

APPENDIX

SECTION A: Report of the Synodical Task Force on World Hunger (1993)

FREEDOM TO SERVE: Meeting the Needs of the World

I. Introduction

A. Our vision

It is our vision and our prayer that

*God's spirit will revive the church,
inspiring each member and every ministry
to serve with compassion that is passionate--
faithfully studying God's Word,
following his will,
spreading his love,
and ceaselessly seeking to meet the needs of the world.*

*God's grace will renew his children,
liberating each member and every ministry
to love our neighbors as ourselves--
using God's good gifts in stewardly ways,
living lives that reflect his love,
respecting each neighbor as imagebearer,
and ardently acting to meet the needs of the world.*

*God's love will bring about reunion,
joining each member and every ministry
to work together as brother and sister--
learning about hunger and poverty,
locating sources and solutions,
searching ourselves for sin,
and selflessly sharing to meet the needs of the world.*

B. Our wounded world

We live in a wounded and weary world, where millions of people suffer from hunger and poverty, alienation and despair. Women, men, and children of all races and religions in countries the world over experience abandonment and rejection, oppression and injustice, poverty and starvation.

Consequently, our world yearns for compassion and love. We all hunger for freedom and fellowship, for a life worth living. In inexpressible ways we all long for a way of life that respects our God-given humanity and does not violate God's good creation.

The violation of our neighbors and the degradation of the creation demand not only words of healing and hope but also deeds of justice and mercy, deeds that flow from faith in Jesus--the Light, Life, and Hope of the world, the Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer of all things.

Scripture teaches us that the ability to love through both word and deed

comes as a direct result of the freedom we gain in Christ. For we were called to freedom not to indulge our sinful natures but to "serve one another in love" (Gal. 5:13). It is this biblical view of freedom which we uphold as the means of meeting the needs of our world.

C. *Our changing world*

During the past decade the problems of hunger and poverty have persisted and have grown even more pervasive. As a result of current developments in global economics and politics, millions more people must now endure the overwhelming problems of poverty.

1. The changing geography of hunger

New places of profound poverty have emerged where poverty did not prevail before, especially in eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. In addition, Africa's suffering has intensified. *Forty thousand children die daily* from preventable causes. *Each year forty million people die* from hunger and hunger-related diseases, a figure equivalent to more than three hundred jumbo-jet crashes a day with no survivors, almost half of the passengers being children.

2. Post-cold-war conflicts

The decline of East-West tensions has increased ethnic, racial, and religious conflicts and wars. And despite relief in the tension between the U.S.A. and the former U.S.S.R., no significant reduction in military expenditures and international arms trade has resulted.

3. The widening gap

The gap between incomes of rich and poor nations and between people within nations continues to widen. Income in many developing nations has actually declined in the past decade.

4. International debt

Since 1984, wealthy nations have been receiving far more in debt and interest payments from poor nations than they have been giving in aid. In 1984, for example, the Ethiopian famine was making the news daily--and so was the unprecedented amount of aid given by concerned people around the world. What we did not hear, however, was that, at the same time, Ethiopia paid out to the West in debt and interest payments four times as much as it received in international aid. Today for every one dollar received in aid and loans from the West, the developing world must give back two. (See Section G of this report, Graph 2.)

5. Environmental destruction

Human degradation of creation and of the resources upon which all people depend for sustenance and livelihood continues unabated. The destruction of the world's forests and the resulting expansion of the deserts is proceeding at unprecedented rates. *In 1950, 15 percent* of the earth's land was covered by tropical forest. *By 1975, tropical forest areas had declined to 12 percent; by 2000, it is expected that less than 7*

percent of the land will be covered by tropical forest. The United Nations estimates that about 135 million people are severely affected by desertification and that 850 million are somewhat affected.

6. The refugee crisis

The number of refugees worldwide has nearly doubled since 1984. Today there are about eighteen million refugees who have been forced to flee their home countries due to persecution, political violence, and civil warfare. Another ten million have fled because their environment can no longer sustain life.

7. Escalating poverty in North America

Poverty and homelessness are escalating in many cities and rural areas of North America. For example, two million people, including 700,000 children, used food banks in Canada in 1991, a 40 percent increase over 1990.

8. The apathy of North Americans

Compassion fatigue and spiritual indifference plague those living in the developed world, including Christians, causing them to become hardened to the suffering and plight of people who are poor.

9. Other social issues

We have not even begun to mention the multitude of other tragedies causing suffering in our world: the AIDS crisis, family and marriage breakdown, drug and alcohol abuse, crime and gang conflict, and many more. Many of these tragedies are complicated by the problem of where and when to assign societal or personal responsibility.

All of the above developments reinforce the call to renew our personal and communal commitment to combat poverty and hunger in the 1990s and beyond.

II. Synod's mandate and the task force's response

A. Synod's five-part mandate

Synod 1991 established a Task Force on World Hunger to (1) develop a five-year plan to increase church-member involvement in responding to hunger. Synod thus responded positively to an earlier initiative underway by the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee (CRWRC).

In addition, the task force was mandated to (2) review the work of the 1978 Task Force on World Hunger; (3) evaluate the integration of word and deed, specifically as it relates to the issue of world hunger; (4) solicit feedback from church councils and diaconal conferences on their perception of the world-hunger education program that came out of the original task force; and (5) enhance education about the systemic causes of world hunger.

B. The task force's response

In response to synod's mandate, the task force reviewed the work of the 1978 Task Force on World Hunger (see mandate, 2). As a result, the current task force realized early on that a lengthy exposition on the problems of world hunger and how to address them would be superfluous. The task force discovered that the 1978 Task Force on World Hunger had already provided a thorough study on hunger and poverty, including an in-depth evaluation of the integration of word and deed in the ministry of the church.

For this reason the mandate's call to evaluate "the integration of word and deed ministry as it relates specifically to the issue of world hunger" (see mandate, 3) was not bypassed but set aside as a task already considered, a task with outcomes that desperately need a communal revisiting by the church.

The task force endorses the two reports that resulted from the 1978 task force's work--*And He Had Compassion on Them* and *For My Neighbor's Good*--as partial fulfillment of synod's mandate. In the past these reports received extensive exposure and perhaps had the greatest direct influence of any synodical report in the history of the CRC. This excellent work does not need to be repeated. Therefore, the present task force strongly urges review and reconsideration by our churches and agencies of both the analysis and recommendations of the 1978 report.

Synod also mandated the present task force to solicit "feedback . . . from local councils, churches, and diaconal conferences" (see mandate, 4). In response, it worked through the staff of CRWRC to conduct visits with and surveys of local diaconates to obtain appropriate input. Information was gathered regarding world-hunger education and local-church and individual responses. Visits with diaconal conferences and their leaders provided further information. The trends gathered from these surveys can be found in Section B of this report.

In response to synod's mandate to enhance the "education about the systemic causes of world hunger" (see mandate, 5), the task force interviewed CRC agencies and the agencies of other denominations. This survey of hunger and poverty education materials produced by other Christian relief and development agencies revealed that our most urgent task is not the production of additional resources. It is more essential to make these materials available to the churches through a single distribution source.

The task force concluded that its report would be most effective if it presented a *vision* and a *process* by which the whole church can become reenergized and recommitted to a comprehensive ministry that meets the diverse needs of the world's poor and hungry people in the name of Jesus.

III. Our church and the needs of the world

A. Looking back: The CRC's involvement in world hunger

The CRC and many of its members have been actively involved in responding to the plight of people who are poor. In addition to the domestic and overseas ministries of a number of our agencies, many members have been involved in local, national, and international church ministries, advocacy, diaconal conferences, food banks, and other volunteer efforts. Through all these the CRC has responded in word and deed to the suffering of people in

poverty. The CRC has been entrusted with many of God's good gifts for ministry among needy people. We are beneficiaries of a heritage of well-articulated, well-founded convictions about the Bible, our faith, and the world. We have few peers in the education of our children and our leaders. We have preached the gospel in many parts of the world. We have cultivated compassionate habits in response to disaster, famine, and poverty around the world. We have also acquired the financial means to support a great number of ministries.

The task force affirms that the agencies of the CRC are among the most effective organizations in their respective areas of ministry. They do excellent work at a reasonable cost with low overhead.

B. Our involvement after the 1978 Task Force on World Hunger report

Following synod's adoption of many of the recommendations of the 1978 Task Force on World Hunger, many congregations studied the task force's reports, sponsored hunger-awareness dinners, and engaged in fasting as a spiritual repentance exercise and as a means of declaring solidarity with people who are poor. Contributions to CRWRC rose to the point of taxing the organization's capacity.

Gradually, however, implementation of the 1978 task force's recommendations began to flounder. Our church's interest in the issues of world hunger, the needs of the poor, and the causes of poverty diminished. This became manifest through declining study and discussion of hunger and poverty issues, less direct involvement with the poor, increasingly consumptive life-styles, and a lower level of giving.

The present task force has concluded that the recommendations of the 1978 Task Force on World Hunger were never fully implemented for two reasons. First, the 1978 recommendations included no built-in evaluation process to monitor success or failure and no means to suggest possible alternative actions. Second, the work of the 1978 Task Force on World Hunger was never fully embraced by all the church agencies.

C. Looking ahead: Beyond issues to ministry.

From a historical perspective, the CRC appears to have turned inward in the years following the 1978 task force, focusing much of its energy on issues such as women in ecclesiastical office and creation and evolution. The current task force began its discussions in the months leading up to and during Synod 1992. This context made the task force acutely aware of one of the current realities of the CRC: our divisions over theological and ecclesiastical issues have hindered our ministry and witness to our living Lord.

Moreover, the church's general inattentiveness to the needs of people in poverty caused many members committed to active involvement with the needy to concentrate their action and their giving outside of the CRC, despite the presence of the denominational agencies.

IV. Our renewed challenge and calling

A. A time to refocus

While honoring the continuing work of the CRC, its agencies, its congregations, and its individual members, the present Task Force on World Hunger, like its predecessor, is convinced that the whole church must refocus its attention and energies on a holistic ministry that meets the needs of the world, for working among and with people who are poor is not a ministry only of CRWRC and Christian Reformed World Missions (CRWM); it is central to the ministry of the *entire* church. Similarly, the task before us is broader than the single issue of feeding the hungry. Hunger is always part of a complex web of natural disasters, poverty, oppression, structural injustice, and spiritual alienation.

Hence, we must remotivate and recaptivate the *whole* church in *holistic* ministry with the poor. Our increasingly splintered and suffering world needs our commitment to that ministry. In fact, the well-being of the CRC requires it. Most importantly, our Lord calls us to it. He calls us to a life-changing conversion in Jesus so that we conform no longer to the ways of this world but are transformed by the renewing of our minds so that we will demonstrate God's good, pleasing, and perfect will (Rom. 12:2).

B. *A time to respond*

Now is the time for the church to respond both in word and in deed to the full range of human suffering and need, giving special concern to those who are most vulnerable. Jesus himself announces and defines his living example of holistic ministry with these words from Isaiah:

*The Spirit of the Lord is on me,
because he has anointed me
to preach good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners
and recovery of sight for the blind,
to release the oppressed,
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.*
(Luke 4:18-19)

Although the task force recognizes that the church has and must have additional ministry emphases, in the Old and New Testament, Scripture significantly focuses on God's love and compassion for the poor and the oppressed. Hence, that focus should be reflected in the ministries of our church.

In this context, the task force found it beneficial to articulate our calling in Christ to meet the needs of the world:

God is calling the CRC to translate its biblical commitments into concrete deeds of compassion and justice.

God is calling us to move beyond theoretical reflection to practical action, to move from a theological analysis of poverty to a loving solidarity with suffering people.

God is calling us from mere financial assistance to compassionate relationships with people in need.

He is calling us from a period of introspection and divisiveness to a renewed vision for ministry and unity in that task.

He is calling us to a time of healing and love.

God is calling us to move beyond a stagnant level of hunger awareness

to a more integral understanding of the causes of hunger and poverty that plague a suffering humanity.

He is calling us to address injustices between people and within the structures of institutions and governments, even our own.

He is calling us to address not only deliberate violations of justice but also inadvertent attitudes and actions that result in injustice and oppression.

He is calling us not only to claim respect for all people but also to nurture and demonstrate it regardless of race, religion, gender, or class.

C. *A time to repent*

Finally, God is calling us to repent of dominance and control and to live with our neighbors in humility and partnership. He is calling us from narrow North American self-absorption and materialism to global awareness that responds with ministries of mercy and justice to a creation groaning for freedom along with the children of God.

V. The task force's vision for the church

A. *An evocative theme . . .*

developed to stimulate the CRC to pursue ministry for people who are poor: **FREEDOM TO SERVE: Meeting the Needs of the World.** This theme recalls that, through God's gift of salvation in Christ, we are freed from sin and bondage. The theme forces us to consider how our freedom in Christ gives us the *privilege* of serving the needs of the world. *

Although this theme is broader than the mandate of this task force and the issues it has addressed, it helps orient our church to its global and primary task of being a holistic witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ to people around the world. All denominational agencies, organizations, churches, and members can then incorporate their own particular ministries into this broader theme.

B. *A revival of the spirit and commitment of the early 1980s . . .*

when the report of the 1978 Task Force on World Hunger motivated church members to serve their neighbors through the relief and development efforts of the CRC.

C. *A revitalized church . . .*

that is *passionate* about *compassion*. Our church must be passionate in its study and proclamation of God's Word and in its zeal to reflect the healing power of God's Word for a hurting world. We must meet with compassion those people who are poor, treating them as whole persons who become our partners in ministry. We need to live stewardly lives that reflect our role as caretakers, not owners, of God's earth. We must make our ministry with needy people an integral part of our individual and communal lives rather than a special program carried out by others on our behalf.

D. *A reenergizing of all people and agencies of the CRC . . .*

in dealing with the problems of world hunger and poverty, each group

playing *its own* pivotal role in this unified effort:

1. *The Back to God Hour* would educate not only CRC members but also its worldwide audience about the nature and causes of poverty and the needs of people who are poor.
2. *Christian Reformed World Missions* and *Home Missions* would work in partnership with CRWRC in addressing both the spiritual and material poverty of the whole person, both at home and abroad.
3. *Synodical Committee on Race Relations (SCORR)* would educate our church members about the role of racism in causing poverty, in perpetuating poverty, and in rationalizing our inaction with respect to poverty.
4. *Church-related colleges and Calvin Theological Seminary* would play key roles in educating church leaders, future pastors, and all the people of God about the nature and needs of people in poverty.
5. *CRC Publications* would supplement its extensive catalog of resources with materials which reflect the full range of ministry of the church, including already existing materials, which could be distributed to inspire the church to Christian action to reduce hunger and poverty.
6. *Christian Reformed World Relief Committee (CRWRC)* would expand opportunities for hands-on involvement of church members--adults and youth--in service of people in poverty. It would also encourage and enable individuals and local churches in advocacy--speaking to governments and institutions on behalf of the poor.
7. *Youth programs* would respond to the growing desire among CRC youth for active involvement in service among those in need.
8. *All church members* would involve themselves in meeting the needs of people who are poor by becoming partners with them and by living a stewardly life-style, making financial contributions, and advocating publicly for justice.

E. *A recommitment to our denomination's ministries . . .*

by church members who are increasingly aware and appreciative of the work of our deacons, missionaries, congregations, and ministries. We envision a church whose members concentrate on serving through our church's people and ministries, which have a proven record of effective and stewardly use of gifts.

F. *A revised perspective . . .*

that envisions a body of believers who earnestly seek to "love globally--serve locally" in the Lord's name. We seek a church whose members willingly share their resources of time, talents, money, goods, and the opportunities of citizenship to assist in alleviating poverty and hunger locally, nationally, and internationally. We seek a church moved to action not out of guilt or fashion but simply because we seek to follow God's Word and live for Christ by demonstrating his love to people who are poor.

VI. The vision enacted

A. *Avoiding breakdown in implementation*

The breakdown of implementation that occurred with the 1978 task force's recommendations must not be repeated. Successful implementation of this report will occur only if the vision of the task force is owned not only by synod but also by the entire church, its agencies, and each of its members. Similarly, we believe that the ministries of all our members and agencies need to reflect more fully the compassion and love of our Lord for the needy. This will be accomplished through the following:

1. The increased cooperation of agencies

The task force established working relationships with many of the denomination's agencies, as well as with related organizations, to determine their interest in helping the church tackle the problems of poverty more effectively. Their cooperation has been excellent. In meetings with their representatives, it was enlightening to learn what many of our agencies are already doing and their willingness and capacity to do more. That work must continue and expand.

2. More actively involving church members

The impact of our efforts must be experienced fully and effectively in the lives and ministries of individual church members and their congregations. Church members need to be invited to have a more hands-on role in the ministry of the church. The church and its agencies also need to actively support the ministries of individual members in their communities. It is the task force's hope that all individual church members of the CRC will have the opportunity to serve--meeting needs and building relationships in their own communities in addition to supporting national and international ministry through time, talents, treasures, and prayer.

3. A larger role for deacons and diaconal conferences

Our deacons and diaconal conferences, who already perform excellent service in leading church members in direct ministries of mercy, need to play a greater role in giving guidance to the church's ministry. Ordained as "prophetic critics of the waste, injustice, and selfishness in our society," deacons must lead the church and its members in learning about life-style changes that can diminish hunger.

4. The Ministries Coordinating Council, the executive director of ministries, and the Synodical Interim Committee

The executive director of ministries (Dr. Peter Borgdorff), the newly formed Ministries Coordinating Council (MCC), and the Synodical Interim Committee will continually encourage and ensure interagency cooperation in response to world hunger.

The task force is grateful that the MCC has already endorsed the vision outlined above and has supported the thrust of the recommendations listed below.

B. Recommendations of the task force

The task force offers the following recommendations to further the process, already in motion, of revitalizing the church's ministry of meeting the needs of the world. Synodical delegates, pastors, deacons, elders, and church members are encouraged also to review the recommendations of the previous 1978 Task Force on World Hunger to see that the current recommendations complement and build on the earlier ones (*Acts of Synod 1978*, pp. 79-86; *And He Had Compassion on Them*, pp. 83-88).

In addition to these recommendations, Sections D, E, and F of this report provide specific suggestions for actions by agencies, diaconal conferences, congregations, and individuals.

1. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to the task force's chairperson, Vernon Ehlers, and/or his designate.
2. That synod endorse and commend to the churches the theme **FREEDOM TO SERVE: Meeting the Needs of the World** and the vision described in this report as a basis for denomination-wide ministry at home and abroad.
3. That synod urge all members, congregations, denominational agencies, and related institutions and organizations to recommit themselves prayerfully to achieving this vision.
4. That synod commend and affirm the decision of the denominational agencies to join in achieving this vision.
5. That synod instruct each denominational agency to include in its long-range strategy an action plan for achieving its part of this vision and request each agency to consider the suggestions relevant to its ministry found in the sections of this report.
6. That synod instruct CRWRC and CRC Publications to ensure that a wide range of educational materials on hunger and poverty becomes available to the churches, including biblical studies, analyses of the causes of and solutions to poverty, and ministry-action guides.
7. That synod instruct the Synodical Interim Committee, through the services of the Ministries Coordinating Council, to provide active leadership, to practice frequent mutual accountability in implementing this vision by denominational agencies, and to assist denominationally related institutions and organizations such as the various colleges and advocacy organizations to this end.
8. That synod instruct the Synodical Interim Committee, through the services of the Ministries Coordinating Council, to engage a full-time person to coordinate the implementation of the vision described in this report.
9. That synod designate a month every fall, beginning in 1993, as **FREEDOM TO SERVE MONTH** in celebration of Christ's compassion and love and our freedom and responsibility to reflect his justice and mercy in this world. Activities could include special worship services and liturgies, focused prayers and offerings, *Banner* features, church-school studies, Back to God Hour broadcasts, college and seminary lectures, other mission

- emphases, etc.
10. That synod instruct the Synodical Interim Committee, through the services of the Ministries Coordinating Committee, to report annually to synod for a five-year period on the realization of this vision.
 11. That synod declare the mandate of the task force to be completed and discharge the task force with thanks.

Task Force on World Hunger (1993)

| | |
|----------------------------|-------------|
| Anne Doef | |
| Harry Spaling | |
| Vernon Ehlers, chairperson | Mary Stamps |
| Claire Elgersma | |
| Gerald Vandezande | |
| Arthur Hoekstra | |
| Jeremy Van Duyvendyk | |
| Marie Holtrop | |
| Bill van Geest | |
| Margaret Kleis | |

SECTION B: Summary of Survey of Diaconates and the Denomination

Synod's mandate to the Task Force on World Hunger included a reference to the need to obtain input from churches, councils, and diaconal conferences about the world-hunger program in the CRC. To carry out its mandate effectively, the task force obtained information from a variety of sources both inside and outside the denomination: Church World Service, Reformed Church in America Hunger Education Program, Bread for the World, and Canadian Baptist Relief and Development. Information was also obtained from Ministry of Money and River Terrace CRC (Lansing, MI).

The task-force membership was constituted in such a way that input was consistently received from a variety of perspectives--diaconal conferences (Arthur Hoekstra, diaconal consultant for the Kalamazoo Diaconal Conference); deacon (Ann Doef); minority (Mary Stamps, director of ministries for Madison Square CRC); domestic hunger (Ann Doef, director of a food bank and soup kitchen in Belleville, ON); U.S. and Canadian (equal representation from each); political advocacy (Gerald Vandezande, public affairs director, Citizens for Public Justice); and international development (Harry Spaling, former CRWRC field staff in Sierra Leone). The other members reinforced these perspectives or added their own.

At its June 1992 meeting, the task force met with representatives of a variety of denominational and related agencies: Calvin College and Seminary, Christian Reformed World Missions, CRC Publications, and the Young Calvinist Federation. Subsequent to that meeting, input was solicited and obtained from all CRC agencies, including the Canadian agencies. This input focused on what the agencies are already doing with hunger and poverty education and response and what they can do in addition. The task force considered this information and made use of it in the part of the report called "Our Vision for the Church."

CRWRC-Canada home-office staff visited seventy-two diaconates to obtain input on a variety of topics, including world hunger. Of these, 92 percent responded affirmatively to the question "Do you involve the members of your congregation in learning about and responding to world hunger?," and 97 percent gave an affirmative response to the question "Do you think the present CRWRC-Canada world-hunger program motivates people to help in solving the problems of hunger and related issues?" Over twenty suggestions to improve the program were received and considered.

In early 1992, CRWRC-U.S.A. conducted a survey of diaconates, diaconal conference leaders, CRWRC staff, hunger coordinators, pastors, and others to evaluate response to domestic poverty. There were 263 respondents. On a scale of 1 (poor) to 5 (excellent), CRWRC's world-hunger education efforts were rated at 3.7. Numerous suggestions were given in response to the question "What else should CRWRC do nationally to address poverty in the U.S.?"

During the past ten years, CRWRC-U.S.A. has conducted an in-depth evaluation of diaconal conferences to which it provided financial support. These evaluations included an analysis of the conferences' world-hunger education efforts, as well as the conferences' analysis of the CRWRC-U.S.A. world-hunger education program.

CRWRC and the task force worked with the Calvin College Social Research Center to include in the recent denominational survey a number of world-hunger-related items. Of the respondents, 97 percent indicated they are concerned about world hunger, and over 70 percent indicated that the CRWRC World Hunger Program had helped them learn about and respond to world hunger.

This information provided a useful foundation for the task force's efforts to assist the denomination in becoming much more passionate in its awareness of and response to hunger and poverty, both in North America and around the world.

SECTION C: Suggested Activities for Congregations

To assist congregations in living out the vision of **FREEDOM TO SERVE: Meeting the Needs of the World**, the task force has compiled a list of actions which can be taken to respond to hunger and related issues. We suggest the following measures:

1. That pastors in Christian Reformed churches be encouraged to preach about the Christian responsibility to respond to people in need. Pastors could lead the congregation in exploring biblical responses to the problems of poverty and our responsibility to act on behalf of people who are poor and oppressed.
2. That congregations observe World Hunger Week in November, including a day of prayer and fasting.
3. That congregations spend adequate time each year studying world hunger/poverty/justice issues in both adult- and youth-education classes, using the books *For My Neighbor's Good* and *He Had Compassion on Them* as well as books, audiovisuals, and speakers available from CRWRC, Bread for the World, Church World Service, the Reformed Church in America, and other agencies.
4. That each congregation adopt a specific "hunger project" through an agency such as CRWRC. Such projects can provide an opportunity for the congregation to learn about the root causes of hunger and an avenue to respond through prayer, action, and financial support.
5. That congregations encourage and support youth involvement in local hands-on service projects and in the SERVE projects through the Young Calvinist Federation.
6. That congregations develop a local hands-on response to neighbors in their own community who are suffering injustice, hunger, or poverty.
7. That congregations ask CRWRC to hold regional workshops each year to keep church leaders informed about world hunger/poverty needs and facts.
8. That congregations designate members with special gifts in education and organization to facilitate hunger awareness in every congregation. Councils could support these members in organizing activities (hunger walks, hunger-awareness dinners, showing videos, etc.).
9. That congregations become actively aware of the needs and opportunities to meet needs within their own community and publicize them through bulletins, church newsletters, and the pulpit.
10. That congregations link themselves with racially diverse or ethnic congregations in supporting a common mission project.
11. That congregations ask the council either to appoint a new committee or to ask an existing one to help the entire congregation deal with both personal and institutional racism and its role in poverty and hunger.

12. That congregations hold an annual "Missions Emphasis Sunday," inviting representatives of agencies that work to end hunger and poverty to speak or bring displays which help raise awareness of these issues among their members.

SECTION D: Suggested Activities for Individuals and Families

To enhance individual commitment to the cause of world hunger, the task force considered various ways in which Christians can enact the vision--
FREEDOM TO SERVE: Meeting the Needs of the World. The following list includes a variety of hands-on responses suitable for individuals and families. The task force suggests

1. That each Christian participate in study, seminars, reflection, prayer, and confession about world hunger and our role in that problem and its solution.
2. That each Christian consider giving at least 1 percent of his or her time and money to organizations and causes working to alleviate hunger and poverty.
3. That each Christian become an active advocate for those suffering injustice, poverty, and hunger by doing justice in our everyday contact with neighbors at school, work, or home.
4. That each Christian keep informed of government decisions and policies toward developing countries and write letters to our government representatives on behalf of people who are poor.
5. That each Christian consider joining organizations which act as advocates for the poor and the oppressed (for example, Bread for the World, Citizens for Public Justice, and Evangelicals for Social Action).
6. That each Christian consider how we can adapt life-styles to avoid waste of resources and to reflect a genuine commitment to stewardship, generously sharing what we have with others.
7. That each Christian live in a way that does not degrade the earth and its resources but does, wherever possible, make every effort to work toward their restoration.

SECTION E: Suggested Activities for Diaconal Conferences

The task force has compiled the following list of activities which will promote the cause of world hunger in local churches. We suggest that diaconal conferences use them as ways to encourage local churches to enact the vision **FREEDOM TO SERVE: Meeting the Needs of the World.**

1. Compile a list of local-ministry success stories which can be shared with other congregations in the conference and with other diaconal conferences. These should not only focus on ministry "projects" but also include worship events and church-education materials or curriculum that encourage people to serve. These can be shared through conference newsletters, local-church bulletin announcements, or videos that can circulate to all churches in the conference.
2. Promote use of the task force's liturgy within congregations by encouraging deacons to speak to pastors and worship leaders about the vision **FREEDOM TO SERVE: Meeting the Needs of the World.**
3. Select a specific CRWRC project around which funds, materials, overseas volunteers service, and hunger and poverty education can be focused within a diaconal conference. Classes Alberta North and South used this highly successful model to organize and help construct several gravity-flow water-supply systems in remote rural villages of Sierra Leone.
4. Sponsor a qualified student from the developing world to attend a Christian college or seminary in North America as a way of linking people in our communities with communities in the developing world.
5. Integrate word and deed ministry by encouraging diaconates to network with classical evangelism committees, campus ministries, home-missions outreach, etc. Encourage churches to have deacons on evangelism and missions committees.
6. Stimulate deacons to sponsor local youth service projects where youth can spend time volunteering to meet community needs (i.e., working in local food banks, shelters, urban ministries, etc.).
7. Encourage and organize spring-break projects whereby church members can volunteer to spend a week serving through local ministries or meeting community needs (i.e., renovating or making repairs on the homes of the elderly and low-income families).
8. Encourage local diaconates to organize collection of grocery items for local food banks or shelters.
9. Stimulate and publicize involvement in local ministries so that each member of each congregation is aware of opportunities to serve (i.e., in local food banks, soup kitchens, women's shelters, child care, homes for the disabled, and housing alternatives for the homeless).
10. Encourage and promote conference-wide involvement in volunteering to respond to both local and national disasters through agencies like CRWRC.
11. Encourage the initiation and development of intercongregational advocacy

groups like Bread for the World, designed to lobby legislative bodies for the sake of low-income, unemployed, and homeless people.

12. Encourage the initiation and development of self-help mutual-support groups that provide solutions to specific problems affecting people at the community level, for instance, Alcoholics Anonymous for people who are addicted or parenting support groups for single parents.
13. Organize diaconal exchanges between classes that differ significantly in some way from each other (rural/urban, rich/poor).
14. Encourage individual diaconates to host monthly "deacons only" prayer meetings to pray for ministries of people in the diaconal conference or local congregation as well as the specific needs of individuals. In addition, set aside a half hour at diaconal-conference board meetings to do the same.
15. Host seminars which lead congregations to use their gifts in meeting the needs of the world (i.e., Home Missions' "Discover Your Gifts").
16. Participate with agencies like CRWRC to arrange educational field trips to interesting diaconal outreach programs in nearby cities, in various places throughout North America, and even overseas. Conferences could arrange to host each other's groups of visitors, share strategies for ministry, and encourage cross-cultural dialogue and understanding.

SECTION F: Suggested Activities for CRC Agencies

To encourage the agencies of the CRC to implement the vision--**FREEDOM TO SERVE: Meeting the Needs of the World**--the task force has compiled proposals to stimulate agency action plans. These proposals are based on information gathered from agency staff members during task-force consultations. The agencies have been asked to use these proposals and their own ideas to develop action plans and to include these plans in their reports to synod. The task force therefore suggests that

All Agencies

1. Form an interagency group using the 1978 Task Force on World Hunger's materials, as well as others, to identify the causes of poverty and to develop a plan to disseminate that information throughout the denomination by their respective agencies or collectively. The expected outcome is that church members will become more involved in addressing these issues through their local churches, diaconal conferences, and the denominational agencies.
2. Identify where they already do holistic ministry and regularly communicate this ministry to church members. The expected outcome is that church members will begin to see all the agencies as individual parts of a larger ministry, meeting the needs of *whole* persons in a holistic way.
3. Look for opportunities to work together to implement the vision whenever possible. Actions by one agency will often require the support of one or more other agencies.

The Back to God Hour

1. Publicize the causes of poverty as well as the good things churches are doing to address poverty and hunger. That knowledge will influence people's choices about what strategies they support or respond to in addressing hunger and poverty needs.
2. Promote the theme of the task force report--**FREEDOM TO SERVE: Meeting the Needs of the World**--in its broadcasts.
3. Dedicate one month each year (possibly November) to diaconal (not necessarily CRWRC) meditations in its *Today*.

Calvin College

1. Initiate and sustain the activities it has suggested in its communications with the task force.
2. Build stronger working relationships with other denominational organizations and agencies to help sustain and implement their activities.

Calvin Theological Seminary

1. Work with CRWRC, SCORR, and other denominational resources to develop more opportunities for experiential learning about hunger and poverty for both seminarians and pastors.

2. Work with the Association for Public Justice, Citizens for Public Justice, Evangelicals for Social Action, and other organizations to determine what information about poverty and hunger is already available.

Calvinettes and Calvinist Cadet Corps

1. Help provide Cadets and Calvinettes with greater hands-on experiences in addressing poverty and hunger.
2. Develop badges for service related specifically to hunger and poverty awareness and response.
3. Seek material for its publications from sources inside and outside the denomination to increase Calvinette and Cadet awareness about poverty and hunger.

CRWRC

1. Develop positive advocacy programs in both Canada and the U.S.--in cooperation with Bread for the World, Association for Public Justice, Evangelicals for Social Action, Citizens for Public Justice, and other such organizations--to foster greater involvement by church members in this area of hunger and poverty ministry.
2. Make greater staff resources available to expand its hunger and poverty education efforts.
3. Work more closely with other denominational agencies to provide information, field staff, and consultation to assist these agencies in their own diaconal ministry opportunities.

Chaplain Committee

Solicit stories from its chaplains about how they have been involved in poverty- and hunger-alleviation work and disseminate those stories in their publications.

Committee on Disability Concerns

Work with the Calvin College sociology and social-work departments as well as other resources to clarify the relationship between disability and poverty.

Home Missions

1. Follow up with an increased emphasis on church development in high-need urban areas.
2. Include a strong diaconal component in the Congregational Ministry Planning and Classical Strategic Planning processes.

Pastor-Church Relations Services

Solicit from other agencies and organizations information about successful models for ministry that it can suggest to churches undergoing internal

difficulties to help them increasingly focus their energies on ministry.

Pensions and Insurance

Develop investment policies which will help alleviate poverty and promote justice.

CRC Publications

1. Solicit additional assistance from other agencies to produce articles and materials about hunger and poverty.
2. Work with CRWRC, The Back to God Hour, and other relevant agencies to produce audiovisual materials for distribution to churches and church members.

SCORR

Be more persistent in helping all CRC agencies and organizations to understand how oppression and injustices such as racism contribute to the problems of world hunger and poverty.

World Missions

Ensure that new staff and staff on home service are fully aware of poverty and hunger and how their work responds to these needs.

Young Calvinist Federation

Be more persistent in soliciting assistance from CRWRC and other agencies and organizations to effectively work through SERVE projects and publications to increase youth commitment to the cause of world hunger.

SECTION G: World Hunger: Some Facts and Figures

Graph 1

The Widening Gap

Two hundred years ago the average per capita income of the richest countries was perhaps eight times greater than that of the poorest. But today's average U.S. or Canadian citizen has an income level almost a hundred times that of his or her counterparts in Bangladesh. This gap continues to widen.

Graph 2

South Aids North

In addition to the widening gap between the incomes of people living in developing and developed countries, the net transfer of dollars from the developed to the developing world has now shifted in favor of developed nations.