

**TO: Congregations of Shenandoah Presbytery**

**FROM: Doug Sensabaugh, Hunger Action Enabler**

**DATE: June 10, 2008**

**SUBJECT: Concerns for World Food Crisis**

We have all been reading and hearing reports about the food crisis, about food riots in various places around the world, and the whole issue of global hunger. The reports are overwhelming to us westerners who are accustomed to "doing something to fix" a situation. We all feel helpless, and sometimes these feelings lead us to do nothing because we just do not know how to respond in the face of the extraordinary need.

The Presbyterian Hunger Program is listening, too, and is helping to interpret ways in which we might be able to be a part of a solution. Through their network of Hunger Action Enablers, resources are being shared that can help congregations interpret what is happening and then offer effective ways to respond that are true long term aids to the growing global food shortage problems.

Ruth Farrell, Acting Coordinator for the Presbyterian Hunger Program, offered the following information which connects the PHP's Five Program Areas to our situation today. These can be shared with your churches and you can decide on what follow through action your congregation can take.

1. **Work in Haiti** -- PHP works with the Farmers' Movement of Papaye which does incredible work in sustainable agriculture. The gardening program is making difference right now for the families that participate. Additional funds will expand the number of families they can work with. Mark Hare is a PCUSA Mission Co-worker assigned to this group. You can read more about that work at

<http://www.pcusa.org/missionconnections/profiles/harem.htm> Mark also is from the Ohio/Pennsylvania area and could probably visit your church/presbytery when next on Home Assignment. Make out to Presbyterian Church U.S.A. and note Account H000007 Peasant Movement Papaye

2. **Work in Cameroon** - the Joining Hands program of PHP has created RELUFA (a network of grassroots organizations in Cameroon working together on root causes of hunger and poverty). One of their simple, but incredible programs is in "food sovereignty" through locally-run grain reserves. You can see a video online and read about this work at [www.relufa.org](http://www.relufa.org) Christi Boyd is the Mission Co-worker assigned to this organization <http://www.pcusa.org/missionconnections/profiles/boydj.htm> Your church could give half to H000108 RELUFA and half to H000128 Cameroon Food Sovereignty Program. Make out to Presbyterian Church U.S.A. and note which account or how you want it divided between the two.

3. **Work in Liberia/Sierra Leon** -- PHP has worked with Agricultural Missions in a training program for sustainable development and agriculture. This program has been successful, and pending funds, PHP would like to support it this coming year. A gift from your church would help make that possible. These were not in any priority order, and you could choose among any of them. Make out to Presbyterian Church U.S.A. and note Account H000018 African Hunger

The above 3 suggestions are not in a ranked order. All three need the funds and use funds in a way that is effective and impacts families and communities.

For all HAEs, the analysis of the world food crisis highlights what PHP has been saying and doing for the last ten years and is why PHP works in those 5 areas - direct food relief, development assistance, influencing public policy, life-style integrity, and education and interpretation.

1. **Direct Food Relief:** This world food crisis highlights the need for food relief that **does NOT discourage local agriculture** -- (this is where many well-intentioned groups do things that have long-term negative impact that they may not even be aware of). **Local agriculture and food storage are significant factors for local economic development and should always be encouraged.** Otherwise, countries become dependent upon outsiders for food and then can no longer control food quantity, quality, or price. In addition, food from outside local markets means transportation -- and so, the cost of oil impacts the cost of food. When my husband and I lived in Congo, it was cheaper to buy USA rice distributed by AID than rice grown 50 miles from our house. People (I am embarrassed now to say that I was one of them) bought the cheaper rice and guess what happened to those rice farmers in Congo? They quit producing rice to sell. And now, no one can afford to buy rice unless AID decides to subsidize both the rice and the fuel to get it there.
2. **Development Assistance** - I know you (HAEs) all know this, but it is so important that PCUSA's PHP works with partners and supports land ownership by the poor, appropriate agricultural technology, and rural community development. Many countries can feed themselves if they can own land and reap the benefits of its harvests.
3. **Influencing Public Policy:** Regrettably government policies and business practices concerned primarily about profits in the US and not the long-term impact on the populations in developing countries are perhaps the biggest contributor to the world food crisis. If we ignore this, we are only concerning ourselves with the symptoms and not one of the root causes. In addition, analysis of the soaring food costs show that speculation (buying and selling futures on food and oil) is a huge contributor -- these are human-made laws that allow speculation on profits to impact current costs of food.
4. **Lifestyle Integrity** - When I was growing up, I was often told to finish my dinner because there are starving children in India. I didn't see how scraping my plate into our trash impacted the amount of food a child my age had in India. But, we now see how very connected our everyday actions do relate to people on the other side of the world. Every time I drive my car, turn the thermostat up or down, buy processed food, I am impacting the environment and others. PHP wants to equip Presbyterians with information, programs, and suggestions and to that end Enough for Everyone is producing some great new materials and looks forward to your ongoing feedback as you use them.
5. **Education and Interpretation:** I know you all use our (PHP) web sites. If interpreting the world food crisis seems a little daunting to you, you are in good company. We at PHP along with other PCUSA colleagues did a 3-day fast (I did a smaller version!) as we apply spiritual disciplines to understanding our Christian response. Please feel free to use any of the resources we used at -- <http://www.pcusa.org/hunger/foodcrisis/index.htm>.

We know that many "people in the pews" are deeply concerned about the food crisis and know in their hearts that we are being called to respond as individuals and as a community of believers. We see our role as helping you all connect-the-dots in this crisis that appears to be so complex, but yet isn't any more complex than greed and sinfulness.

Ruth Farrell

Acting Coordinator

Presbyterian Hunger Program

### **A Short List**

The following are some suggestions for churches seeking places to send funds that will have a positive effect on the global food situation. Again, some are immediate while others are designed to offer a long-term solution (such as Heifer International). Shenandoah Presbytery invests each quarter in most of these long-term solutions using the proceeds of the cents-a-meal funds sent in by each congregation. Your congregation can select from this list or investigate other places where your resources can help those in need.

#### *Presbyterian Hunger Program*

-International Development Assistance (H400303)

-Joining Hands Against Hunger (E051608)

#### *Other Direct Service and Development Assistance*

-Heifer Project

-Church World Service (e.g. Hunger and Development)

-Living Waters for World

-Presbyterian Disaster Assistance

#### *Advocacy*

-Bread for the World (towards international development assistance campaign)

-Jubilee USA