

EDITORIAL: World hunger merits response_110303

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Little things make a difference, even when you look at the big picture. Take hunger, for example.

All over the world, people are so poor they go to sleep hungry every night. That's not hunger like most Texas Baptists know it, when the preacher goes too long on Sunday morning and our stomachs growl or when we're too busy to stop for lunch and feel like we're "starving" by late afternoon. No, it's deep hunger, malnutrition. Mothers too undernourished to nurse, fathers too weak to work, children dying before they're old enough to go to school if, indeed, they have a school to go to.

All this is horrifying enough, but then one detail brings it right on home. Maybe you saw it in the last Baptist Standard: Americans spend almost 50 times more on fast food than they do on helping poor children. The average U.S. household provides only \$5 a year to assist children in poverty, and half of all households had not donated anything to help the poor in the past year.

Wesley Stafford, president of Compassion International, which sponsored the survey with the Barna Research Group, offers an out: "Although it is a disappointment that so many Americans don't feel responsibility for children in poverty, I believe more would participate if they knew who to

trust and what to do.”

Well, then, Texas Baptists have no excuse. Every year leading up to Thanksgiving, the Baptist General Convention of Texas collects the Texas Baptist Offering for World Hunger. Guided by the BGCT Christian Life Commission, the offering provides funds to alleviate hunger and root causes of poverty in Texas, throughout the United States and around the world.

The offering goal this year is \$1 million, only a crumb to feed a multitude, but enough to make a difference. It covers:

\$36,200 for Mexico and Canada, to support such ministries as building sanitary latrines to break the cycle of disease and providing tuberculosis screenings for refugee children.

- ◆ \$195,800 for Texas, primarily to supply church-based food banks, but also to help fund such ministries as medical clinics and educational programs in at least 17 communities.

- ◆ \$120,000 for nine U.S. states and Puerto Rico. The money will stock food pantries; teach nutrition, job skills and English as a second language; support adult literacy workshops.

- ◆ \$90,000 for Central and South America and \$144,000 for Africa, to help families with subsistence farming projects, dig wells for safe drinking water and provide nutrition supplements for children.

- ◆ \$25,000 for Eastern Europe and \$78,000 for the Middle East, to supplement the diets of malnourished families, provide agricultural resources and supply clothing.

- ◆ \$111,000 Asia and the Far East, to convert waste to methane gas, provide vocational training and deliver food.

♦ \$200,000 for emergency response to meet other urgent and critical needs worldwide.

Make sure your church collects the offering, and give generously. Let's break the cycle of indifference to hunger.

News of religion, faith, missions, Bible study and Christian ministry among Texas Baptist churches, in the BGCT, the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) and around the world.