) to be at the next gathering in about two weeks (AKB to convene)
- C. No need to merge next steps or actions into one consensus plan; U process encourages energy and intuition to lead next steps and action (all)
- D. Amanda Craft, Ann Ferguson, David Gambrell and Andrew Kang Bartlett will meet on Friday 1:30 PM to develop proposal/strategy around “Fast for the Famished” (placeholder name)
- E. Ann intends to promote Fast throughout PW networks
- F. Andrew will share fasting materials from Noelle and Steve Shussett; and David Gambrell’s reflections on “Eucharist and Hunger”
- G. Andrew asked to add sources to Global Food Crisis powerpoint. Attached along with Spanish translation, done by Jacob Goad (Mission Volunteer in Peru).

[Notes and all mistakes by Andrew]