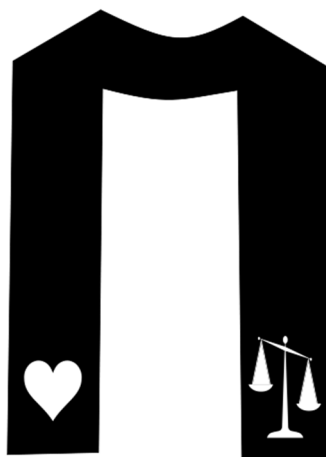


Broken Bread

Newsletter of Social Ministries for Peace & Justice, Des Moines Presbytery
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JUSTICE



In every age
Christians ponder their
mission in the world.
Is a passionate concern
for justice part of
being a follower of Jesus?
Or is seeking justice
something Christians may
choose to do
or not do?

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BIBLICAL BASICS ON JUSTICE

from Bread for the World

When we examine the scriptures, we find out how central justice is to the life of the Christian. There is no concept in the Old Testament with so central a significance for all relationships of human life as that of justice. The people of the Old Testament were in relationship with God because of the covenant that existed between God and Israel.

As a member of this covenant community, each person was in relationship with every other person, including poor and needy people, one's family, and even strangers and aliens. Out of these relationships arose responsibilities and demands. The just person was faithful to these responsibilities and demands.

God's Ownership, Our Stewardship

God created the world and all that is in it. Therefore God is the owner of everything in creation. *The earth is the Lord's and all that is in it, the world, and those who live in it* (Psalm 24:1). God invites human beings to be stewards of creation. We are invited to be good stewards of what

belongs to God. Stewardship is not a way of managing *our* possessions. It means rather that we care for what *God* has entrusted to *us*.

Let My People Go! The Cry of Yahweh

The justice of God is vividly portrayed in God's concern for the Israelite people when they were in Egypt. In the hold of bondage and slavery, they cried out to God, Yahweh, for help (Exodus 2:23-25). Yahweh called Moses to deliver the Israelite people from slavery:

Then the Lord said: I have observed the misery of my people who are in Egypt; I have heard their cry on account of their taskmasters. Indeed, I know their sufferings, and I have come down to deliver them from the Egyptians (Exodus 3:7-8).



The Exodus is the fundamental experience for the Jewish people. Every year the community of Israel gathers to celebrate and relive the Exodus. They are to remember that their God frees

them from oppression and injustice. If they are to be faithful to God, they must free the oppressed and do justice toward others.

Yahweh: Defender of the Oppressed

In the legal tradition of the Old Testament, we find the theme of concern for the oppressed and poor of society: *The resident aliens, the orphans, and the widows in your towns, may come and eat their fill so that the Lord your God may bless you in all the work that you undertake* (Deuteronomy 14:28-29).

Concern for the oppressed and the poor was at the core of the Israelites calling. This concern was rooted not only in the covenant, but more importantly, in the very nature of Yahweh. Yahweh is the defender of the oppressed, the One who liberates the captives, the One who feeds hungry people:

(The Lord) executes justice for the oppressed;...gives food to the hungry. The Lord sets the prisoners free; the Lord opens the eyes of the blind (Psalm 146:7-8).

Share Your Bread with the Hungry: The Message of the Prophets

Throughout Israel's history, the prophets reminded Israel to remain faithful to the covenant. Their primary mission was to lead the people back to the path of righteousness and justice. The prophets were sent not only to speak Yahweh's word, but also to speak on behalf of those who had no voice.

Yahweh complained through the prophets that the people had forgotten who it was that gave them their land

and provisions. They, who once were hungry and oppressed, refused to feed the hungry and themselves became the oppressors. The people of Israel spoke folly and left the craving of the hungry unsatisfied (Isaiah 32:6, paraphrased).

Amos was one of the strongest in calling the people back to the way of justice. Israel was at the height of her economic and political power when Yahweh sent the poor shepherd Amos to call the people of Israel to repentance.

These people had often transgressed against the covenant. One transgression was that they *oppressed the poor and robbed them of their grain* (Amos 5:11a, TEV). The injustice that the rich engaged in completely negated the value of their worship:

I hate, I despise your festivals, and I take no delight in your solemn assemblies. Even though you offer me your burnt offerings and grain offerings, I will not accept them; and the offerings of well-being of your fatted animals I will not look upon. Take away from me the noise of your songs; I will not listen to the melody of your harps. But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an everflowing stream (Amos 5:21-24). Where there is not justice, life is barren and worship of God is a sham.

Shalom: The Vision of Peace

But where will justice lead us? What is the goal toward which the prophets call the people of Yahweh? In doing justice, we come to know God better. *Did not your father eat and drink and do justice and righteousness? Then it was well with him. He judged the*

cause of the poor and needy; then it was well. Is not this to know me? Says the Lord (Jeremiah 22:15b-16).

In addition to knowing God better, doing justice leads to *shalom*, peace: *Then justice will dwell in the wilderness, and righteousness abide in the fruitful field. The effect of righteousness will be peace, and the result of righteousness, quietness and trust forever* (Isaiah 32:16-17).

Where there is justice there is the possibility of peace. The opposite is also true: where there is oppression and injustice there can be no *shalom*.

What is this *shalom* God is calling us to experience? It is certainly more than the absence of war and violence. The basic meaning of *shalom* is wholeness. It involves all the conditions of life that make for wholeness and harmony. *Shalom* is the goal of God's work as deliverer and liberator. God's purpose in the world is to restore *shalom* wherever it has been broken. God's will for all is *shalom*, and the task of the community of faith is to do God's will.

Prepare the Way of the Lord



When we turn to the New Testament, we find these same themes. John the Baptist, who prepared the way for Christ's public ministry, exhorted his hearers to change their lives. When the crowd asked him what to do, John replied in clear and

certain terms: *Whoever has two coats must share with anyone who has none; and whoever has food must do likewise* (Luke 3:11).

The Work of Justice and Peace: Jesus' Ministry

Jesus characterized his own earthly ministry by service to the poor, the outcasts, and the downtrodden. Early in his public ministry, Jesus entered the synagogue and read from the prophet Isaiah to describe his ministry: *The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor* (Luke 4:18-19).

Luke presented us with Jesus at the beginning of his public ministry. Jesus identified himself with the Servant of the Lord and saw himself as part of the great prophetic tradition of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Hosea, and Amos.

Jesus announced the coming of God's reign. But not only did he announce its coming in the power of the Holy Spirit, he also embodied God's reign. In his life, in what he said, and in his deeds, we see what God's reign is all about. In his death and resurrection, God's reign is inaugurated in a new and definitive way.

With Jesus, we have the fullness of *shalom*, of justice and peace. Jesus is our path to justice and peace. In him, we know and have the justice and peace of God. In Jesus, Yahweh's covenant has been renewed, and we are called to

be agents of God's *shalom* in the world

Paul reminds us that Jesus, *though he was rich,...for your sakes...became poor, so that by his poverty you might become rich* (2 Corinthians 8:9).

Christ Among Us

Jesus is the Poor One among us. He identified himself with poor and hungry people and those who suffer and are in need of help. Christians thus come face to face with a great mystery. God in Christ is present in a special way in poor and hungry people (Matthew 25:31-46). Christ represents himself to us in a special way in the hungry, the naked, the sick, and the prisoner. He is among us in the outcasts, and the oppressed of our age. Their cry for justice is Christ's cry for justice. The very Christ who suffered and died on the cross that all might be reconciled to God is crucified again and again in the suffering and death of poor and hungry people.

One of the distinguishing characteristics of the new Christian community was care for those in need. Following the example of their Lord, the early church found ways to care for poor and hungry people, the needy in their midst.

The Bible does not offer us a ten-point program or a five-year plan of action on how to combat injustice in our world. Rather, the scriptures give us a vision of a new creation. *They will hunger no more, and thirst no more...and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes* (Revelation 7:6a-7b).

NOTE: All biblical quotes are from the New Revised Standard Version unless otherwise noted.

SOME DEFINITIONS

From "Hand in Hand: Doing Evangelism and Doing Justice", published by the Presbyterian Peacemaking Program

Justice: Using the Dictionary

Our word for justice comes from the Latin *jungere* meaning *bind, join, tie, or oblige*.

The Hebrew word *tsedaqah* is translated sometimes as *justice* and sometimes as *righteousness* in English versions of the Bible.

Working Definition of Justice by the Presbyterian Peacemaking Program

Doing justice is the ministry of ensuring that all people are able to participate fully and fairly in the human community and are able to enjoy the goodness of God's creation. This response to God's grace includes efforts to remove the impediments to full participation including poverty, abuse, environmental degradation and discrimination on the basis of race, ethnicity, class, gender, age or disability.

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God sends the church in the power of the Holy Spirit to share with Christ in establishing God's just, peaceable, and loving rule in the world. God's reconciliation in Jesus Christ is the ground of justice and peace. The church in worship proclaims, receives, and enacts reconciliation in Jesus Christ and commits itself to strive for justice and peace in its own life and in the world.

Justice is the order God sets in human life for fair and honest dealing and for giving rights to those who have no power to claim rights for themselves. The biblical vision of doing justice calls for

- Dealing honestly in personal and public business,
- Exercising power for the common good,
- Supporting people who seek the dignity, freedom, and respect that they have been denied,
- Working for fair laws and just administration of the law,
- Welcoming the stranger in the land,
- Seeking to overcome the disparity between rich and poor,
- Bearing witness against political oppression and exploitation,
- Redressing wrongs against individuals, groups, and peoples in the church, in this nation, and in the whole world.

IT'S NOT THAT SIMPLE: A TREATISE ON FISHING LESSONS

*by Chris Bryan and Katie Cook,
previously published in SEEDS
Magazine*

How often we hear quoted the ancient Chinese proverb: "Give a man a fish and feed him for a day. Teach a man to fish and feed him for a lifetime." Though well-intentioned and at first glance logical, this adage does not really address the complex issues facing hungry people.

One of the inherent dangers in the saying is that it implies that people who don't

have enough to eat are the sole cause of their predicament. The logic suggests that they are in control of their own fate, at fault because of their own deficiencies. And our idea of self-sufficiency, of "learning to fish," assumes that, if they learn our uniform (most often translated "Western") methods for growing food and supporting themselves, they will be all right.

Another danger in the proverb is that it grossly oversimplifies the problem of food security. It encourages us to ignore a significant number of major factors that cause hunger. At work here are much more than ignorance or lack of tools. Before we ask them to fish for themselves, we must ask: Do the fisherfolk have access to a lake? Who owns the lake? Who controls transportation to the lake? Is it polluted? If so, who polluted it? Is it overfished by industrial interests? Who owns the hooks and lines?



Our global economy has turned even the most basic natural resources into commodities, making it sometimes impossible for people with plenty of native knowledge and expertise to earn a decent living or put food on their own table.

We as responsible people of faith should examine the roots of these problems. Political instability and vast privatization have led to circumstances in which know-

ing how to fish so to speak does not necessarily grant self-sufficiency. The raw truth is that people do not go hungry because they are lazy, or because they don't know how to fish. They go hungry because they don't have access to power.

The solution lies in helping people around the globe, and in our backyards, to empower themselves. Instead of urging them to learn to fish, we should speak on their behalf regarding injustices barring them from food resources. That means we, who claim we care, should listen to people who work first hand with the hungry and malnourished and we should listen to the hungry and malnourished themselves. Once we have heard from them, we can set about to fight the oppression that causes their hunger.

Of course, this is not a popular rallying cry. It is much easier to fall back on a proverb that makes those of us in the developed world feel a little less responsible, a little less guilty. It is always easier to blame poverty on the poor.

In addition to our aversion to guilt, we also fear the idea of transferring power to the powerless. We fear that we may have to change our own lifestyles. We are also afraid because such ideas tend to draw enmity from the people who hold most of the power.

And we may not know for sure how to go about transferring that power. We will probably disagree about the best ways to begin. But it seems that, once we realize that some of those folks already know how to fish better than we do, we've made a very important step.

TRANS-PACIFIC PARTNERSHIP (HUH?)

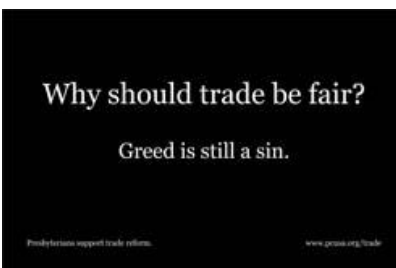
by Margaret Vernon, Trinity
United Presbyterian Church
Mission Team, Indianola, IA

Are you suddenly seeing Trans-Pacific Partnership+ (TPP) on your email alerts, or Facebook? Nancy Lister-Settle, our Des Moines Presbytery Hunger Action Enabler, said the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), has been looking at it for a few years, and the TPP has many key Presbyterian entities concerned, including Rev. Gradye Parsons, Stated Clerk of the General Assembly, the Presbyterian Hunger Program, the Office of Public Witness. While the TPP has been in negotiations for a few years, it is close to being ~~fast-tracked~~ in the U.S. Congress at this time.

The Interfaith Working Group on Trade and Investment issued a statement on 11/11/12 which the PC(USA) Office of Public Witness signed along with Methodist, UCC, Catholic and other entities. This statement, which remains timely, said in part:
As religious institutions and faith-based organizations with extensive global relationships, we have deep concerns about the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) agreement. Specifically, we are very troubled by the investor-state provisions that will harm public health, access to essential services, and the environment.

The leaked TPP investment chapter reveals a radical redefinition of foreign investor rights that would allow multinational corporations to

sue governments for millions of dollars in compensation for environmental or public health safeguards by claiming that such protections constitute an infringement of their newfound "rights". Foreign investors could target and undermine policies ranging from bans on toxins to natural resource protections, just as they have done under the similar investment provisions of NAFTA and CAFTA.



We see the effects that these investor-state provisions have on our partners around the world. The indigenous people in the Ecuadorian Amazon suffering from the massive toxic water dumping of an international corporation, the children of La Oroya, Peru enduring extreme lead poisoning from a US investor owned metallic smelter, and other victims of public health catastrophes have tried to seek justice by suing the corporations responsible. Remarkably, those corporations have turned around and used the investor-state provisions enshrined in trade rules to evade justice and even to seek "compensation"...

In order for trade and investment practices to enhance the wellbeing of people, private enterprise should advance distributive justice, sustainable human development, environmental protection, and poverty alleviation. Trade and investment should

assist societies to meet social needs, such as secure livelihoods, health and education. To this end, all governments engaged in the TPP negotiation process should reject the agreement's dangerous investor-state provisions.

350.org describes the TPP as an expansive free trade agreement that is being negotiated at this time between the U.S. and the twelve Pacific Rim countries, and includes Canada, Mexico, New Zealand and Australia. Legislation designed to address climate change, curb fossil fuel expansion and reduce air pollution could all be subject to attack by corporations because of their newfound rights to sue governments. Additionally, the deal could criminalize internet use, undermine workers and human rights, manipulate copyright laws, restrict government regulation of food labeling and adversely impact subsidized health care. We are urged to contact our Members of Congress to oppose fast-tracking of the TPP agreement. (fast-tracking would not allow for debate or amendments)

Dean Baker, macro-economist and co-director of Center for Economic and Policy Research+, recently stated: *"The world has benefited from the opening of trade over the last four decades. But this opening has been selective so that, at least in the United States, most of the gains have gone to those at the top. It is possible to design trade deals that benefit the population as a whole, but not when corporate interests are literally the negotiators at*

the table. Rather than being about advancing free trade, the TPP is the answer to the question: How can we make the rich richer?+

NOTE: Congress is not likely to approve the Administration's request for fast track authorization, but the TPP is alive and well and Presbyterians continue to ask legislators to oppose the trade agreement itself.

WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?

by Ruth Farrell, Letter From the Coordinator Presbyterian Hunger Program, PHP Post

Last week a Presbyterian friend told me about the wonderful work a church was doing through a meal packaging program to help the hungry in Africa. The church pays for the cost of the food and then provides volunteers to package the dehydrated and high protein meals that are used in crisis situations and in school feeding programs for schools and orphanages in developing countries around the world.

My friend reported that this project is extremely successful for the congregation, so why was my heart sinking?

When I was a mission worker in Congo, I went to market and had a choice: I could either buy rice imported from the USA or rice produced by farmers living 50 miles upriver. Despite the 10,000 miles it travelled, the U.S. rice (heavily subsidized with U.S. taxpayer dollars) was cheaper. So I, along with everyone else, bought rice from the USA.

Guess what happened to the rice farmers up river? Yes. They could not compete and had to quit producing rice.

Then when fuel prices go up or when free hand-outs dry up, the U.S. rice becomes more expensive. The Congolese are now dependent on imports or on the small amounts they can grow for their families.

The Congolese would be far more food secure if they were growing what they need in the Congo. The problem is that they will only produce more when they are confident that their crops will not be undercut by free or subsidized foreign imports.

When I raised these concerns with my friend, she pointed out that writing a check for feeding programs or agricultural development projects supported by PC(USA) does not engage the congregations like this meal packaging project. 120 people saw a video on hunger, worked inter-generationally to pack the meals together, and felt deep satisfaction because they had contributed to feeding the hungry.

Nevertheless, I am sure that if they had known that their \$5,000 (for the cost of the food) might do more long-term harm than good, they would have chosen a more effective way to help.



This, friends, is the role of the Presbyterian Hunger Program to continually seek out and share with you ways to address the underlying causes of hunger.

Our partners in developing countries remind us that they will have more food security if their farmers are supported in developing sustainable farming, infrastructure and marketing.

We can help by working with long-time partners and mission personnel (and this includes sending funds), praying, and advocating for policies and practices that help ensure food security and food sovereignty in the U.S. and abroad. Our prayer is that we may each deepen our discipleship so that all people may be fed!

TRINITY UPC AND THE CIW

Trinity United Presbyterian Church in Indianola, IA dedicates four Sundays as Mission Sundays. The message on April 6th this year was offered by Katherine Farris, a member of the Mission Ministry Team.

Trinity Mission has added a new organization to those it supports. My suggestion to add it came from a class on human trafficking a colleague and I taught last year. Slavery / human trafficking is about complete control of another human being. Although we had a poor record in the past, most Americans are complacent about slavery today. We think slavery happens in Thailand or the Sudan or in the Middle East until it happens in Atalissa, Iowa. In *The Slave Next Door*, Kevin Bates cites the Coalition of Immokalee Workers (CIW) as a group that has tackled slavery in the southeastern United States.

So what is it? The CIW is centered in Immokalee, Florida, just southeast of

Naples. Also centered in this area is the multi-million dollar tomato industry which provides most of the winter tomatoes for the United States. Bates wrote, "Picking tomatoes is brutal." It is stoop labor in the hot southern sun, often with no water, no benefits, no fixed hours. In addition, housing in Immokalee was broken-down trailers, twelve men to a trailer, each paying \$50 a week for the privilege of sleeping there.

The workers were paid a piece rate of \$25 a ton, much less than a cent for the slice of tomato on a Whopper. Unfortunately, farm workers and household servants are exempt from the National Labor Relations Act of 1935. The act protects workers, gives them the right to organize and fixes wage, health, and safety rules.



At the same time, the mega-growers, no longer family farmers, faced constantly increased costs. In addition, the fast food giants and market corporations like McDonalds and Wendy's, and Krogers and Walmart dictated the prices they were willing to pay for tomatoes. Where could the growers cut costs? The workers pay.

However, in the early 1990's, tomato pickers from several backgrounds formed the Coalition of Immokalee Workers. Their purpose was to address known labor violations. Unfortunately what

they found, in addition to terrible labor conditions, was actual slavery.

As a result, CIW has taken two paths. First, their anti-slavery campaign has helped free over 1,500 farmworkers. Several slave holders have gone to jail. CIW also contributed to the formation of the Department of Justice Anti-Trafficking Unit and finally was the impetus for the Trafficking Victims Protection Act in 2000.

The second path is the Campaign for Fair Food. This focuses on fair wages for farm workers. Major elements include a penny per pound increase in pay for workers, a Code of Conduct for farmers monitoring health and safety. Success? But there is still much to do. McDonalds, Burger King, Subway, and Yum brands have signed agreements along with Whole Foods and Walmart. Wendy's, Krogers and Publix, to mention a few, have not. From the beginning, the Presbyterian Church (USA) has been involved with this mission urged by Florida congregations. One Great Hour of Sharing and the Cents-Ability Offering help; Trinity United Presbyterian Church now does too.

Find out more at:
www.ciw-online.org and
www.presbyterianmission.org/ministries/fairfood/

A \$NAP \$HOT: Iowa Senior's Living on the Edge

From the booklet by the same name, published by Iowa Alliance for Retired Americans:

Iowa's elderly population is rapidly increasing. Currently,

over 15% of Iowans are age 65 or older and projections indicate that in the next 20 years, elders will make up 22% of the state's population.

Retirement security cannot be taken for granted. With this life-changing event comes a new set of concerns about achieving and maintaining dignity, independence and economic security after the age of 65. As older adults and their families determine the living arrangements and services that best fit their individual needs, financial circumstances can drastically limit their options, and many Iowa seniors are not faring well in the current economy. More and more adults want to stay in their homes, but many cannot afford to do so. Often their incomes or assets are just above the guidelines to qualify for public programs and initiatives that might enable them to stay in their homes and take care of their health and personal needs.



In March of 2012, Wider Opportunities for Women (WOW) released new data about income shortfalls for Older Americans, stating that in Iowa, seniors are facing a \$2,932 income shortfall to cover their most basic expenses. This situation for Iowa's seniors can best be exemplified by the following statement from Alicia Giebelstein, a retiree from Des

Moines, Iowa. I worked all my life and supported my family by myself on women's wages. I did what I was supposed to do, and now I am counting my pennies. Between food, medical bills, and gas I'm just barely making it. I'm at the point that something as simple as needing a new prescription pushes me over the edge. I was always just above the guidelines for any assistance, and now that I have retired it hasn't changed.+

The Iowa Alliance for Retired Americans (IA ARA) has partnered with Wider Opportunities for Women to share information about the Elder Index, a definition of income inadequacy using the national WOW-Gerontology Institute National Elder Security Standard Index methodology. This benchmarks basic costs of living for elder households based on the characteristics of such households, including household size, home ownership or renter status, and health status, and illustrates how costs of living vary geographically. The costs are based on the market costs for basic needs of elder households and do not assume any public or private supports. This booklet [available from IA ARA at 2000 Walker Street, Suite A, Des Moines, IA 50317; 515-262-9571; iowa.alliance@gmail.com]

takes a look at 8 central Iowa counties: Polk, Dallas, Boone, Story, Jasper, Marion, Warren and Madison, and compares the income adequacy according to the Elder Index with the incomes of certain seniors, most of whom were identified and interviewed because they still find it necessary to continue employ-

ment after retirement to make ends meet.

**SNAP SHOT:
Linda – Polk County**

Linda is 65 years old and lives in Polk County. Except when she was raising two children on her own, she worked all her life at mostly minimum wage jobs. She most recently had a part time job, but had to quit because she couldn't afford to pay for gas. The mileage reimbursement she received was limited, but her hours and the miles she was required to travel to meet with clients were not. Linda had to give up her house, because she could not afford to pay property taxes, homeowners insurance and general upkeep of the house, so she pays 30% of her income on rent through the Des Moines Housing Authority. She relies on Medicare and Medicaid for health care. For recreation she occasionally rents a DVD.

Linda: I'd like to challenge some of these Senators and Congressmen, whoever, to live on \$582.00 a month, with a car that you're afraid to go two blocks up the street for groceries because you're afraid it might break down.+

Linda's Budget:

Income: (Social Security, SNAP) - \$607.00
Elder Income Guidelines:
Income - \$1898.00

Expenses: Housing (Rent, Insurance, Phone) - \$259.00
Elder Income Guidelines:
Housing - \$623.00

Food - \$25.00 (from money left to cover unspecified expense)
Elder Income Guidelines:
Food - \$251.00

Transportation (Gas & Repair amount not indicated, Liability Insurance) - \$29.00
Elder Income Guidelines:
Transportation - \$285.00

Health Care (no amount indicated)
Elder Income Guidelines:
Health Care - \$451.00

Miscellaneous Expenses (no amount indicated)
Elder Income Guidelines:
Miscellaneous Expenses - \$288.00

Linda's Specified Expenses - \$313.00;
Money left to cover unspecified expenses - \$294.00
Linda's Total Expenses - \$607.00
Elder Income Guidelines:
Expenses - \$1,730.00



**SNAP SHOT:
Mary – Warren County**

Mary is 75 years old and retired from teaching due to disability. She can't work full time on her feet due to back problems, but still works a minimum of 15 hours per week at a part time job. Her mileage is paid at 40 cents per mile, but is limited to 200 miles per month. Her assignments are not necessarily local and so she often exceeds the 200-mile limit, and the rest of the

cost of gas goes on her credit card.

Mary does not get SNAP benefits, but gets commodities once a month, including peanut butter, 2 cans of peas, canned stew and canned pears. She also gets \$26 in farmers market coupons for the season. Her grocery budget is \$75.00. She plans meals and freezes foods. Mary has Medicare and Medicaid. She has no eye care or dental care, but her new plan pays for one visit to the dentist and one visit to the eye doctor. The Chronic Disease Foundation pays for her shots for osteoporosis and cancer, except for the \$10 co-pay, which is Mary's responsibility. Mary's leisure activities do not include movies, shows or concerts that cost money. Instead she goes to the senior center and plays bingo or cards. She saves \$15 every few months for a haircut and sets aside a few dollars at a time for Christmas.

Mary's Budget:

Income: (Social Security, Alimony, Pension, Employment, Mileage) - \$1,071.00
Elder Income Guidelines:
Income: \$1892.00

Expenses: Housing (Rent, Heat & Electricity) - \$543.00
Elder Income Guidelines:
Housing - \$623.00

Food - \$75.00
Elder Income Guidelines:
Food - \$251.00

Transportation (Gas & Upkeep) - \$115.00
Elder Income Guidelines:
Transportation - \$285.00

Health Care . (amount not indicated)
Elder Income Guidelines:

Health Care - \$451.00

Miscellaneous Expenses (Personal Care and Gifts) - \$15.00

Elder Income Guidelines:
Miscellaneous Expenses - \$282.00

Mary's Specified Expenses - \$748.00

Money left to cover unspecified expenses - \$323.00

Mary's Total Expenses - \$1071.00

Elder Income Guidelines - \$1,892.00



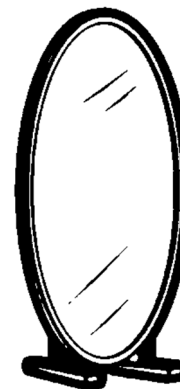
The Elder Index measures basic expenses for elders age 65+ living in the community, not in institutions. Each Elder Index component is a conservative estimate of need, and the Elder Index does not include any %extras+ such as vacations, entertainment, electronics, gifts or meals out. As a result, those living below an economic security income may be forced to go without, or make difficult choices among basic needs such as nutritious foods, prescription medications or adequate heating or cooling.



**LOOK IN THE MIRROR
 God Can Use You to
 Change the World**

*by Karen Wilson, Joining Hands
 Presbytery of Giddings-Lovejoy*

On a recent Sunday, at the end of his sermon, my pastor challenged the congregation to do something every day for the rest of the month. He said we should look in the mirror and say that I am a child of God, that I deserve love and respect, and that God will use me to change the world.



Before 2002, I was a pretty normal church member, teaching Sunday school and singing in the choir. Then one Sunday I was asked if I would like to go to a human rights meeting. I agreed, and soon found myself learning about economics in Peru. The next thing I knew, I was asked to travel to Peru, representing the human rights campaign of Giddings-Lovejoy Presbytery's Joining Hands program. There would be three others going as well, representing the environmental and economic development campaigns and the Coordinator of the Giddings-Lovejoy group. I felt very inadequate, having been a part of this group for just a few months, but I agreed to go.

I was, as are most people, aware that there is poverty, but seeing it made quite an impression. And going to La Oroya, Peru, the community where a U.S. corporation was operating a facility that was poisoning almost every child there made me realize that we, in the U.S., need to take action. Over time, that experience led me to learn about the injustices in our trade agreements and how these agreements affect the most vulnerable. I've also learned about the resource curse, where foreign based companies, including those in the U.S., pay huge sums of money directly to corrupt governments in developing countries to extract natural resources, while communities continue to live in poverty. This money should be going to improve education, health care, and infrastructure in those countries. Instead, the money oftentimes goes directly to the pockets and bank accounts of certain government officials.

In recent years, I have contributed what I could to the Publish What You Pay campaign, which calls for transparency in payments by extractive industries companies to governments. This legislation was included in the 2010 Dodd-Frank Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act, and if and when it is implemented, will give citizens of affected countries information to hold their governments accountable and combat corruption. I supported the effort by calling presbyteries around the country, identifying a mission or hunger person there, explaining the issue, and

urging them to ask others in their presbyteries to make phone calls to their legislators. We're also working toward transparency in the negotiations of our free trade agreements. Fast track legislation has been introduced into the Senate and the House. I, along with many others, made phone calls, sent emails, and visited our Congressional offices voicing our opinions against Fast Track and the Trans-Pacific Partnership Free Trade Agreement. Considering the amount of public opposition voiced against Fast Track and the many legislators voicing opposition, Senate Majority Leader Reid has indicated that he doesn't plan to bring the fast track legislation to the floor of the Senate. And without Fast Track, passage of the Trans-Pacific Partnership is unlikely.



I'm not college-educated. Until recent years, I had never written or called members of Congress. But now, I am passionate about justice issues. If you would have asked me 10 or 15 years ago if I would be involved with or doing any of the things mentioned above, I would have thought that you were crazy. I've always voted, but that's as far as my political involvement went. And my votes were probably not as

well-informed as they are now. The Joining Hands program has certainly changed my life, and I hope, made a difference to someone somewhere.

So, I challenge you now, as I was challenged. Look in the mirror. Tell yourself that you are a child of God, that you deserve love and respect, and God can use you to change the world.

SOMEONE YOU SHOULD KNOW:

Rev. Michelle Parsons

Rev. Michelle Parsons is the new Moderator of the Presbytery of Des Moines' Compassion, Peace & Justice Task Force

Michelle lives in Des Moines and is mother to two awesome and spunky daughters, Nellie (10) and Audrey (6). She serves as Director of Youth & Outreach Ministries at Westminster Presbyterian Church in Des Moines. She is a graduate of Union Presbyterian Seminary, in Richmond, VA (MACE '00/MDiv '02). Before moving to Des Moines in 2011, Michelle served as a solo pastor in Giddings-Lovejoy Presbytery for close to nine years. Her work at Westminster incorporates two of her passions in ministry: education (especially with teens) and mission. She loves creating opportunities for people to experience God's transforming presence, and when the church connects the gifts of God's people with profound needs in the community. Serving as Moderator for the Compassion, Peace & Justice Task Force, is a perfect fit for her call to ministry, and she's excited to be part of the team!

GRAINS OF TRUTH

Why should we care deeply about justice?

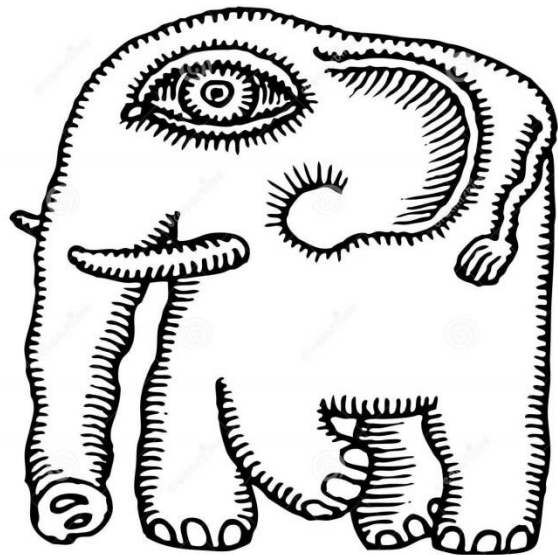
It's both simple and profound.

It's because we believe in the Gospel.
For real believe.

Like it should change everything believe.

Eugene Cho

**IF YOU ARE NEUTRAL
IN SITUATIONS OF INJUSTICE,
YOU HAVE CHOSEN THE SIDE
OF THE OPPRESSOR.
IF AN ELEPHANT HAS ITS FOOT
ON THE TAIL OF A MOUSE
AND YOU SAY THAT YOU ARE
NEUTRAL,
THE MOUSE WILL NOT
APPRECIATE
YOUR NEUTRALITY.**



Desmond Tutu

Broken Bread

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