



The Rev. Alan Sutherland, Rector

March 1, 2009

30 Hour Famine Sermon
Read by Audrey Sandknop and Diana Vetter

In the Old Testament reading, we heard the conclusion of the story of Noah. Noah and his family, through faith, survived a flood that has destroyed the earth. God promises to never flood the earth again. Noah's flood was a flood of water caused by 40 days of rain.

Today, we are facing a flood of poverty, hunger, malnutrition, unclean drinking water, hopelessness in the faces of the very young, and easily treatable diseases going untreated in the poor. We can call it a flood because this horrible situation is common in two-thirds of the world.

26, 000 children under the age of five years old die every single day from hunger and hunger related diseases. While we are in church 1200 children will die.

We learned how much we take for granted. It would take 7 billion dollars to stop world hunger, and Americans alone spent 13.2 billion dollars for Valentine's Day last year. We learned about the children in Africa who are abducted, enslaved and forced to fight in a war that isn't theirs and sometimes even kill their family and friends. We learned about the many children that are left as orphans because their parents have died from AIDS. But we also learned how we can make a difference through World Vision. With the money we collected we can help feed these children. World Vision has set up health care centers, schools, and education centers that provide hope.

In Mark's Gospel, we hear the baptism of Jesus, which is followed by the spirit driving Jesus into the wilderness for forty days, where he went hungry and thirsty. He was tempted with bread, water, and power.

For most of the world, they do not have to be driven into the desert to face this challenge. The spirit drove us, 50 youth and their 10 leaders to 30 hours without food so other children will live.

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It was very hard to go hungry. At times we were, exhausted, weak, and even a little grumpy. It was especially hard when we had to cook food for the different community service projects. But keeping focused on serving others also helped to keep our minds off of being hungry.

As this was the start of Jesus' ministry of healing, teaching, and reaching out to the forgotten, the poorest of the poor, and the ignored members of the community, our ministry this weekend lead us to do the same.

We split into groups and were able to learn about and help many different organizations. We worked with Camp Haven, ICU, Refuge House, Faith in Action, Manchester Center, God's Pantry, Room in the Inn, Contact and Connection, St. Agnes House, Ronald McDonald House, Mayfair Manor, and Good Shepherd Day School.

With Contact and Connection, we heard about the loneliness that many in our parish family face because they are homebound. Contact and Connection is a ministry where members of the church visit those who are unable to leave their homes often. We brought flowers, sandwiches, cookies, grapes and company to their homes. We saw God in their joy, their smiles, and their eyes.

Another group went to the Ronald McDonald house. It is a "home away from home" for children and their families who come to Lexington for Medical treatment. They don't turn away families even if they can't pay. We cooked lunch, vacuumed, and cleaned windows. God's presence could be felt in the joy of the other volunteers we met and the dedication of the staff to helping families.

In the afternoon we all went to Mayfair Manor Nursing Home. While we were there we met the elderly residents. Through conversations, games and music we were able to bring them joy and comfort. We were able to brighten their day just by keeping them

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company and showing we cared about them. In everyone's smiles it was evident that God was with us.

Our last project was for God's Pantry. God's Pantry is a food bank that feeds low-income families in the community. It has experienced a shortage because the need has risen so much. We learned that most of families of the world live off a dollar a day. Our challenge was to buy groceries for a family of four for five days on five dollars. None of us succeeded. We need to donate more food and money to help feed the hungry in our own community and the world.

Jesus came out of the wilderness proclaiming the good news of God. His wilderness experience had helped strengthen him for his ministry. In our 30 hours, we worshiped, studied, and even experienced life as a member of a forsaken country.

We spent some of our time in Bible study and worship. We had four services, opening, compline, morning, and noon day. At all the services we sang, prayed for the hungry and the poor, and heard a reading from the Gospel that had to do with hunger. At compline we used candles and passed around the light of God. We learned that while one light seems small, together it illuminates the world.

We also played tribal games where we stimulated life in the Amazon. Our teams were given an identity of a child and faced different challenges that taught us about life in the Amazon. One game taught us about how people had to walk many miles to get water that might not even be clean. They have to carry heavy buckets multiple times a day. Our challenge was to hold buckets full of juice straight out in front of us. It was extremely hard and most of us only lasted 20 seconds. Other games included crab walk soccer. These games were a lot of fun, but also showed us the difficulties that many people face in their daily lives.

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As Jesus came out proclaiming the good news, we have come out of this changed. We have come out of this making a difference in our world. Besides the community service work done during the 30 hour Famine, we have collected about 6 thousand dollars. With a federal grant that money is raised to nearly 33 thousand. We saved 90 children's lives by feeding them for a year.

We also made a connection with one special child each.

During the famine we had prayer partners. These are children that World Vision sponsors around the world. The way that they helped us was that every time we got hungry we looked at our prayer partners and prayed for them. They helped us get through the day.

God sent Noah a rainbow to remind people of the covenant established between Him and all of us on earth. Our 30 Hour Famine was the first step in our journey of a covenant. We invite you to join us in that promise - that we will do all in our power - one child at a time -to stop this flood of hunger and death.

As Jesus said, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and BELIEVE in the good news."

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