



# PHP POST

Fall 2022 | Presbyterian Hunger Program | [www.pcusa.org/hunger](http://www.pcusa.org/hunger)

Eradicating Systemic Poverty

## FROM REFORM TO TRANSFORMATION: Ending Hunger and Eradicating Poverty

By Andrew Kang Bartlett, associate for national hunger concerns

David Beckmann, a founding father of the domestic anti-hunger enterprise and retired president of Bread for the World, a flagship anti-hunger group the Presbyterian Hunger Program helped found in 1974, often preached an important message: We can't food bank our way out of hunger; ending hunger requires political will.

The Rev. Art Simon, a pastor in New York City dealing with hunger and poverty surrounding his Lower East Side church, was a prime organizer behind Bread. To Beckmann's point, Simon once said, "It's better to build a fence at the top of a cliff than to have an ambulance at the bottom," meaning "Let us tackle hunger's root causes."

Therefore, in 1975, Bread launched its first Offering of Letters on the right to food. Bread generated more than 100,000 letters and the landmark Right to Food Resolution was passed by Congress, which states: "The United States reaffirms the right of every person in this country and throughout the world to food and a nutritionally adequate diet."

The Right to Food is a very important concept, but how on earth can it be realized? For a declaration in Washington, D.C., to translate into a reality experienced by individuals in downtown Baltimore, rural West Virginia or the wheat fields of North

Dakota, the systems that perpetuate hunger must be transformed. To end hunger, poverty must be eradicated.

So, we in the PC(USA) have boldly placed eradicating systemic poverty as a top tier priority of the Matthew 25 initiative. Well, amen! And ...to do this well, we need to first look at where we've been.

Since the launch of the War on Poverty in 1964, we've passed hundreds of well-meaning federal, state and local anti-hunger and social welfare bills, yet have failed to eradicate poverty. In fact, U.S. poverty rates remain above 13% overall and are far higher among our children.

Certainly, legislation can and has lessened the suffering, but we are still in the same inequitable boat where the ultra-rich, lounging in the captain's quarters, call the shots and further accumulate power and wealth — wealth that was generated on stolen land and labor, and the exploitation of nature. The rest of us, the overwhelming majority, squabble over crumbs in the galley or are simply stranded on the shore.

Reform of a deeply unjust system only lessens the pain without offering long-awaited healing. If we wish to change outcomes, the architecture of the boat itself must be transformed and we must



Abby Rudolph

Immigrant and refugee children grew and harvested these sweet potatoes at the Americana World Community Center in Louisville, Ky.

look to those people and communities that are directly impacted to learn strategies that can build a boat that floats us all.

One approach we learn from our partners is to focus on materially changing conditions. In central Virginia, we witness Black farmers organizing themselves into a farming cooperative, called an Agrarian Commons, where they collectively own and steward the land purchased with the financial support of PHP and many other supporters. One of a dozen Agrarian Commons starting up around the country, this model, which in Virginia has both urban and rural land, is based on a tradition of community land trusts, which makes farming viable, enables wealth generation and preserves land as farmland into the future.

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## Eradicating Systemic Poverty and Hunger

by Rebecca Barnes, coordinator for PHP

The Presbyterian Mission Agency embraces the vision of being a Matthew 25 church — becoming actively engaged in the world by living out the invitation to build vital congregations, dismantle structural racism and eradicate systemic poverty. This issue of the PHP Post is dedicated to eradicating systemic poverty. (Go to [pcusa.org/phpost](http://pcusa.org/phpost) to see PHP Posts on Matthew 25, dismantling structural racism and building congregational vitality.)

Systemic poverty refers to the economic exploitation of people who are poor through laws, policies, practices and systems that perpetuate their impoverished status. We live in a world where not all have equal access to education, transportation, fresh food, financial resources, clean air, water or healthy environments, employment with a living wage, health care, benefits, citizenship and affordable housing. This lack of access creates generational cycles of poverty and a racial wealth gap that are systemic in nature.

As we work to eradicate systemic poverty, we are touching on all the same concerns that Presbyterians have long related to issues of hunger, including employment and fair wages in order to afford food; community access and rights to land, water, seeds and other natural resources in order to grow food; affordable housing and safe

communities in order to keep and preserve food; and transparency, justice and human rights in local, national and global laws. The same “root causes” that keep people hungry also keep people poor. The same “underlying reasons” that enable some people and nations in our world to consume and accumulate so much food that it goes to waste also enable some people and nations to amass great wealth, natural resources and power while others suffer. These are fundamentally theological issues, and the church does well to address them however we can.

For Presbyterians to understand and engage in eradicating systemic poverty, we incorporate these concerns and actions into all facets of church life — in our worship, learning, relationships, actions and in our own sharing of resources. (See 5 Spiritual Practices to End Poverty on pages 6–7.)

We focus first and foremost on listening to and learning from communities directly impacted by poverty and hunger. We form genuine relationships and value the leadership of those most impacted. We then work alongside community leaders as together we act for positive change. We engage in policy advocacy, community organizing and movement building in ways that demonstrate true solidarity. May God guide us in this deeply spiritual work!



### Join Now!!

Does your church work to integrate environmental practices and thinking into congregational life? Does your worship seek to intentionally honor Creation? Are you always looking to make your building have a smaller carbon footprint?

Maybe you should become an Earth Care Congregation! The ECC certification recognizes in a tangible way the churches that make the commitment to take seriously God’s charge to “till and keep” the garden.

To learn more about the Earth Care Congregation Program and see the complete list of churches, please visit [pcusa.org/earthcarecongregations](http://pcusa.org/earthcarecongregations).

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## Building Relationships First, Then Working Together for Change

by Jenny Oldham, presbyterian hunger program

Presbyterian Hunger Program has partnered with the Washington Interfaith Network (WIN) since 2016 and recently had the privilege of hearing from the Rev. Alison Dunn-Almaguer of WIN. Her story of a housing victory in Washington, D.C., emphasized the importance of community organizing and building relationships.

In this city, displacement is constantly happening. People are being pushed out because of high costs, even though they’re making solid wages and have good jobs. Dunn-Amaguer shared that one way to fight something as big as gentrification is piece by piece, through power.

Temple Courts was an affordable housing building in a diverse community in a historically African American neighborhood, where some families had lived for years.

By the mid-2000s, the building was in disrepair. Management stopped showing up, stopped doing pest control and stopped taking care of the trash. In 2008, the building was leveled. Residents were promised that it would be rebuilt and that they would have the right to return.

For years after, local congregations talked to the council and the mayor, trying to get a resolution for the residents. And for years, residents also tried to get the building rebuilt, but their voices went unrecognized. It wasn’t until the groups began to build a relationship together that their action would achieve the desired outcome.

WIN helped organize a neighborhood team with members of two local congregations: Mount Lebanon Baptist Church, a historic African American congregation; and Holy Redeemer Catholic Church, which was formed by a merger of two congregations, bringing Black and white members to the table together.



Congregation Based Community Organization Washington Interfaith Network (WIN) celebrating successes.

Team members began to knock on doors and ask neighbors, “What is the biggest thing that you care about in this neighborhood? What’s the thing you want to change?” Over and over, they heard that eight years prior, residents were told they would be able to come back, but the site was a parking lot.

Nathan Brown was young when the residents were evicted. He recalled, “I remember the yellow flyers that were posted up that said that we were going to be kicked out within seven days. We only had seven days ... and now I have children of my own and struggle day to day to find a stable place to live. My mom still doesn’t have a stable place to live. What can we do about it?”

Dunn-Almaguer responded, “What do you want to do about it?”

“I want to bring it back.”

The next week, Brown and 12 other displaced residents met with members of the two churches and WIN. The ensuing campaign was centered on the voices of the local community, the congregations added the power of their voices, and WIN added organizing experience.

Six months later, 300 people gathered with a council member to demand for investment in rebuilding Temple Courts. The council member agreed, but the mayor would also need to be involved. WIN called on its 50 organizations, and more than 1,000 people joined the effort. People from congregations in all eight of the Washington, D.C., wards asked mayoral candidates, “If you are elected, will you work with us to ensure that Temple Courts is rebuilt?”

Six years later, residents are being interviewed for move-in dates. Not only residents but also their children have the right to return.

Every step of the long journey, residents were involved, along with church and WIN representatives. They met with elected officials, discussed funds and land, and met with developers. Developers wanted to build segregated buildings — one for high-end housing and one for affordable housing — but the community said no. And their voices are being honored. Market-rate units, mid-income units and more than 200 lower-income units will stand together.

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# MATTHEW 25

Seven assertions ground our work to end systemic poverty in the biblical tradition, our Reformed theology, our confessional heritage and our Presbyterian policies. They can be used together or separately to lay a foundation for your congregation's anti-poverty work. Incorporate them in worship liturgically as a "declaration of faith," include them in newsletters, post them on

## Matthew 25 Assertions on Poverty

the church's website, and distribute them to poverty study and discussion groups. To find the whole list of seven assertions, go to [pcusa.org/mt25poverty](http://pcusa.org/mt25poverty).

**We believe** God calls us to work to end poverty and to create communities of well-being. We believe that God created the world and called it good; that the earth belongs to God; that God tasked the first humans with serving and preserving God's Creation; and that the prophets called again and again for God's people to seek well-being and justice for all people.

**We believe** Jesus Christ models how we are to live in community and to confront systems of injustice, including poverty. Jesus Christ taught us to care for the vulnerable, to be a good neighbor and to provide food to the hungry. Christ came to proclaim good news to the poor. Jesus Christ came not to condemn the world, but to save it.

**We believe** the Holy Spirit inspires, motivates and guides all faithful work to eradicate poverty and build communities of well-being. The early Christians supported sharing things in common for the good of all. Throughout the centuries, Christian hospitality has included providing food and shelter. In the Lord's Prayer, we pray for God's kingdom to come "on earth" as it is in heaven, and we believe the Spirit works in the world to make this so.

**We declare** that poverty is not a personal problem but a corporate sin and that "a church that is indifferent to poverty, or evades responsibility in economic affairs, or is open to one social class only ... offers no acceptable worship to God. ... Enslaving poverty in a world of abundance is an intolerable violation of God's good Creation." (PC[USA] Confession of 1967)

## 2022 Global Food Week of Action Sticks with Oct. 10–17 Dates



Community garden planting at First Presbyterian Church of Cottage Grove, an Earth Care Congregation and a Hunger Action Congregation.

This year we're going from Monday to Monday, so we don't miss the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty on Oct. 17, given the alignment with the PC(USA)'s Matthew 25 goal of eradicating system poverty!

In 2022, World Food Day — always Oct. 16 — falls on a Sunday, so we have a great opportunity to preach about hunger, food, climate and poverty. If you aren't the pastor, make sure to share this announcement with them along with the webpage — [pcusa.org/foodweek](http://pcusa.org/foodweek).

**INVITATION:** Your congregation is invited to co-sponsor Food Week — for free — with a pledge to do some promotion around the week, incorporate in worship, and/or to plan and share an event happening in October related to food, hunger, climate or poverty. You can also add a hunger, food justice, climate justice or anti-poverty group that you're involved with as a co-sponsor as well. Just email [php@pcusa.org](mailto:php@pcusa.org) if you wish to add your congregation or group to the 80-plus co-sponsors.

## The Global Debt Crisis and Worsening Hunger and Poverty

By Eileen Schuhmann, mission specialist for international hunger concerns, Presbyterian Hunger Program

Debt is a root cause of hunger and poverty. Global debt (which includes borrowing by governments, businesses and people) surpassed \$300 trillion in 2021, a record \$77 trillion increase from 2020, which the International Monetary Fund cautions is at dangerously high levels. This extraordinary borrowing has stemmed in part from the high spending countries have made toward protective measures, combined with the interruption of income generation due to lockdowns.

Now with the war in Ukraine, it is expected that global debt will push even higher as global insecurity persists and food and fuel prices continue to soar. Meanwhile the U.S. raising interest rates will increase the value of the dollar and drive the debt of many countries even higher.

Low-income countries and households are impacted the most by high debt levels. Sixty percent of low-income countries are on verge of debt distress where they can't meet their financial obligations.

Sri Lanka is an example of a country in debt distress. Just this past April, Sri Lanka suspended its repayment of foreign debt, and the central bank declared the country bankrupt. There is now a tremendous amount of uncertainty and political instability in the country. There have been nonstop peaceful protests, some met with violence. Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa resigned in May 2022 followed by the resignation of his brother President Gotabaya Rajapaksa in July 2022. In the heat of the crisis, the country experienced up to 15 hours without electricity daily. This shortage of petrol, diesel and kerosene is causing transportation issues, limiting the fishing activities that are so vital to Sri Lanka's economy and food supply and making it extremely challenging to cook food. Sri Lanka's reliance on imported food has made



Sri Lankans rally to demand that the government return lands to those forcibly displaced.

accessing and affording basic food items difficult for households due to the dramatic devaluation of the Sri Lankan rupee by 32% since the beginning of the year and the doubling in the cost of imported foodstuffs. Complicating food access further, up to 70% of farmers didn't farm this year due to shortages in fuel and fertilizers. And medical supplies and medicines are extremely limited at best and totally unavailable at worst.

The sustainable development of lesser-developed countries is impeded by heavy debt burdens. Instead of making investments in sustainable development, highly indebted countries have no other choice but to take out new loans to pay off old debt rather than invest in development projects that will generate future revenues and growth. Oftentimes, the original debt was incurred to pay for projects that failed to generate the intended revenues. For example, in the case of Sri Lanka again, the Mattala Rajapaksa International Airport, named after the former president during his presidency, was financed with foreign loans, but airlines refused to use the remote airport and farmers are now storing rice in the cargo terminals. Such failed projects increase poverty and are therefore impossible to repay.

Heavily indebted poor countries pay so much

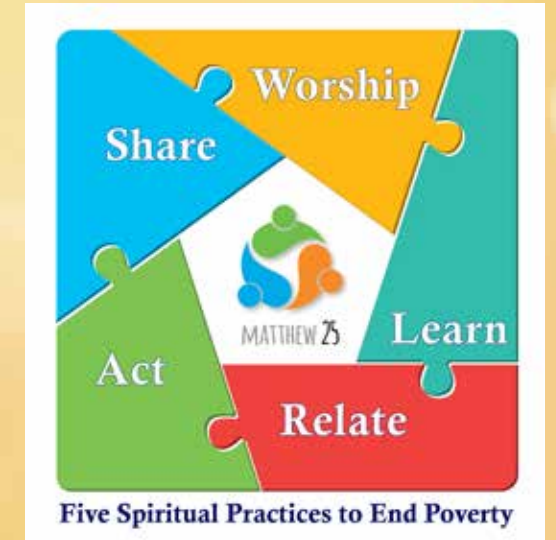
in debt-servicing costs (interest and principal repayment) that they are unable to meet the needs of their citizens. They cut back on investments in education, health care, food security and social programs. Thus, foreign debt leads to social debt — governments can't provide the services, protections and infrastructure that its citizenry require.

It's this failure to meet the needs of citizens that leads to conflict and political instability. There is a breakdown in trust and the relationship between the state and its citizens. This breakdown threatens democracy. People, out of desperation, can turn to violence. And with the growing violence and instability, the state becomes vulnerable to the deterioration of democracy and an uprising of authoritarianism.

Our Joining Hands partner in Sri Lanka, Praja Abhilasha, has a long history of fighting the land grabbing by the Sri Lankan government and military for the implementation of development projects that have now led to the bankruptcy of the country. This is one of the reasons why the Presbyterian Hunger Program should continue to prioritize the land rights of communities and support their struggles to prevent harmful investment projects.

# SPIRITUAL PRACTICES TO END POVERTY

In the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)’s vision of being a Matthew 25 church — being actively involved in the world around us — one of the key themes is eradicating systemic poverty. As we seek to end poverty and instead build community well-being, we incorporate these concerns in all areas of our common church life. The Presbyterian Hunger Program offers the following resources to engage in issues related to poverty and community well-being through worship, education, partner relationships, avenues for action and sharing resources. Each of these areas is one for practice — knowing we’ll never get it exactly right, but we keep trying. Each of these is deeply spiritual — as we navigate worship, learning, relationships, action and sharing resources. For more on Matthew 25 efforts on eradicating systemic poverty, see [pcusa.org/mt25poverty](http://pcusa.org/mt25poverty).



Ugandan women gather for a community meeting.



Coalition of Immokalee Workers calls for food justice.



iStock

## Learn

Read children’s books as a starting point for Talking With Children about Homelessness: find recommendations at [pcusa.org/homeless](http://pcusa.org/homeless). Study the story of Joseph and learn about some modern-day solutions to hunger: download the PHP Bible Study at [pcusa.org/hunger/biblestudy](http://pcusa.org/hunger/biblestudy). And watch videos about the work of our grant partners around the world and hunger-related issues: visit [pcusa.org/hunger](http://pcusa.org/hunger) to access PHP’s YouTube channel.

## Act

Presbyterians stand in solidarity with Coalition of Immokalee Workers in the Fair Food Campaign and are active in state and national organizing for the Poor People’s Campaign. Part of our call as Christians is to organize and to advocate for the changes we believe are needed in the world. These two partners offer multiple ways to engage in faithful action: [ciw-online.org](http://ciw-online.org) and [poorpeoplescampaign.org](http://poorpeoplescampaign.org).

## Worship

Find worship resources, including sample prayer, 10 Commandments of Food and bulletin insert to celebrate the Food Week of Action each October. The Global Food Week of Action includes World Food Day (Oct. 16), International Day for Rural Women (Oct. 15) and International Day for the Eradication of Poverty (Oct. 17). See [pcusa.org/foodweek](http://pcusa.org/foodweek).



Cameroonian women show how to share resources through a successful community grain bank.



Joining Hands Network in Peru meets with U.S. Presbyterians.

## Share

PHP partners PRODEK and RELUFA are two organizations that fight hunger and poverty by mobilizing resources within communities to meet income generation and food and nutrition needs. PRODEK is currently supporting women’s groups with microloans where women can borrow funds to start small income generating activities and those funds grow as women repay loans with a small interest fee and circulate more loans among members. RELUFA continues to support community grain banks programs in the extreme north of Cameroon, which have addressed recurrent hunger problems in the villages there by permitting community members to borrow grain during the lean period and reimburse grain during the next harvest.

## Relate

For more than 20 years, the Joining Hands initiative of the Presbyterian Hunger Program has challenged global systems that generate hunger, poverty and injustice with the understanding that our own liberation is intrinsically tied to the liberation of our siblings around the world. It is with this understanding that we continue to deepen our relationships and solidarity with peoples in frontline communities who are living within extraction zones, who have had their environment and health polluted, been forcibly displaced from their lands and fallen into deeper poverty. And in listening to our partners, we are moved to analyze our own complicity as individuals, church and nation in maintaining systems of oppression so that we can become better partners and advocates for improved policies and corporate practices.

## International Guests Become Friends

by Eileen Best, co-moderator, presbyterian hunger program advisory committee

Connections with international guests can lead to lifelong friendships in a surprisingly short time. This happened to my husband, John, and me in September 2019 when we hosted Jaff Bamenjo through the International Peacemakers program. John was serving as the interim pastor of the Pine Island Presbyterian Church on the west side of Kalamazoo, Michigan, a small new church development congregation. A significant part of the congregation was a large extended family who were immigrants from Cameroon. Earlier in 2019, I had noticed that a participant in the International Peacemaking Program was from Cameroon. John encouraged the Pine Island session to apply for the program.

We were matched with Jaff, who is the director of RELUFA, an agency in Cameroon which is part of the Joining Hands network of the Presbyterian Hunger Program. RELUFA (the Network for the Fight Against Hunger in Cameroon) is a joint effort of groups within the society and grassroots communities who join forces to fight poverty, hunger and economic, social and environmental injustice on a national level. Jaff was only with us for four days but the bonds we formed are strong and continue to this day. During those four days, he preached at the church and at a presbytery meeting, spoke to a joint youth group of local Presbyterian youth, met with Western Michigan University students, visited with the staff of our state representative and our U.S. representative, and enjoyed the fellowship of gathering in the homes of our Cameroonian members. The violent conflict in Cameroon between the anglophone (English-speaking) and the francophone (French-speaking) parts of the country is heartbreaking and not well known in the United States. As in any place where there is war, people are displaced and cannot plant crops, which leads to widespread hunger and poverty.



Jaff Bamenjo and Rev. John Best visit with church members after worship.

Eileen Best

The Cameroonian families were eager to hear what Jaff was experiencing and they discussed what could be done, both here and in Cameroon, to promote justice for the people of Cameroon.

After Jaff's visit, we stayed in touch through Facebook, sharing news, prayer concerns and support. In 2020, I was elected to the Presbyterian Hunger Program Advisory Committee. Because Jaff's work with RELUFA is part of the Joining Hands network and supported by the Presbyterian Hunger Program, we have seen each other several times on Zoom calls. It is always a joy to see each other and have a few moments to chat. Because we know Jaff and have spent time together, the difficult situation in Cameroon is not an impersonal news story. It is the lived reality of our friend. I am so thankful that RELUFA is supported by the Presbyterian Hunger Program. We know that the One Great Hour of Sharing dollars are feeding people, promoting development work and fighting injustice

through an amazing grassroots program.

I have been blessed with opportunities to meet many international church leaders and I have friends all over the world. So many times, they become good friends, and sometimes, like our experience with Jaff, they become family.

Note: The Pine Island Church has since closed and the Cameroonian families are now active members of First Presbyterian Church in Kalamazoo, Michigan.

*Eileen Best is a retired Certified Christian Educator, living in Kalamazoo, Michigan, with her husband, the Rev. John Best, and is co-moderator of the Presbyterian Hunger Program Advisory Committee.*

### For more info

To connect your congregation with International Peacemakers, go to [pcusa.org/internationalpeacemakers](http://pcusa.org/internationalpeacemakers).

## The Three L's of Relationships

By Andrew Kang Bartlett, associate for national hunger concerns



Peru community leaders listen and learn together as they engage in reforestation efforts.

Red Unido Manos, Peru

*Ever notice that the church is often playing catch-up?*

While you can sometimes find congregations doing deep transformative work in their communities, we must confess this doesn't happen as much as we would like it to. Rather, it is often non-faith-based groups doing the work to transform harmful human systems of politics and money. The Matthew 25 initiative, especially its call to dismantle structural racism and eradicate systemic poverty, challenges us to step into the fray of systems change, both individually and through our congregations.

When considering the second goal of eradicating poverty, we pause at the immensity of that and wonder how on earth a couple million Presbyterians, much less I alone, can end poverty. Where do we start and how can we make progress on

such an audacious goal?! We do it together starting with a foundation built on genuine relationships.

Thankfully, we have dozens of partners across the country and around the world who wake up every morning and, usually after coffee, unflinchingly attempt to build a new world free of oppression and poverty. Through gifts to the Hunger Fund and One Great Hour of Sharing, you are already supporting these groups. Yet, this partnership can be much more than simply a transaction. I contend that engaging with our partners in authentic relationships will profoundly shape our discipleship in our attempt to be God's hands and feet on Earth.

Core to this process is getting to know each other and exploring the question of how to move, metaphorically, from playing catch-up to playing catch. To do this well, we

need to make our investment in long-term relationships and to commit to finding the common ground in our humanity and in our destinies. Practicing what I call the "Three L's of Relationships" — learning, listening and lingering — is where it starts.

The first two L's of relationships, learning and listening, are obvious as they form the basis for knowing each other's personal struggles and joys, and the history, context, challenges, values and dreams of one's people. The third L, lingering, communicates respect and demonstrates that this is not about achieving a particular goal, but re-centers the value on relationships.

Whether it is during a shared meal, building something together, joining in a local campaign, or celebrating milestones and victories, linger ... take the time to get

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## Global Hunger on the Rise

by Valéry Nodem, associate for international concerns

Valéry Nodem



A woman tends to her yam plants, an important source of vitamin A, in Batibo, Cameroon.

According to the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), global hunger has reached record levels. Although this steep increase started before the war in Ukraine, it has accelerated the trend — including subsequent bans of wheat export by countries like Egypt and India who are trying to secure enough food for their own people.

FAO warns that international food prices will hit record highs this year, which means vulnerable people in the poorest countries will suffer most from food insecurity because of rising costs. Since 2019, the number of people in low- and middle-income countries who suffer acute food insecurity — when insufficient food consumption puts lives or livelihoods in immediate danger — has doubled to 276 million people. **All four pillars of food security — availability, access, stability and utilization — are threatened by the combined negative effects of increased costs, conflicts and Covid.**

In low- and middle-income countries, lots of families spend over half of their budget on food and are seriously impacted by

higher food prices. The Center for Global Development estimates that because of the current spike in global food costs, an additional 40 million people will be pushed into severe poverty.

FAO indicates that world food prices are currently higher than what they were during the previous food crises in 1974 and 2007. Prices of basic commodities such as flour or vegetable oil have tripled in some regions since the Ukraine war began. Food producers around the world also face skyrocketing prices for fertilizers, of which Russia is one of the biggest exporters. In severely affected countries, rising food prices very often threaten social stability. When food prices were at their highest in 2008, more than 20 countries reported social unrest and instability.

Just as increased costs lead to food insecurity (which in turn drives social unrest), it is also true that conflict is another one of the major drivers of hunger. The World Food Program estimates that 60% of the world's hungry live in areas riven by war and violence. Conflicts push people from their homes, and turn productive workers,

forced to flee their homes, into refugees and beggars.

Current conflicts like the ones in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Nigeria, South Sudan, Yemen and Syria have left more than 100 million people in “famine-like” conditions. Russia and Ukraine typically export 28% of the wheat that is consumed in the world, 75% of sunflower oil, and a significant share of barley, maize and fertilizers. Almost 30 countries import more than half of their food imports from Russia, and countries like Somalia where PHP has partners export almost 100% of their wheat from Russia. From 2020 to 2021, the price of fertilizers on global markets doubled. It doubled again this year. This is threatening food production in many countries that purchase most of their fertilizers from Russia.

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A rice farmer plants his field in India.

Valéry Nodem

### From Reform to Transformation from p. 1

A change in the material conditions in Little Village, with its largely Latinx population located in the heart of Chicago, is what our partner, Little Village Environmental Justice Organization, is accomplishing. Using a community organizing approach, community members raise their voices to resist polluting industries and insist on respect and beneficial policies. Building on their success creating a gorgeous community garden with colorful chickens and a cornucopia of healthy produce, they recently acquired land for a cooperative mini farm within a public park built on a restored Superfund site.

A grassroots community coalition in Louisville, Food in Neighborhoods, is assisting neighbors in underserved parts of the city to purchase vacant lots where they can grow food and increase the green space in deforested urban areas.

Land ownership changes the equation and fosters both wealth and wellness. Shifting resources to those who truly need them, to those working to improve their communities, is an essential way to improve material conditions and begin changing the architectural design of a more inclusive

### Building Relationships from p. 3

During a recent hard-hat tour, Brown's daughter said, “Daddy, I want to be like you — you got this building back ... for me and for you and for our family.” Brown later ran for an elected position and continues to be engaged. He is now fighting for Black equity through a home ownership campaign.

### The Three L's of Relationships from p. 9

to know each other. Certainly, small talk about the weather and the kids is great, but also explore whether there is openness to explore deeper inquiries ... “What do you

boat. The other way is to shift power.

The unhealthy accumulation of power into the hands of a tiny elite — mostly white and male — that produces so much human suffering and harm to God's Creation is more challenging to confront. But confront it we must because Frederick Douglass' words are as true today as when he said them in 1857, “Power concedes nothing without a demand.”

The congregation-based community organizing groups that PHP supports make demands directly to decision makers. Demands for investment in affordable housing, backed by the power of large numbers of faith-based constituents, have filled the coffers of Affordable Housing Trust Funds around the country with hundreds of millions of dollars devoted to building affordable houses and apartments.

Taking lessons from our courageous partners, let us never be content with reform alone and instead strive to transform the architecture of power and wealth so together we can finally eradicate systemic poverty.

Dunn-Almaguer says that organizing “changes the leaders who are engaged and who are involved.” It is slow, but meaningful and powerful, and it works to change systems — not just put bandages on them.

love?” “What makes you mad?” “About what are you grieving?” “What does liberation and the Beloved Community look like to you?”

### Global Hunger from p. 10

Climate change also remains a very important driver of food insecurity. According to the World Food Program, 80% of the world's hungry live in areas prone to natural disasters and extreme weather. Droughts, heat waves and floods are threatening farming in all parts of the world. The climate crisis will have increasingly damaging consequences for food systems around the world. East Africa is currently going through one of the most severe droughts in 40 years, which reduces food production, leads to extreme hunger and starvation, and to the death of millions of livestock. In South Asia, predictions, after the recent wave of extreme heat, are that climate change will increase the number of hungry people by 23 million in 2030.

Covid has added to these problems through a combination of increased unemployment, supply chain disruptions and widespread lockdowns. In turn, hunger has increased the severity of Covid virulence and increased mortality by weakening immune systems among the world's most vulnerable populations.

During these trying times, our partners on the ground are witnessing the impact of these multifaceted crises on their communities. They work with families having to cut one or two meals a day; with farmers who have fled their lands and homes because of conflicts, or unable to grow food because of extreme droughts or floods; and with people having a hard time adjusting to growing food prices.

In these times of global turmoil, we need to keep our siblings in different parts of the world in our prayers. We need to help those in need and provide support for them and their families. We need to study how all these issues are interconnected and get involved in fighting for the end of wars, better climate policies and debt reduction. We need to pay attention, as we are all affected by this.



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This includes the English version of the leader's guide, participant's manual and middle school curriculum. Spanish, African American and English versions are also available for download at no cost. Find *Just Eating* at [pcusa.org/justeating](http://pcusa.org/justeating) or call (800) 533-4371.

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