

# Broken Bread

Newsletter of Compassion, Peace & Justice, Presbytery of Des Moines  
Volume 33 · Number 1 Winter 2015

## Resolutions for the New Year

“I don’t know what your destiny will be, but one thing I know: the only ones among you who will be really happy are those who have sought and found how to serve.”

Albert Schweitzer

So did you make a New Year’s resolution for 2015? Statistics show that 45% of Americans *usually* make them and 17% *sometimes* make them, but only 8% keep them!

Over half of all resolutions involve self-improvement; the top ten include losing weight, quitting smoking, getting organized, and staying fit and healthy. But number 8 in the top ten is “helping others in their dreams.”

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The statistics don’t tell us which types of resolutions fail more or less often. The numbers do show that our commitment wanes as the weeks go by.

We are already a few weeks into 2015, but it’s not too late to make a pledge for the year. This issue of Broken Bread offers some suggestions for compassion, peace and justice resolutions that we can commit to together.

### IN ORDER TO CARE FOR THE EARTH, WE NEED TO NOURISH THE SPIRIT

by Oscar Rea Campos, Foundation for Community Action, UMAVIDA partner (Joining Hands-Bolivia), from PHP Post, Advent 2014.

In Bolivia, the city of El Alto, inhabited by mostly Aymaras (Bolivian indigenous group) from dispersed areas of the

Bolivian altiplano (high plateau), poverty is a part of daily life, as well as malnourishment.

“On the altiplano, the Pacha Mama (Mother Earth) has given us what we need, especially the quinoa (indigenous grain high in protein), but we can no longer consume it,” says Mrs. Juanita, with her sad gaze which extends as far as the altiplano itself.



Quinoa is just one of many traditional foods that Bolivians can no longer afford now that it has become a cash crop for export.

In Bolivia, during the past two decades, family and rural agriculture has been rapidly replaced by industrial agriculture. Today, 48% of the arable land is destined for industrial cultivation, and that percentage is expected to increase in the future.

The International Year of Family Agriculture in Bolivia has generated a legal framework with a new focus on development, even though the priority base for generating economic resources continues to follow extractivism, or extracting as many resources and as much as possible.

The race towards development guides the majority of people towards higher poverty and food insecurity, while it generates large sums of money and comfort for a few. Food no longer provides sustenance for life because it is a lucrative business for some. Those who generate riches with food and those who produce it with the hope of generating income have confused the fertility of Mother Earth with productive yield.

Our Mother and our weaker sisters and brothers groan in pain, agonizing over the lack of compassion and respect.

Family, urban horticulture and gardening offer great opportunities to cultivate food, to cultivate tenderness and to cultivate life.

In the city of El Alto, with arid land and cold temperatures,

poor families are carrying out urban horticulture with our institution, Foundation for Community Action, a partner organization of the UMAVIDA Network, Joining Hands Bolivia. These families produce 30 species of vegetables in a space of 24 square meters. They are contributing a green blanket to the Pacha Mama, by providing food for their families and neighbors and generating compassion that nourishes their family relationships and their relationship with their environment.

The principle challenge on this land is to return the fertility to the Mother Earth with vigor, through communal work with the family, and with a lot of love, affection and respect for their small piece of land. In order to achieve this, it is necessary to recuperate joy and hope. For example, when out of nowhere, the smallest green bud appears, it creates indescribable amazement and happiness for its enormous significance: the birth of new life.



The abundance of vegetables has a direct relationship with the care that is offered to

them. The same applies for the Mother Earth.

We have seen that through our work, these families no longer buy vegetables, nor do they consume all that they produce. Their level of savings has increased and they sell some of the surplus, some exchange them, while others donate or share them with even poorer families.

The family garden, this small piece of Pacha Mama, has returned their health to them. Smiles appear on the faces of daughters and sons. For what else could we ask? We have the most important of all: our food. Food that nourishes our bodies and our spirit.+

## RESOLUTION



Learn about the Joining Hands program:

Joining Hands is committed to justice, restoration of the Earth, and the abundant life promised by God for all people+;

the global campaigns identified by partners:

Extractives and Water,  
Food and Land, and  
Trade Reform;

and add your voice to an advocacy action for change.

<http://www.presbyterianmission.org/ministries/joininghands/>

(The Presbytery of Des Moinesq Joining Hands team is always looking for fellow advocates! Contact HAE Nancy Lister-Settle to find out how to connect with this group.)

## REHABILITATION OR INCARCERATION?

Rick Jones, *Presbyterian News Service*, January 26, 2015

Those who choose to go into Christian service will tell you that the call to ministry can be very loud and lead you down a path you never expected. God can take you out of your comfort zone and place you in a situation you have never been exposed to. But the blessings can be overwhelming. Prison ministry takes a special commitment. Ministers are exposed to persons who have committed murder, sexual offenses, child abuse and more. Some have no remorse for their crimes and are as dangerous behind bars as they were on the outside. But what about those who do see the error of their ways and seek forgiveness and an opportunity to turn their lives around? What is the church's responsibility for these?

According to the U.S. Department of Justice, nearly 6.9 million people were in the care of adult correctional systems at the beginning of 2014. One in 35 adults was under some form of correctional supervision. State correctional facilities and local jails across the country continue to deal with overcrowding and lack of bed space.

For those engaged in prison ministry, such as Alonzo Johnson, the work never ends. Johnson recently joined the Presbyterian Mission Agency as a mission associate for peacemaking, after serving as a pastor in Philadelphia. He

comes from a low-income family; his father battled health issues and died when Johnson was 16. For the remaining family of four, life was tough.

Johnson grew up in a world of hurt and sadness, even though we had family, friends, things that helped us survive, Johnson says. My mother was a strong woman and was the one that truly loved God, a Christian who instilled hope in us, my anchor. She told us how important it was to be in church and with God and be thankful for what we had.

Johnson felt the call to ministry and began seeking God's will for his life. While at Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary he took part in its field education program, which exposed him to urban and prison ministries. He and other students began working with inmates at the Luther Lockett Correctional Complex in La Grange, Ky.

The prison chaplain was instrumental in helping us understand the realities of prison ministry as well as the realities of what we would be facing, Johnson says. This was not a prison movie; these were real people we were spending time with, and we quickly learned that the inmates were facing a ton of issues.

On the final day of his prison ministry internship, Johnson realized that he had to do more.

Two of us were preparing to leave for the last time when we passed an inmate we had gotten to know. He appeared agitated and would not speak to us, Johnson says. When we asked him what was

wrong, he said something very profound: You students come here, make relationships with us and then you leave at the end of summer. We had to let that soak in.



As Johnson and the other student left the reformatory, they both realized that they could do more. The result was a long-term volunteer ministry that included a worship service and Innerquest, a group of inmates from different faiths who would gather to discuss spirituality as well as poverty, racism, fear and the purpose of life.

These were insightful themes which really opened up conversations about what it means to be human, Johnson says. Some of the inmates had been there for a number of years, and what I saw come out of this was the humanity of people in prison who had hopes, fear, concern as parents, children, spouses.

Johnson says the inmates were eager to delve into conversations about spirituality, living better lives and making a positive difference when they got out.

Prison ministry is very profound. It is a difficult and

specialized ministry,+ Johnson says. %We were volunteers, with no money and no financial backing. Some of these guys would get out of prison looking for us because they didn't always know how to re-enter society.+

Johnson says we are called to be people of God but that we need to understand what that means. Individuals or churches that take on prison ministry must be ready to share their lives with those who get out of prison and are looking to start over.

%Regardless of how you feel about prison, the inmates deal with salient issues like education, parenting, family and mental health,+ Johnson says. %Many of these individuals have lost everything: their homes, money and family. Getting back into the workforce is difficult, because with every job application there is that line asking whether you have been convicted of a felony.+

Johnson and others in prison ministry often find themselves asking tough questions about incarceration. What is the purpose of prison? Is it punishment, rehabilitation or both?

%We talked with young people about prison life, but based on statistics you still have that percentage that will end up there despite your strongest warnings,+ says Johnson. %Once they are behind bars, it may be too late to help them. A number of young people get swallowed into a system that may destroy their lives, a system that can be predatory or violent and that's

frightening. This is why it is important to take preventative actions by addressing the root causes of youth entry in the prison pipeline.+

Johnson says generalizations about people in prison are unhelpful. %We do have human beings in prison; not everyone there is a violent criminal. They are fathers, husbands and sons. To be concerned for them doesn't mean we agree with their crimes or want to absolve them for what they did.+

And Johnson is quick to note that some inmates genuinely want to change, though churches have to recognize, he adds, that some are addicted to substances and need help. But he has reasons for hope: %God's grace is very real, active and alive, and there are inmates who are transformed and go on to do incredible and amazing things.+

Johnson is among the course leaders for %Breaking the Chains: Mass Incarceration and Systems of Exploitation,+ the 2015 *Ecumenical Advocacy Days* national gathering to be held in Washington, D.C., April 17-20. More than 1,000 people gather to worship, reflect and discuss advocacy on a wide variety of domestic and international policy issues at this feature event of the ecumenical Christian community.

### RESOLUTION

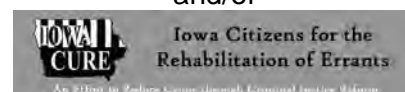
Register to attend Ecumenical Advocacy Days:  
[www.advocacydays.org](http://www.advocacydays.org)  
AND the PC(USA) Office of Public Witness Advocacy Training Weekend:

<http://www.presbyterianmission.org/ministries/compassion-peace-justice/advocacy-training-weekend>



(Scholarships are available from the Presbytery of Des Moines Compassion, Peace & Justice Task Force.)

and/or



Learn from and be involved with Iowa CURE, an organization focused on efforts to reduce crime through criminal justice reform:  
[www.iowacure.org](http://www.iowacure.org)

and/or

Volunteer to help with the new Hanson House of Hospitality (for women transitioning from prison), located at 1330 8th Street, Des Moines. Contact Diane Johnston, 515-868-5510.

## SERMON FOR HOMELESSNESS SUNDAY

*from the worship resource guide, The House of Refuge Ministries, Morganton, NC*

*Mark 1:21-28*

Jesus's first act of healing, according to Mark, brought an outsider into the crowd.

The man was possessed by a demon, and people were scared of him. He was wild, he contradicted himself, he told the truth . but he frightened people.

Jesus changed him.

Jesus saw the man underneath the problem, and brought the man out.



On Homelessness Sunday, we take the opportunity to pray for and think about homeless people in our worship. How much more of an outsider can you be in this society than not even to have a home? Somewhere to go out to work from, somewhere to bring up your kids, somewhere to offer hospitality to others. When we talk about the homeless we talk as if putting a roof over their head would sort out the problem, but that's a long way from being the case.

Homeless people find themselves in a wide range of circumstances . from asylum seeker to someone whose marriage has just fallen apart; from youngster leaving home for the first time to grieving widow or widower late in life. Behind every person is a story . and often the story is one of rejection, exclusion and disappointment.

Of course, not every homeless person is a passive victim. Not every homeless person is a delight to know. People who are homeless are people who are angry, people who drink too much, people who

contradict themselves, people who leave their needles where young children might find them. Not all homeless people are like that, but some are. So homeless people are not necessarily likeable.

Now I haven't found anywhere in the Gospel where Jesus said we should like everyone. But what he does say very clearly is that we should love our neighbor . and that our neighbor isn't just the person next door to us. What does it mean to love our neighbors . how do we manage this seemingly impossible thing?

We start off by looking for something to like in him or her. Everybody has something . even Hitler loved his dog. To do this, we have to have some contact. If all we know about asylum-seekers is that they are here to take our jobs and our homes, and possibly to poison us with ricin into the bargain, it's very easy to scowl as we pass one in the street. And the scowl begets a scowl. But once we find out that they like the poetry of Robert Burns or the music of Gareth Gates, or digging the garden, or whatever it is, and that we do too . then there's something to go on. **So we reach out.**

We offer common respect. We try to treat people the same whether they have a mansion on Lake James or a one roomer on Bouchelle Street. If they have neither, and live in the homeless shelter, or spent last night sleeping rough in the woods, they are due the same courtesy. [read James 2:3-5]. **So we seek to include.**

We share what we have. This is the difficult bit, but if we

don't do it, the whole thing doesn't work. Here's what Jim Wallis of the Sojourners in the US said earlier this month on Martin Luther King Day: Martin Luther King Jr was a modern-day Micah who knew that we will not beat our swords into plough-shares until everyone has their own vine and fig tree . their own little piece of the global economy, their own small stake in the world, their own share of security for themselves and their families. Because when you have a little patch upon which to build a life, nobody can make you afraid.

I'm not talking home ownership here. I don't necessarily want to see everyone in a semi-detached box with a mortgage. But unless people are part of this society why should they have any commitment to it? **So we give them a stake.** And we can do that through proper health care, decent education, good recovery mental illness or drug abuse programs: not all the measures to tackle homelessness are homelessness-specific.



Finally, we allow a second chance . and, if need be, a third and a fourth. I had the conversation on Friday with a Landlord here in town, and he was having a go at a his tenant . the people had trashed the place up. You should get one chance and

that should be it, she said. But I'm afraid the Jesus way . and that should be the Christian way . is different. Jesus didn't give up on people. **So we should allow people their mistakes.**

That's what I understand about loving my neighbor. Of course, in some ways it's easier for me. I don't find discarded needles next to my garage. Buildings round where I live are not covered in offensive graffiti. Those of us who live in well-off areas, are somewhat protected from many a harsh reality. But we have our demons, too. We are possessed . by our possessions. And sharing those possessions, can prove a bit difficult. But after all, **that is what we are called to do.**

## RESOLUTION



Make monthly contributions to CROSS Ministries, Des Moines Presbytery's ministry of homelessness prevention. Checks to CROSS Ministries can be mailed to 1050 . 24<sup>th</sup> Street, Des Moines, IA 50311, or you can donate via PayPal on the Presbytery's web page [www.dmpresbytery.org](http://www.dmpresbytery.org), click on %Donate Now+.

and/or

Give to Hope Home, a ministry of First United Presbyterian Church in Winterset. Their mission is to provide homeless families a safe home and teach life skills which empower families to gain self-sufficiency. Contributions can be made on the web page: [www.hopehomewinterset.org](http://www.hopehomewinterset.org).

and/or



Volunteer at the Central Iowa Shelter-- there are a multitude of ways to help out. Some of the simplest ways are to collect top need items and bring them to the center or help serve lunch. Volunteers can help on projects, committees or if you're only able to offer a day of service, we always have things to do and are grateful for your time. Click on %volunteer+ at [www.centraliowashelter.org](http://www.centraliowashelter.org) to sign up.

## EVERYONE WINS

Fair trade is a different way of doing business. It's about making principles of fairness and decency mean something in the marketplace.

The fair trade movement seeks to change the terms of trade for the products we buy, to ensure the farmers and producers behind those products get a better deal. This means better prices for producers, but it also means longer-term and more meaningful trading relationships.

The *Fair Trade Resource Network* offers the Top Ten Reasons to Support Fair Trade:

**1. Fair Trade means fair pay and working conditions for farmers and producers.** Fair Trade products are made in safe and healthy working conditions, where farmers and

producers receive a fair price and have a voice in how their workplace is run.

**2. Fair Trade is better for the environment.** Fair Trade supports sustainable practices that minimize our environmental footprint.

**3. Fair Trade means high quality goods.** Artisans take pride in their work. Crafts are often handmade, which translates into closer attention to detail and in the end higher-quality products.

**4. Fair Trade means better tasting food.** Farmers are involved and invested in the entire production process, and crops are grown and harvested in smaller quantities. As a result, Fair Trade food is fresher and tastier.

**5. Fair Trade is safe.** Fair Trade actively promotes integrated farm management systems that improve soil fertility and preserve valuable ecosystems, and limit the use of harmful agrochemicals that present dangers to farmers' health. That means food that's safer for you and for the people who grow it.

**6. Fair Trade supports communities.** By working through cooperative structures, Fair Trade artisans and small farmers are able to invest Fair Trade earnings in their communities, improving housing, healthcare, and schools.

**7. Fair Trade is trade farmers can count on.** Fair Trade is committed to strengthening direct partnerships between buyers and producers. These partnerships provide an

avenue for buyers to purchase quality products from people they trust, and offer a sustainable and reliable way for farmers, artisans and their families to improve their livelihood.

**8. Fair Trade connects you with other cultures.** Fair Trade products are unique to the places they come from and the people who make them. Farmers and artisans are involved in the entire process, and Fair Trade products reflect the people and cultures they come from.

**9. Fair Trade means sustainable local economies.** Fair Trade gives farmers and artisans control of their own future. They can build their own businesses, rather than working for a middle man, and the profits stay in their communities and go back into their businesses.

**10. Fair Trade means what you buy matters.** By choosing Fair Trade products, you are not only accessing high quality products, you are making a difference in the lives of the people who grow the food you eat and the goods you use.

**RESOLUTION**



Become a label reader. Look for Fair Trade certification or membership when you shop. Ask retailers to offer Fair Trade options where you shop. Choose a Fair Trade product to replace something you use

every day, such as coffee, tea, spices or chocolate.

and/or



Support local producers at farmers markets, the grocery store, arts and crafts sales, restaurants, and fair trade shops. Opt for local whenever you can.

**SUSTAINING MEMBERS:**

**OUR SISTER PARISH**

*by Maurice Dyer, Trinity United Presbyterian Church, Indianola, member of Compañeros and Co-coordinator for Don Justo Coffee with Dignity*

Ah, a new year. With its arrival you may stop for a moment to take stock of the year just past and where the new one might be leading. Regardless of whether you make an official New Yearsq Resolution or not, your vow to make a change is undoubtedly focused on something you want to do for yourself.

Consider this. Consider making a vow that will undoubtedly change the life of someone else. Consider becoming a Sustaining Member of Our Sister Parish mission.

Our Sister Parish is your mission in El Salvador. On your behalf it strives to empower the poor surrounding Berlin, Usulután, El Salvador, by working closely with those

communities in partnership with several churches within the Presbytery of Des Moines and with those communities without partners.

Working in conjunction with Our Sister Parish and our Mission Co-worker Rev. Katherine Pater these communities are able to identify various community-wide needs. Then, in an organized manner they can make an appeal for financial support.

Fertilizer, scholarships, water filters and water tanks have been provided. Churches, schools and community centers have been built. Emergency medical expenses have been paid. Retaining walls have been built. The lives of many people have been changed.

At the center, at the hub, is the Casa de Pastoral, the Pastoral House. It is the home of the mission. It is where Katherine lives. It is where people know they can go if they have a need.



It should come as no surprise, then, that there are costs associated with maintaining this facility. Utilities, food and lodging costs associated with housing the mission co-worker and with hosting various delegations and meetings, as well as many other expenses total around \$1,000 per month.

The Sustaining Member program was created to help defray these costs allowing more dollars to be allocated

towards the actual work of the mission. Today, 17 giving units contribute a total of \$443 per month towards a goal of \$1,000 per month. Monthly gifts range from \$5 to \$100 per month.

How are these gifts made? Sustaining Member gifts are made through automatic monthly withdrawals from your credit card, your checking account, or your savings account. You just need to choose which one.

Consider this. Your vow to become a Sustaining Member of Our Sister Parish will change the lives of our brothers and sisters in El Salvador.

### RESOLUTION

Make a monthly contribution to Des Moines Presbytery's Mission in El Salvador.



It's simple. It's easy. Take a moment to sign up now by going to:

<http://dmpresbytery.org/missions/our-sister-parish/item/489-would-you-like-to-be-a-sustaining-member?.html>

### INHERENT WORTH AND DIGNITY

by Rev. Darcey Laine, UUC of Athens and Sheshequin

In Ithaca, the town where I live, I am told that there are more restaurants per capita

than any place else in the US except Manhattan. We are lucky that so many restaurants near our house are independent locally owned businesses, and many feature local organic produce and local humanely raised pork and beef. If you are a foody and if you care about ethical eating it's a great place to live.

Now I worked in restaurants while I was in school as a bus person, as a waitress. I worked at fancy places and family restaurants. It's hard work; that I know. Never was I so physically exhausted at the end of a work day as I was when waiting or bussing tables. But it is good work you can feel proud of. I loved that feeling of rapport with the customers, I loved the food we served. I loved the camaraderie with my fellow servers who were some of the most fun co-workers I've ever had. I even got good at carrying plates on my arms, or on one of those huge trays on my shoulder. I didn't love working a 7 hour shift with no breaks, and I didn't love the days when the restaurant sat empty while we refilled salt shakers or wiped down the wait station with no customers to wait on and no tips to help pay the bills, and I'm glad I didn't have to support a family on my tips. But the restaurant industry is one of the largest growing in the country, and it is work 10 million Americans are proud, as I was, to call their own.

I was surprised to find out that the so called "tipped minimum wage" has not changed since I was waiting tables. It is still \$2.13 an hour nationally. I have to tell you it's been 20 years since I waited tables,

and I was shocked to find that waiters in most states today make the same wage I did 20 years ago. It turns out that the minimum wage and the tipped minimum wage rose together until 1996 when Herman Cain, then the head of the National Restaurant Association, struck a deal with Congress to de-link the two. The minimum wage will continue to rise, but the minimum wage for tipped workers will be frozen. Now in theory, if you don't make at least the minimum wage in tips, your boss is supposed to pay the rest so you are making at least minimum wage; some bosses do, and some don't. The law also requires that wait staff are taxed based on 15% of their sales. Which means that if someone forgets to leave a tip, or chooses not to leave a tip, you still get taxed on 15% of their meal. Those taxes are taken out of your paycheck, as they are for most folks, so most wait staff get a paycheck of \$0, with a paystub detailing which taxes were withheld.



It is a common misconception, I think, that waiting tables is a lucrative profession. You look out over the dinner rush as you calculate your tip, and you think, geeze, if my waitress gets this same tip from everyone seated here she's going to make a ton of money. What you don't see is everything that goes into that tip. You don't see the hours a



waiter or waitress spends before the restaurant opens polishing silver and filling salt shakers. You don't see the wait staff waiting anxiously as the early customers trickle in hoping their tables will be filled more than once that night. You don't see the waiter stuck at work as he waits for that last table to finish up- the table that hasn't ordered anything in an hour but is enjoying each other's company. All the waiter can do is, well, wait for them to move on so he can clear their table and re-set it for the next day. You don't see that in restaurants where there are bus people, they also make \$2.13 an hour, and so the waiter must take part of his or her tips and give it to the bus people, and give part to the bartender; it's called "tipping out." We also been the bus person who has seen the tips left on the tables and knows that what the waiter is handing me is not the full percentage of their tips.

You also don't see that the Friday and Saturday night dinner shifts go to the most senior staff. Waiters and bus staff start on Mondays, or the other less popular shifts. A Restaurant Opportunity Center study showed that only 20% of restaurant workers make a living wage, and those are mostly in fine dining restaurants. So, yes, if you work at a fine dining restaurant in NYC and get the Friday and Saturday night shifts, you can make a decent living. But I think for too long we have let the image of the tuxedoed waiter rolling in tips keep us from making sure the waitress at the local pancake house can also earn enough to feed

her family. In fact within the restaurant industry are 7 of the 10 lowest paying jobs. The two lowest paid jobs in U.S. are in the restaurant industry. Restaurant workers relying on food stamps are double the rate of the rest of the work force, and their poverty rate is triple the rate.

So what does this have to do with Inherent Worth and Dignity? I would like to propose the radical idea that affirming and promoting the inherent worth and dignity of every person needs to go beyond our good thoughts about our brothers and sisters, beyond treating our neighbors kindly, to creating a society where all our brothers and sisters can live in dignity. I propose that we could best affirm the worth and dignity of all honest hard work through a living wage. Right now the minimum wage in this country is not a living wage. And what do I mean by that? A living wage is defined as the amount of money that a person needs to earn to put a roof over her head, food on her table, to go to a doctor when she is sick. I heard a legislator say recently that this country was built on people saving up their money and starting their own businesses. If we believe that is important, then we should pay our workers enough that they can put away a little bit for a rainy day, for their retirement, or even to become their own boss someday. That is what we mean by a living wage. A living wage means that anyone who works full time should not need public assistance to survive.

The restaurant industry is just one industry where it is

common practice to pay people less than what they need to live on. It is so common that we don't often take time to think about; it is invisible to any of us who are paid enough to live on. It is so deeply embedded in our assumption about the world that we are afraid of what any change to this norm will mean. But there are enough examples to show that something more just is possible. For example in seven states, the tipped minimum wage is now re-joined with the regular minimum wage and all of these states continue to have growing restaurant industries.

I wonder if what is happening here is what my old theology professor used to call a "language event"-in an age where the Supreme Court confirms that corporations are people, but the workers of the world are called "labor costs" that need to be "minimized." As long as we think of the people who bus our tables, wash our dishes, and make our phones as "labor costs" that must be "minimized" we are stripping them of their inherent worth and dignity.

When we explain why we can't pay employees enough to meet their basic human needs, we hear a lot about market forces. But as near as I can tell, the market does not take care of people who make things. We cannot leave that to "the market" because it is the explicit job of the "market" to "minimize costs." The lives of human beings are not a cost. They are a blessing. Each and every one has worth.

No, it is not the job of the market to make sure that each

and every person on this planet is afforded dignity, and that we honor their worth as human beings. Such ethical concerns fall to people of conscience like us. I am not aware of any religious tradition the world over who hold as their highest principle maximizing shareholder value or minimizing labor costs. I know these are powerful ideas in our culture right now, almost like a sacred cow we must refrain from harming, but the mission of this congregation is to encourage spiritual growth and ethical living. I propose the radical notion that whether our brothers and sisters who put food on our tables can themselves afford to feed their families is not something we should consider market forces allow. It is a fundamental ethical principle that we must bring to every decision we make as a country, as a community.

When you hear about market forces, remember that YOU are a market force. The market has no inner ethical compass except for yours. Not everyone knows that tips are not a bonus for extra good work, but are rent money, grocery money. Not everyone knows that the IRS assumes you tipped your server 15%. But the next time you are eating out with friends, and dividing up the check, have a conversation about how the tipping system really works. The next time you are eating out get curious. Do you know which restaurants offer their employees something better than the \$2.13 per hour required by law? Do you know which restaurants have a history of making their

employees clock out before they are done working, or taking a portion of their employees tips? As people concerned about ethical eating, we have gotten curious about whether the greens are local, or the beef grass fed. Let's start getting curious about which restaurants offer paid sick days and promote from within. Let's get curious about which restaurants honor the inherent worth and dignity of their employees. And then let's be a market force; let's support the restaurants that are ethical leaders.

These restaurants need our support. Owning a restaurant, especially a small local restaurant, is challenging. Owners who want to pay a living wage to their staff really have to work hard and get creative to compete with all the restaurants who pay only \$2.13 an hour. And it would really help level the playing field if we encouraged our legislators to re-connect the tipped minimum wage to the regular minimum wage. I know there is a myth out there that if the minimum wage is raised, food will become so expensive that none of us will be able to afford to eat out any more. A proposed Fair Minimum Wage Act would have raised the federal minimum wage from \$7.25 to \$9.80 per hour over the next 3 years and the tipped minimum wage from \$2.13 to 70% of the regular minimum wage. Studies show that the actual impact on American families would be only about 10¢ per day over 3 years. Wouldn't you pay 10¢ a day to raise many Americans out of poverty, to reduce the need of working people to subsidize

their wages with food stamps? I would.

We are a people who affirm and promote the inherent worth and dignity of every person. Those words are beautiful and inspiring, but challenging too. To promote the worth and dignity of every person we must go beyond the respect for one another that we hold in our hearts, that we aspire to live out in our day to day interactions with our brother and sisters We must also create a world where each person who works receives a wage that allows them food and shelter and medical care, without which dignity is hard to come by. Be they restaurant workers, farm workers, or garment industry workers, we are called to stand by every worker until each can live in dignity.

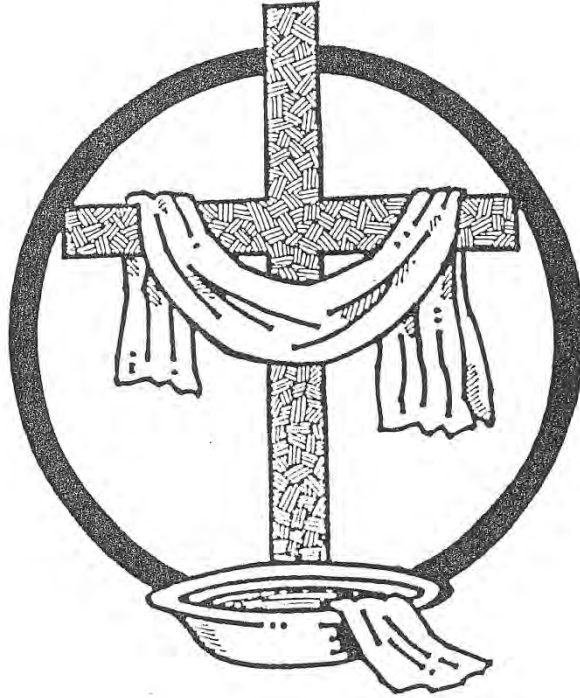
### RESOLUTION

Read (suggest to your book club!) *Nickel and Dime: On (Not) Getting By in America*, or *Behind the Kitchen Door* to learn about the issue of poverty among food service workers.



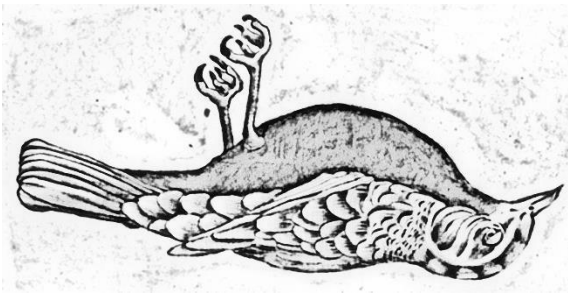
Download the app to your phone and use the Restaurant Opportunities Centers (ROC) United Diners Guide to see how your favorite restaurants score related to wages, benefits and promotions. Watch the video on the web page about talking with restaurant management in a way that educates without threatening:  
[www.rocunited.org/dinersguide](http://www.rocunited.org/dinersguide)

## GRAINS OF TRUTH



Let us all remember this:  
one cannot proclaim the Gospel of Jesus  
without the tangible witness of one's life.

Pope Francis



It was a chilly, overcast day when the horseman spied the little sparrow lying on its back in the middle of the road. Reining in his mount he looked down and inquired of the fragile creature,

“Why are you lying upside down like that?”

“I heard the heavens are going to fall today,” replied the bird. The horseman laughed. “And I suppose your spindly legs can hold up the heavens?”

“One does what one can,” said the little sparrow.

# Broken Bread

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