

THE ADVOCATE

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Special points of interest

- A different kind of food pantry
- Justice for Dionisio
- Unrest continues in Kenya
- Pastoring in an election year

SPEAKING UP AND REACHING OUT

What does it mean to be a voice for the voiceless? To speak up for those who are marginalized?

Ingersoll CRC member John Klein-Geltink saw an opportunity to love mercy and do justice when he saw a rather misinformed op-ed in his daily paper.

The editorial criticized food banks and their patrons, whom the writer represented as entitled and not ashamed of their insecure circumstances. While there were valid points in her piece, the way she portrayed the situation of food insecurity and those who struggle to get by was almost irresponsible in its tone.

But rather than silently fume over the misrepresentations and stereotypes, John saw an opportunity to speak up, and it was as simple as sitting down at the computer. He and his daughter wrote a response to the op-ed which was then printed in the paper.

Through this simple act, he not only was able to show another opinion to the one expressed on the editorial page, but he was also able to share with his entire community about an exciting food distribution program that assists the poor while building up their dignity and providing valuable life tools.



The Food for Friends program in Oxford County, Ontario is a unique effort that gathered the cooperation of the entire county, from those that already worked in services for the poor, to those that needed the services, to a broad spectrum of churches and several businesses.

Rather than operating like a regular food bank, the Food for Friends program gives grocery shoppers (at every grocery store in the county) the opportunity to donate 25 cents on top of their grocery bill at checkout, which then goes into the Food for Friends fund.

Story continued on page 2.

NEWS BRIEFS

Dionisio's alleged killers arrested!

Thanks in large part to thousands of letters and phone calls by people around the world, including many dedicated Christian Reformed people, a break was made in the case of Dionisio Díaz García's murder. Two men were arrested on January 31 as suspects in the killing.

We have reported in past issues on the brutal assassination of Dionisio, the "lawyer of the poor," who worked alongside the Association for a More Just Society (AJS) in Honduras. AJS, which has many connections to the Christian

Reformed Church, has been working tirelessly since Dionisio's murder in 2006, to bring to justice the people who are responsible for the taking of his life.

At the anniversary of his death this past December, AJS pushed even harder, organizing a rally in Honduras, and calling their partners around the world, including the CRC, to contact officials and demand justice.

News Briefs continued on page 3.

ACTION OPPORTUNITIES

Turn a symbol of loss into one of hope! The Office of Social Justice and the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee encourage your church or school to get involved in **Tents of Hope**.



Tents of Hope is a fun and unique way to get your community involved in speaking up for the refugees of Darfur, Sudan.

Here's the basics: Your group sets up a canvas tent (don't worry, we tell you how to get one), provides paints, and gathers your family, friends, church members and school buddies to fill your canvas tent with messages of hope, encouragement, and peace. Meanwhile, you can raise

funds for CRWRC's Darfur relief.

So many people from Darfur have been forced to flee their homes because of violence, and now live in refugee communities housed in tents. They still face the threat of violence, starvation and disease. Holding a Tent Event gives your community an opportunity to come together to learn about what has and is happening in Sudan, what you can do about it, from raising your voices to advocate to raising funds for relief.

Painting a tent builds community, allows people of all ages to participate, and creates the unique and memorable opportunity to learn and act.

Learn about Tents of Hope on our website www.crcjustice.org (click on Tents of Hope). We've got suggestions on holding a good event, how to get a hold of a tent, and more. The OSJ and CRWRC would love to assist your group, church or school in planning, so if you are interested, feel free to email Tracy at youngt@crcna.org.



SPEAKING UP, CONT'D

From the donated money, eligible families and individuals are then given a grocery card in small denominations up to \$60 which they can use to buy food.

Participants turn in their used card along with receipts to ensure that nutritious food is being purchased.

Not only does using the grocery cards allow poorer families the ability to shop in a store just like their neighbours, it also assists them in learning how to properly budget and make healthy food choices, again, just like their neighbours.

Little abuse of this system has been reported. In fact, some participants enjoy being able to donate the remaining money on their grocery card back into the Food for Friends fund at checkout.

John recognizes that the Food for Friends program alone will not end hunger in his community. But he is encouraged by the participation of so many in providing a dignified way for struggling people to get by.

And by speaking up to combat stereotypes and correct misinformation, he is living out the call to do justice.

How can you act justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with God today?



Bread for the World is looking for the best and brightest advocates to become **Bread for the World's Hunger Justice Leaders**.

Motivated 18-35 year olds are invited to apply for an **all-expense paid leadership training** from June 14-17 in Washington, DC.

Event participants will interact with premier organizing and issue experts, connect with other leaders from across the country, hone skills to become an inspiring organizer, and more. **Applications must be received by March 15, 2008.**

BFW will cover all costs for the participants selected in this highly competitive process. Leaders will commit to promoting efforts against hunger and poverty in partnership with Bread for the World. Successful candidates will be notified of their selection by April 1. To learn more and apply visit: <http://www.bread.org/get-involved/hunger-justice-leaders-training/>



WEBSITES AND RESOURCES



With 85 members and growing, the **CRC Justice Seekers** networking site is on a roll! If you're looking for a place to think out loud about justice issues, to connect with others interested in creation care, poverty and hunger, immigration, the Middle East and other hot button justice issues, if you just want to get recommendations or feedback on good movies or books about justice, or if you want to publicize a talk or special

event at your church, then Justice Seekers is the place to be. Give it a glance today: <http://justiceseekers.ning.com/>. Great connections are made every day!

Palestine Summer Encounter (PSE) is a one, two, or three month service learning and cultural immersion program in Bethlehem, Palestine. Participants study Arabic in and outside of the classroom setting, live with a Palestinian host family, volunteer with one of thirty-seven participating nonprofits and organizations and meet with both Israeli and Palestinian peacemakers. Learn about the Encounter here: www.palestinesummer.org.

Check out the new documentary, **The Fair Trade**. This film follows a young woman who finds herself involved in a fair trade business after a devastating personal loss. As she questions God and questions her life, her entanglement with struggling women all the way around the world slowly brings healing and purpose. Learn about the movie and how to see it: www.thefairtrademovie.com



If you're looking for **Lenten resources**, check out Bread for the World's downloadable table top reflections, or Alternatives for Simple Living's online 40-day guides: www.bread.org, www.simpleliving.org

Lenten Prayers for Hungry People

Readings, prayers, and actions to help you observe Lent in 2008—prepared by Bread for the World



NEWS BRIEFS, CONT'D

Unrest continues in Kenya

Your continued prayers are needed for the people of Kenya and for CRC-affiliated staff in the country.

Last month, the country erupted into violence following presidential elections due to charges of fraud and tampering.

The situation remains tense, and outbreaks of violence are still occurring. You can keep tabs on the latest news from Kenya by visiting the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee's website: www.crwrc.org.

Davis Omanyo, East/South Africa Team Leader for the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee,

has seen the violence and devastation in Kenya first hand, and shares his harrowing experience in a recent newsletter.



You can download the pdf newsletter at www.crcjustice.org in the "Recently Updated" column on the homepage.

JUSTICE AND WORSHIP

Check out the news brief above about the break in the Dioniso Díaz García's case.

Now check out this one-pager that the Association for a More Just Society (AJS) has created:

http://www.ajs-s.org/dionisio/dionisio_prayers_jan_2008.pdf.



It's a simple downloadable prayer calendar that you can use to guide your thoughts and prayers for justice for Dionisio, his family, and the people he worked so hard to help.

Now that the case seems to be moving forward, your prayers are especially needed for continued progress.

Learn more about Dionisio and AJS here: <http://www.ajs-us.org/>

ACTION CALENDAR

February 6: Pastoring in an Election Year:

Is it okay to talk politics from the pulpit? How much of your personal opinions should parishioners know? How can you direct church members' political energy toward community transformation — beyond the election season? How can the church engage in politics without being used as a political pawn? Does political engagement matter?

The CRC Office of Social Justice and the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee are hosting a laid-back lunch with a round-table format. Everett VanderHorst, Pastor of Shawnee Park CRC, will get things started by sharing his experience planning a community political conversation during the '06 elections.

The Advocate

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Christian Reformed
Church

Come and weigh in on these and other questions, listen to others' thoughts, or just come for free food and fellowship!

Date: Wednesday, Feb. 6

Time: 12:30-1:30 pm

Location:

Shawnee Park CRC

2255 Tecumseh SE

Grand Rapids, MI

Phone: 616-452-6971

Introduction: Rev. Everett Vander Horst

Questions? Contact Kate Kooyman, Congregational Justice Mobilizer, at 616-648-6068 or kooymank@crcna.org.

For your FREE lunch reservations, call Beth DeGraff, CRWRC Justice Contact, at 616-241-1691 or degraffb@crcna.org.

February 9: Bread for the World Advocacy Workshop.

Folks in the Detroit area are invited to attend a BFW advocacy workshop at Good Shepherd Lutheran Church in Royal Oak from 9:00 am to 12:30 pm, with continental breakfast available at 8:30 am.

Learn ways you and your friends, church and campus colleagues, and others can help reduce poverty and hunger throughout the world by convincing Congress to fund effective poverty-focused development assistance programs.

Hear stories that show how people are taking hold of solutions. Get the advocacy tools, the creative spark, and the knowledge you need to make a difference in ending hunger and poverty and help achieve the Millennium Development Goals!

For more information and to register for the Detroit Area/Mid-Michigan workshop, visit:

<http://ga4.org/Bread/events/detroit2008/details.tcl>

March 5: A War Within the Church.

Brookside CRC in Grand Rapids is hosting a panel discussion (no registration required) on Wednesday, March 5 from 7:00 - 9:00 p.m.: A War Within the Church: Fighting Fair about the War in Iraq.

Paul DeVries, pastor of Brookside, will moderate a discussion with those holding differing opinions: John Bolt (systematic theology), John Cooper (philosophical theology), and David Hoekema (philosophy, Calvin College).

March 28-30: The Scandal of Evangelical Politics: Toward a Biblical Agenda.

Register now for this conference at Palmer Theological Seminary in Wynnewood, PA.

How should I vote in 2008? What issues are most important to God? What does the Bible say about abortion, gay marriage, and immigration? What about foreign policy, including the conflict in Iraq? What is said about overcoming poverty in the U.S. and around the world?

Keynote addresses and workshops at this timely and important conference will explore these and other questions to help Christians apply biblical values in the socio-political realm, including the voting booth. It's a conference that all who strive to be faithful to the gospel in the public square should not miss. For more information or to register, call 484-384-2990 or visit www.esa-online.org

April 24-27: Canadian Foodgrains Bank retreat, A Hunger for Life: Food for Change.

This extended weekend at Hidden Acres Camp in New Hamburg, Ontario, will be a combination of whole group plenary sessions and smaller immersion group exploratory activities.

The immersion groups will participate in site visits, discussions and reflections related to their topic as well as some meal preparation. Each immersion group, lead by 2 co-facilitators will explore one of the following five interest areas and move from exploring and storytelling to analysis/synthesis and brainstorming about possible action steps: Bio Fuels: When Food Becomes Fuel; Climate Change and Global Hunger; The Changing Food We Eat; Sustainable Local Food Production; Travelling the Food FreeWay.

Space is limited to 50 participants. Cost of \$150 per person includes meals, accommodation and site visits.

For more information contact: David & Kathryn Mayberry (519)-485-3642 or mayberry@bellnet.ca