Food, Peace and Security

Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into your house…?
—Isaiah 58:7

So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.
—Corinthians 10:31

Food is a peace issue. As seen most recently during the Arab Spring, history paints a clear picture: Increases in food prices can jeopardize a nation’s peace and security. Without access to and distribution of nutritious, affordable food, a nation’s internal stability is at risk. A study of the impact of food prices on civil conflict in 120 countries in the past 40 years found that in low-income countries, increases in international food prices lead to a deterioration of democratic institutions and an increase in anti-government demonstrations, riots and civil conflict.¹

In recent years, international food prices have reached record levels. In many countries high food prices have led to violence and social unrest. In Algeria, a country heavily dependent on food imports, food riots broke out in 2008 and again in 2011 due to food inflation. The 2011 protests left five dead and more than 800 injured. Food insecurity was one of the main underlying factors of the Arab Spring of 2011, which toppled the heads of state of Tunisia and Egypt, once again showing how much conflict and food insecurity are interrelated.

The world food system has the capacity to produce an abundance of quality food to feed the global population. Yet close to a billion people (more than the combined populations of the United States, Canada and the European Union) go to bed hungry every night.² Worldwide, approximately 16,000 children die each day from hunger-related causes, and another 870 people million people suffer from hunger and undernutrition.³ In the United States, more than one in five children is at risk of hunger. Among African Americans and Latinos, nearly one in three children is at risk of hunger.⁴ When we produce more than enough food for the entire world population, this is an outrage that must be urgently addressed. If we are to work toward a more peaceful world, food security should be of paramount importance.

Our Vision
A peaceful world can only be realized when there is access to nutritious, quality food for all. Our task is to work toward a world in which persons have the ability to either produce or purchase their food from markets. Nations should be able to control food production and food stocks to stabilize prices regardless of the ups and downs of the global market. The world without hunger where justice reigns and poverty is conquered is the world we want to see.

United Methodist Church Policy
“We engage in the struggle for bread and justice for all in the confidence that God goes before us and guides us” (Resolution 4051, “The United Methodist Church, Justice, and World Hunger,” The Book of Resolutions of The United Methodist Church 2012.)
What United Methodist Women Members Can Do

- Educate yourself on the causes of hunger, undernutrition and obesity. For more information, refer to the United Methodist Women mission studies Poverty and Food and Faith and visit www.wfp.org/hunger for statistics from the World Food Programme.

- Raise awareness about food justice policies and fight for what is just. Advocate for the right to food (www.srfood.org) and encourage national and international policies that prioritize food over other uses for agriculture, such as ethanol and biofuels production.

- Support small farmers and community agriculture by purchasing seasonal and locally produced food as much as possible. Strengthen local food systems by buying at farmers markets and other local food outlets.

- Join hundreds of thousands of people in the fight against obesity by cooking and eating healthy food. For recommendations on planning meals, cutting calories and cooking healthy recipes, go to www.cdc.gov/healthyweight/healthy_eating.

- Advocate for healthier food options, nutritional education and physical education in U.S. schools.

- Join a community garden and bring your kids along and make it a family activity.

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