

Editorial: Let's be sure to feed our hungry Texas neighbors

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Thanks for those cans of corn, bags of rice and beans, other nonperishable foods, and even tubes of toothpaste and packages of toilet paper.

They make survival possible for every seventh person in the United States.

That's right, 14 percent of Americans—46 million people—depend upon food pantries and meal programs to feed themselves and their families, according to a new study released by Feeding America, a network of 200 food banks.

✘ Editor Marv Knox In the Lone Star State, the odds are even worse. More than 18 percent of Texans are food-insecure, meaning they do not have reliable access to affordable, nutritious food, according to the Texas Hunger Initiative, based at the Baylor University School of Social Work and supported by the [Texas Baptist Christian Life Commission](#). That means almost one in five Texans, or more than 4.8 million people, may not know the source of their next meal.

“People in America have to make trade-offs,” Bob Aiken, CEO of [Feeding America](#), told Religion News Service. “They have to pick between buying food for their children or paying for utilities, rent and medicine. ...

“Hunger exists in literally every county in America. It's an urban problem, it's a suburban problem, and it's a rural problem.”

Hunger is pervasive and pandemic

That's what makes supporting your local food banks and church feeding

pantries so important. Hunger is pervasive and pandemic.

The Feeding America survey found that, among people who go to food banks:

- 26 percent are black, 20 percent are Hispanic, 43 percent are white and 11 percent are other.
- 33 percent of households have at least one family member with diabetes.
- 65 percent of households have a child under 18 or someone 60 or older.
- And 25 percent of military families depend upon food banks.

According to the Texas Hunger Initiative:

- Our state's child food insecurity rate is 27.6 percent, including more than 1.8 million children.
- 17.9 percent of Texans—4.8 million people—live in poverty.

School has started, and the 2014 general elections are only two months away. In this political season, Americans—Texans included—will disagree sharply on candidates and public policy. The season is bound to be rancorous.

Follow Jesus

But we all can agree Christians should be feeding people, alleviating hunger. Jesus said when we turn our backs on the hungry, the thirsty, the stranger, the naked, the sick and the imprisoned, we reject him. But when we feed, welcome, clothe, heal and visit them, we do the same to him.

So, let us be on the side of Jesus by being on the side of the hungry.

Make sure your church supports your local food bank. And if your community does not have a pantry that provides food for the poor, start one.

Then be sure to give sacrificially and volunteer faithfully to ensure its success.

If you need help, contact the [Texas Hunger Initiative](#).