Hunger and Food Programs

During recent years the largest activity among Adventist Community Services units across North America shifted from the traditional clothing programs to feeding the hungry. Almost every ACS unit operates a food pantry. Surveys conducted by the North American Division indicate that 3,000 food pantries are in operation under the ACS umbrella.

About 20 million people in North America suffer from hunger at least a few days each month. Particularly critical is the fact that many of these people are children. One in every five children in the United States under age 6 lives below the poverty line; half of African American children under age 6 are poor. In Canada almost 17% all children live in a low-income situation.

Hunger can have a devastating impact on a developing child. The chances of permanent damage to the body and increased illness are directly related to malnutrition. Lack of a proper diet affects a child's ability to get a good education and can keep him or her from breaking out of the cruel cycle of poverty.

"Hospitals are increasingly reporting instances of infant and child malnutrition which damages and stunts growth" **(***Bread for the World, Report on America*, 1991).

Unfortunately, no malnutrition surveillance system exists to document the extent of the problem. However, a recent survey conducted by the Physicians Task Force on Hunger at Harvard University reports cases in several areas of the United States.

The infant mortality rate in some inner city neighborhoods is greater than that in countries such as Cuba and Jamaica. The Children's Defense Fund estimates that one United States child dies every 53 minutes from the effects of poverty.

In Canada one study found that half of low-income families cannot afford to give their children good quality food or a variety of food, and 18% cut the size of their children's meals because there was not enough food. Another survey of clients of food pantries in Canada demonstrates that, even with aid from a food pantry, the majority run out of food at least once a month (Jillian Oderkirk, "Food Banks," *Canadian Social Trends*, Spring 1992, pages 6-14).

In the U.S. the hunger problem has increased sharply in the last decade. The 1990s are not expected to be any different. "Based on a survey of twenty-seven major cities, the U.S. Conference of Mayors reports that almost ninety percent of these cities expect the demand for emergency food assistance to increase. Already, in three-fourths of the cities surveyed, emergency food assistance facilities have had to turn away people in need because of lack of resources" (Andrew Carroll, *Volunteer USA*), pages 340-341).

Aletha Harris is typical of the struggling single mother who finds it hard to feed her children. She is now employed as a computer assistant, and described what she has faced during a U. S. Congress hearing.

"At the age of 17, I gave birth to a child.... At 22, I married a disabled veteran. We had two children (and) in this marriage I suffered total hardship. One cold night I had to run to the police station to get away from him...

"I took on two jobs working 16 hours a day to provide for my children. I finally found a house...but there was no public transportation and I had no car.... I had to walk two miles to the store to get food for my family and many times walk one mile to drop my child at the home of a day care mother...."

We have all been hungry, but most of us know where to get food or when we will eat next. Hunger is knowing there is no food for yourself or your family and not knowing when or where you might find some.

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It starts with pain. "First it is with you all the time, waking and sleeping, and in your dreams, and your belly cries out insistently.... Then the pain is no longer sharp but dull, and this too is with you always, so that you think of food many times a day, and each time a terrible sickness assails you.... Then that too is gone, all pain, all desire, only a great emptiness is left, like the sky" (Kamala Markandaya, *Women and Children: Hungry in America* (1991, Fawcett Columbine, New York, pages 121-122).

What Causes Hunger?

Is it overpopulation? Natural disasters? Poor farming practices? All of the above, or none of the above? Surprisingly, the answer is none of the above. The first three answers are popular because they blame the hungry or blame God (or the devil). And there is enough truth in each of these answers to invite our belief.

"Hungry countries do tend to have high birth rates. But for the poor, children provide the only retirement plan. To have some survive to care for them, parents must have many children.

"But population density and hunger are not inevitable companions. South Korea has only half the cropland per person that Bangladesh possesses, yet Bangladesh faces widespread, severe hunger. The Netherlands has a greater population density than Ethiopia, but the Dutch export large quantities of food.

"Natural disasters, such as flood, drought, and cyclones, interrupt food production, of course. But famine caused directly by these acts of God' contributes only a small part to the world (and domestic) hunger problem.

"Many poor farmers do abuse their land. But nearly always they do so out of desperate necessity. Survival demands maximum production now; they simply do not have the luxury of trying out long-term conservation measures" (Tom Dybdhal, "What Causes World Hunger?" *Adventist Review*, May 5, 1988).

In fact, there is enough food produced each year for every person on the globe to eat 3,000 calories daily, which is the average consumed by each person in North America. Annual food production increases at a rate of 2.8 percent while world population is growing at 1.7 percent each year (T*he Ending Hunger Briefing Workbook;* 1984, The Hunger Project, San Francisco, pages 23-24).

The average affluent North American is complacent about hunger because he believes that to eliminate world hunger, we would have to spend so much money it would be impossible. In fact, an annual investment of $30 billion would eradicate hunger by the end of this decade. In the U.S. more than $30 billion is spent each year on alcohol and tobacco. The nations of the world spend $30 billion every twelve days on the production of weapons (*Ibid*., pages 28-29).

In fact, hunger is caused, both around the world and in North America, by the lack of the will to end it. Government stockpiles of surplus wheat could provide every citizen of the U.S. with seven loaves of bread. North Americans throw out a third of the food they buy at the grocery store. "It is a real tragedy that while perfectly edible food slowly spoils in warehouses, fields, orchards, and kitchens ... so many millions of people, young and old, do not have enough to eat" (Carroll, page 341).

What Can be Done about Hunger?

Carl Nesmith, a young Adventist pastor in Lithonia, Georgia, decided to do something about hunger one day in a supermarket. He observed an employee discarding a large quantity of edible food. When Pastor Nesmith asked the store worker why he was throwing the food away, he was told, "I know it's a shame, but it's the store policy."

"This event led me to talk with the store manager and the corporate office about giving the food to the poor and hungry," recalls Pastor Nesmith. "I had no idea how this could be done, but I persevered with the matter for four months, until the home office agreed to try giving me the food to take to the poor. I started picking up fresh produce in my small car and taking food into poor communities. Soon we were doing it every day, and a local car dealer donated a truck."

The project is called Heaven's Grocery Store and it is sponsored by the First Seventh-day Adventist Church in Lithonia, a suburb of Atlanta.

Pastor Nesmith has taken an assignment to another church, but volunteers continue to pick up produce, baked goods, dairy items, canned goods, and variety of paper and other products from several food store chains each week. The groceries are then distributed at more than 20 neighborhood locations-senior citizens centers, churches, homeless shelters, and lowincome housing complexes. It totals more than $135,000 worth of food each year; enough to provide 144,000 meals.

The program serves about 3,000 families each month. It has received strong support from the local mayor and a number of other civic leaders, including Max Cleland, then Secretary of State for the State of Georgia. A network affiliate TV station in Atlanta honored Pastor Nesmith and Heaven's Grocery Store as one of the outstanding volunteer projects in the metropolitan area in 1990, and significant funding has come from a number of sources outside the Adventist Church.

The problem of hunger does not usually bring to mind a place like Nova Scotia. The city of Halifax, however, has high unemployment and a high cost of living, and this results in families who go hungry.

Operating out of a converted one-car garage, the Halifax ACS Centre provides food for more than 6,000 families. In a recent year it distributed more than $125,000 worth of groceries. It has received significant recognition from the government and coverage in the media. The active Ingathering program in the Halifax Adventist church has spread the word, and the Centre is well known by civic leaders, hospitals and other churches as a place to refer persons in need.

Most of the foodstuffs come from the Metro Food Bank in Halifax, and the Federal and Provincial governments provide a grant to hire a staff assistant, as well as student interns each summer. Nonetheless, funding from the local church and denominational sources, and the donated canned goods that come from church members and other individuals, are important building blocks to match the other resources that make this program possible.

"We have past clients who now are regular donors," says John Gilbert, former pastor of the Halifax church. He believes that a food pantry program can make a real difference in peoples' lives and tells the story of a homeless person who the Centre hired under Canada Manpower grant. "We provided him with work experience and good referral that enabled him to get a permanent job."

The Halifax Centre works hard keep the poor from becoming dependent on its food pantry. "We want our church to have a professional approach to social issues, reaching beyond band-aid solutions to answer underlying causes," states Linda Gilbert, former program director and the pastor's wife. She points out that the food pantry is just one service provided by the Centre which takes a wholistic approach and also provides nutrition classes, health education, family counseling and basic social services.

Why Food Programs are Important

Each of the three nations that make up the territory of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in North America has the wealth to meet the basic food needs of its people. Yet in the United States, despite cash payments through public assistance programs, more than 35 million people live below the poverty line ($16,400 for a family of 4 in 1997). The U.S. Department of Agriculture spends $24 billion each year on domestic food assistance programs, including Food Stamps to about 25 million people a month, school lunches for 24 million students a day, the special supplemental food program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) which serves 3.5 million pregnant women, infants and toddlers, and several smaller programs.

In Canada, despite stronger government involvement in fighting poverty than currently exists in the United States, more than 290 private, charitable food banks have formed since 1981 and registered with the Canadian Association of Food Banks. Two million individuals, 7.5% of the population, including 700,000 children, receive food assistance at least once a year. (See Jillian Oderkirk, "Food Banks," *Canadian Social Trends*, Spring 1992, pages 6-14.)

Yet the government "safety net" has holes in it. It does not always work like it is supposed to. Sometimes the most needy are denied aid because

of quirky reasons such as a homeless man who cannot get Food Stamps because he does not have an address. Sometimes there are simple misfortunes such as a family whose Food Stamps are stolen, or an 8-year-old suddenly transferred by her mother to a new school without the paperwork to prove that she qualifies for the hot lunch program. Struggling single mothers, the elderly, people with inadequate education and few sophisticated social skills are ill-equipped to navigate the processes of a large, well-developed bureaucracy.

Many people do not qualify for government programs, but due to circumstances beyond their control they are still without food. Others may in fact bear some responsibility for their circumstances. They are still hungry. They can starve to death even if it is "their fault." Christ asks, "Did you feed the hungry?" not, "Did you figure out whose fault it was that they were hungry?" (Matthew 25: 31-46) Pride, illiteracy, mental health problems, addictions to things like gambling or a racy lifestyle can all result in hunger. Sometimes family members suffer the most. It is the weakest members of society who are most at risk-children and the elderly.

Bible Principles for Hunger Ministry

Throughout the scriptures God reveals that it is His will that no person should starve to death or go hungry. In the Old Testament particular attention is given to "the widow, the orphan and the alien" (Deuteronomy 10:17-19, Psalms 146:9, Jeremiah 7:5-7). These represented the marginalized elements of society at the time; those who could not own land, the primary means of producing food and making a living. Because women could not own land at that time, the widow was often left without any means of feeding herself. Orphans were often left without any inheritance and therefore were cut off from working the land and producing food. The alien, because he was of a different nationality or ethnicity and not a citizen of the country, was also denied access to making a living for himself.

God expressed particular interest in these marginalized persons who were unable to compete in the economy of the time, and gave specific directions to ensure that they would be fed and not starve to death. One of the practices described in the Old Testament to help feed the hungry is "gleaning." This is a key element in the story of Ruth, a widow and an immigrant with no means of support for herself and her widowed mother-in-law, Naomi. In Deuteronomy 24:19-21 specific instructions are given to God's people; "When you are harvesting in your field and you overlook a sheaf, do not go back to get it. Leave it for the alien, the fatherless and the widow, so that the LORD your God may bless you in all the work of your hands. When you beat the olives from your trees, do not go over the branches a second time. Leave what remains for the alien, the fatherless and the widow. When you harvest the grapes in your vineyard, do not go over the vines again. Leave what remains for the alien, the fatherless and the widow." This same principle is still used today by many organizations involved in the anti-hunger network.

Another set of Old Testament practices—designed to decrease unemployment and eliminate a permanent underclass—make up the Jubilee system described in ... When "the promised land" in the Middle East was settled by the children of Israel after their exodus from Egyptian slavery, each of the households was given a plot of land (Josuha 13:7, 28; 14:1-3). Of course, as generations passed on, these original plots were divided among the sons and became smaller and smaller. Soon the urge to sell the family farm came into existence as some successful farmers began to look around for more land, and other, less successful, farmers got into debt and needed to raise money to pay off what they owed. By instituting a Year of Jubilee when all debts were canceled and all of the farms returned to their original owners, God prohibited the development of a situation were a few landowners controlled all the agricultural production and a large number of landless people were permanently impoverished.

Much of what the Old Testament prophets have written is addressed to the issues of poverty and economic justice. Micah 2:2 describes the sins for which he declares God will punish His people this way; "They covet fields and seize them, and

houses, and take them. They defraud a man of his home, a fellowman of his inheritance." In chapter 6 Micah describes Israel's guilt as "ill-gotten treasures" (Verse 10), and quotes God as asking, "Shall I acquit a man with dishonest scales, with a bag of false weights?" (Verse 11). "What does the Lord require of you?" he asks in Verse 8, "To act justly..."

Hosea reminds God's people that His covenant with them was rounded in standards of social justice "I will betroth you to me ... in righteousness and justice, in love and compassion" (Hosea 2:19). But "you have ignored the law" (4:6) and "Israel is corrupt" (5:3), "he loves to defraud. Ephraim boasts, I am very rich; I have become wealthy"' (12:7-8). And off their religious pretentions, God says, "I desire mercy, not sacrifice" (Amos 6:6).

Amos voices God's condemnation of "women who oppress the poor and crush the needy" (Amos 4:1) and lists the "sins of Israel" as "They sell the righteous for silver, and the needy for a pair of sandals. They trample on the heads of the poor as upon the dust of he ground and deny justice to the oppressed" (Amos 2:6-7). "You trample on the poor and force him to give you grain and you deprive the poor of justice in the courts" (Amos 5:11-12). Consequently, the Lord says, "I hate, I despise your religious feasts; I cannot stand your [worship] assemblies" (Amos 5:21).

The same themes surface in Isaiah 58, a chapter of which Ellen White says ... "Day after day they seek me out; they seem eager to know my ways" (Verse 2). God's people are described as very pious, fasting, praying and seeking a close relationship with Him. "Yet on the day of your fasting, you do as you please and exploit all your workers" (Verse 3). "You cannot fast as you do today and expect your voice to be heard on high" God says in Verse 4. God describes the worship that He wants from His people as "to loose the chains of injustice ... to set the oppressed free" (Verse 6) and "to shared your food with the hungry" (Verse 7). He specifically points out the powerful witness of a ministry of compassion, "if you spend yourselves on behalf of the hungry and satisfy the needs of the oppressed, then your light will rise in the darkness and your night will become like the noonday" (Verse 10). And Isaiah relates the duty of compassion to Sabbathkeeping (Verse 13), as Christ was to do later in the New Testament.

The Old Testament documents fully God's concern that no person suffer hunger; that economic conditions which create the problem of hunger are essentially evil. It presents to those who are faithful to God a duty to feed the hungry and work to overcome the social conditions that cause hunger. The New Testament involves the Messiah in the same issues and portrays Him as teaching the same principles with a particular theme of grace and mercy.

In Matthew 12 Christ defends his disciples for violating one of the Sabbath rules established by the Pharisees. "Haven't you read what David did when he and his companions were hungry?" Christ asks in Verse 3, and in Verse 7 He quotes Hosea 6:6, "I desire mercy, not sacrifice," in establishing His Lordship over the Sabbath and enunciating His principles of Sabbath-keeping. Clearly the Sabbath is to be a day for the witness of compassion; a day to feed the hungry, collect donations of canned goods, educate church members about the hunger problem, etc. John Brunt, an Adventist theologian, has written a book entitled *A Day for Healing* in which extensive Bible study demonstrates that a key element of Sabbath-keeping is to participate in God's will for healing, mercy and restoration of justice.

Christ knew hunger. Luke 4:2 reports that for the 40 days He spent in the wilderness, "He ate nothing during those days, and at the end of them he was hungry." Verse 3 records that the devil used hunger to tempt Jesus, so He knows the pain felt by the hungry and can empathize with the condition of the poor. Christ fulfills the prophecy of Isaiah about a "suffering servant" that would come to heal others with His suffering.

Some commentators take Christ's response to the temptation of hunger in Verse 4 to mean that He is indifferent to the problems of poverty and hunger, concerned only or primarily with theological and religious issues. This interpretation ignores both the context of the illusion and Christ's specific statements later in Luke 4. Verse 4

quotes "man does not live on bread alone" from Deuteronomy 8: 3, a passage in which God reminds His people that during the Exodus He fed them manna from heaven and cared for their other physical needs. A few verses on Luke records that "when the devil had finished all this tempting ... Jesus returned to Galilee [and] he went to Nazareth" where Christ preached His inaugural sermon in His hometown synagogue. Reading from Isaiah 61, Christ announces His mission as "to preach good news to the poor ... to release the oppressed" (Luke 4:18-19). The passage includes a reference to the Year of Jubilee, and clearly lays out the prophetic roots and wholistic nature of Christian ministry.

Christ personally conducted a feeding program on at least two different occasions. One of these is recorded in John 6: 1-14. Establishing key principles of charitable ministry, He took the small donation of a young boy, "gave thanks" (Verse 11) and miraculously multiplied it to feed 5,000 people. When everyone had been fed, He told his disciples, "Gather the pieces that are left over. Let nothing be wasted" (Verse 12). These same operating principles will serve you well in the food pantry or soup kitchen you operate today.

1. Thankfully accept what is donated by those who give freely.
2. Leave room for Christ to work in your ministry.
3. Be a careful steward of all that you are given, including the leftovers. Christ's example firmly establishes hunger ministries as key parts of the Christian mission in all times and places.

Ministry to the poor and hungry was from the earliest days of the Christian Church established in the office of deacon. Acts 6:1-4 records that in order to provide better management and more sensitive handling of "the daily distribution of food [to] widows ... the Twelve gathered all the disciples together and said ... choose seven men [and] we will turn this responsibility over to them." Today we seem to have forgotten the origins of the office of deacon in that what we call "Deacon" is a job much more concerned with maintaining the institutional church than with the ministry of compassion. In fact volunteers in Adventist Community Services are the real inheritors of the original call bestowed upon the seven.

Peter and Paul are both on record as among the first Christian leaders to engage in the honorable, although sometimes problematic, task of raising money for the poor and hungry (Acts 2:45, 5:1-10; I Corinthians 16:1-4). Paul also expressed concern that people should not have to come to church hungry (I Corinthians 11:17-34), and told the young pastor Timothy to teach church members "who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth." Rather, he was to "command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share" (I Timothy 6:17-18).

James points out in his pastoral letter to the early churches the foolishness of believers who want to focus only on religion and not get involved in practical help for the poor. "Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to him, 'Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed,' but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it? ... faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead" (James 2:14-17). A few verses earlier he has already pointed out that real faith, the wholistic faith of the God revealed in scripture, is to care for the poor, the powerless and the hungry. In I John 3:16-19, this same concept is given a powerful, Christ-centered focus. John argues that because we know God's love for us in Christ's death on the cross, we are empowered to give our lives to others. "If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has not pity on him, how can the love of God be in him? ... let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth. This then is how we know that we belong to the truth."

Our Lord Himself suggests that feeding the hungry has particular significance as the second coming nears. In Matthew 25:31-46 Christ pictures the judgement as separating the sheep from the goats. He lists the key considerations in the judgement as having to do with how believers treated the poor, the alien, the sick and the prisoner. He identifies Himself with the marginalized and powerless in society. "For I was hungry and you gave

"Food Bank" or "Food Pantry"?

A food bank is an inter-organizational agency that provides food supplies to the distribution centers, soup kitchens, etc., throughout a metropolitan area or region. It operates a warehouse and provides a "wholesale"-level service. It does not get involved in direct provision of groceries or meals to individuals or families in need.

A food pantry is a local service program that distributes groceries to needy individuals and families. With one or two exceptions, this is the category into which Adventist programs fall.

It is a mistake to label your local program a "food bank," unless you in fact have an arrangement to supply food to a number of other agencies and are eligible for membership in America's Second Harvest. To call a program a "food bank" when it actually is a food pantry may sound good to your church members, but it sounds ignorant to knowledgeable community leaders and may actually create confusion and ill-will.

A soup kitchen is a local service program that provides simple hot meals to anyone who comes in. Sometimes it may be called a breakfast program because of the time of day it operates. Most soup kitchens operate five, six or seven days a week and offer one meal a day. It is recommended that programs that operate only one or two days a week not get started until they coordinated with other programs and plan to cover a day of the week not covered by some other group in the community. Since many soup kitchens are associated with churches that worship on Sunday, they are often delighted to have an Adventist group operate on Sundays.

A congregate feeding program is when a meal is served in association with a group activity such as worship, activities for children, a senior citizens club or day care.

A street feeding program is where hot food or a simple lunch is handed out curb-side, at street corners or in public parks, etc. Food is taken directly to hard-to-reach homeless populations and other "street people."

me something to eat" (Verse 35). The righteous respond, "Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you?" (Verse 37). They did not see what they were doing as a special, religious event; it was just their intuitive, compassionate response to the conditions they saw in the world around them. "I tell you the truth," responds Christ with great feeling and deep meaning, "whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me" (Verse 40).

The lost seem to be people who are also deeply interested in a relationship with Christ. "Lord," they plead, "when did we see you hungry ... and did not help you?" (Verse 44) Christ clearly defines Himself as on the side of the poor, the homeless and the suffering. "Whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me. They will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life" (Verses 45-46).

This is the closing verse in a long passage that begins with the questions of the Twelve in Matthew 24:3, "what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?" The early part of this passage is most familiar to Adventists. "You will hear of wars and rumors of wars ... Nation will rise against nation ... There will be famines and earthquakes in various places" (Verses 6-7). "And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come" (Verse 14). You may never have read the discourse all the way through at one sitting to see the way the command to feed the hungry is connected to the doctrine of the Second Advent. We do not have the space here to work through the entire passage. It is sufficient to say that the Bible clearly teaches that those who are sincerely waiting for Jesus to come again will want to be involved in feeding the hungry, healing the sick, helping the poor and ministering to the oppressed.

Food programs point to our faith in the soon-coming Christ, the Blessed Hope of a New Earth where there will be no more suffering or tears. It is a powerful Adventist witness to operate a food pantry, soup kitchen or other feeding program.

Operating a Community Food Pantry

The program at the New Life Seventh-day Adventist Church in Nashville, Tennessee, is typical of hundreds of church-basement food pantry operations. (Many other pantries are operated as one of the services offered at a multi-service ACS center.) By 8:40 on a Monday morning, 11 people are waiting for the office food pantry to open at 9 a.m. Among them are three young mothers with children, an elderly man with his wife, and a woman who says, "I hope they can help me; I lost my job."

Inside, ACS volunteers Herbert McDonald, Sadie Simmons, Florence Custard, and Catherine Collier are busily packing grocery boxes. Grace McDonald, an interviewer, and Jonathan Kelsey, the volunteer coordinator, check to make sure paperwork supplies are ready.

At 9:00 the doors open and people stream in. They stop by a table in the lobby to pick up a number, and then enter the waiting room. As the numbers are called they will be interviewed and, if it is appropriate to their needs, they will be given a box of emergency groceries to take home. Each box includes 50 to 60 pounds of food put together around a plan for nutritional balance to meet the unique dietary and cooking situation faced the household that receives it. Where there is an infant in the family, formula or baby food, and even cloth diapers, are included.

Two hours later, 29 families have been served, but the food pantry will remain open another half hour while six more people are interviewed and assisted. Such is the average day for the New Life food pantry says R. Steven Norman. It has served the hungry of Nashville since March, 1988. It got started at the suggestion of conference president. After doing a little background research the groups discovered that 54% of the people in the church's Zip Code area live below the poverty line.

A food bank affiliated with Second Harvest, the national network of food banks in the United States, helped the New Life church begin its pantry. Each week up to 500 pounds of grocery items were obtained from the food bank. A weekly special offering funds the handling charge of 12 cents a pound that covers the shipping, warehousing and donation-development work of the food bank and Second Harvest.

Because it was located in a high-need neighborhood and its operation was efficient and effective, the New Life food pantry later received a special grant offer from the food bank. The 12 cents a pound handling charge would be paid from grant funds if the pantry would agree to operate five days a week for at least two hours a day.

New Life accepted the challenge and asked another Nashville Adventist congregation—Riverside Chapel—to supply some of the additional volunteers that were needed. It has become the second largest food pantry operation in middle Tennessee, distributing as much as eight tons of food a week. Its client files document food aid to 4,000 households.

The food ministry places a heavy burden on the small church and often has the pastor and key leaders praying for enough volunteers and money to keep it going. On at least three occasions they have seen unexpected answers to prayer. A need developed for a truck to transport supplies from the food bank to the pantry, and the local conference loaned a truck. Freezers were needed for food storage, and two chest freezers were donated. Money was needed to purchase some equipment, and a local couple sent $500 in the mail just in time to make the payment.

The main reason that New Life Church operates the food pantry is to meet the needs of the poor, not as a "hook" to recruit members. Yet the witness of this ministry of compassion has resulted in evangelism and church growth. At least ten people have been baptized who had their first contact with the Adventist Church through the food pantry. Mary Davis read a booklet that was placed in a box of groceries. She says, "I saw that everything the Adventist Church teaches is in the Bible, so I decided to join." She also became a volunteer

at the food pantry. "No one knows the number of friends made by this ministry," reflects Norman (*Adventist Review*, December 26, 1991).

Community food pantries are the ultimate safety net for unemployed and low-income families in North America. They provide the emergency groceries that keep people from going hungry when government programs and all else fails. Food pantries affiliated with the Seventh-day Adventist Church come under the ACS umbrella and should be operated in accordance with the following guidelines:

1. The location and times of operation should provide easy access for those in need. Can poor people easily get to your food pantry? Can they easily get home with a box of groceries? A pantry should not be located where client families have to spend significant money on gasoline to drive from their homes to the pantry. Since often poor people do not have access to automobiles, it should be located within easy walking distance of a bus line or other mass transit, if that is available in your community.

A sign should be posted that it is easily visible from the main street, and the entry clearly marked with additional signs so that people who have never been to your location before can quickly find where to go. There should be standard operating hours posted so that those who arrive on off-hours will know when you are open to the public. It is also a good idea to include an emergency phone number.

The facility should provide private areas for interviewing and a comfortable area to wait. It should be furnished in a friendly way, without signs that blare bureaucratic requirements and rules. The waiting area should have appropriate literature covering topics such as family life, nutrition, health, the available social services and antipoverty programs in the community, and religion. Religious materials should be presented in an appropriate, compassionate way so that a person who walks in for the first time does not feel that pressure will be placed upon them, or that unchurched people are not welcome.

The operating hours of a food pantry should also be designed to make its services easily available to those in need. If it is open only during normal work hours, the working poor will find it very difficult to get emergency groceries when they need them. It will also make it difficult to help those who come in for food find jobs and make the transition to self support. On the other hand, if a food pantry is open only in the evenings, it may make it impossible for the elderly and others to use its services.

The best plan may be for a food pantry to have both morning and evening hours. For example, 10 a.m. to noon on Tuesdays and 6 to 8 p.m. on Thursdays. Of course, weekend hours would also be a way to meet the needs of all segments of the needy population. If your food pantry can operate only once a week, Sunday afternoons may be the best time.

Some have suggested that it is best for small food programs to operate "by appointment;" to meet the needs of a family when a request is phoned in. The unfortunate thing about this approach is that it will most likely prevent many needy families from being helped while at the same time exposing the program to a larger than average share of con artists. Families facing a need for emergency groceries almost universally report that they are unwilling to make a phone call and arrange for an appointment, and that they feel demeaned and insulted when the groceries are delivered to their homes. They prefer to go to a program when it is open to the public. On the other hand, some who have made their living for a period of time "begging" report that they were told by more experienced con artists to look for churches that provide help "by appointment;" that these are the easiest places to "score." It is also true that most food banks will not provide supplies to pantries that do not have minimum hours when they are open to the public. Nor will most civic leaders and social workers make referrals to food pantries that have no hours of public operation. Posted, regular hours are a minimum expectation for the operation of a food program.

2. Establish guidelines for an emergency grocery box that is designed to be practical for families in your community. Sometimes in disaster situations people are allowed to simply go into a food distribution center and pull out the groceries they want as if it were supermarket shelves. This is not a good idea in the operation of a community food pantry. It may tempt con artists to come in and strip the shelves of the most valuable items which they will sell, while needy people who feel ashamed because of their situation may not actually take enough to adequately feed their families.

The standard practice in food pantries operated by all organizations across North America, including ACS, is to provide at least three to five days worth of groceries. In fact, this is a minimum standard for participation in some local food banks. In some settings because of the distances that people must travel or other considerations, the minimum food supply covers more days. You will need to make a decision based on the situation in your community.

Once you have determined how many days of groceries you will provide each household, it is easy to create a basic guideline for putting together each box. This guideline will utilize the basic categories of foodstuffs available to your pantry and necessary to meal preparation—pasta, rice, beans, canned vegetables, soups, flour, peanut butter, cooking oil, baked goods, fresh produce, etc. The guideline will also specify a number of items in each category per person in the household. Using multiplication, a volunteer will be able to tell how much to pack as each box is prepared. There is usually also an "extras" category for things that are sometimes available, but often not available and not essential to nutrition. Pantries will vary the number of "extra" items that are to be placed in each box according to the season and to availability.

A guideline should also be written for baby supplies-formula, baby food, diapers, etc. Another guideline is needed for household supplies such as can openers, paper goods, cleaning and personal items. If some of these are regularly available and needed on a regular basis in your community, then it is important to include them in a standard formula. Otherwise they may be provided only on a case-by-case basis at the specific instructions of the interviewer.

The rough draft of your guidelines should be reviewed by a number of your volunteers so that they can give practical input based on their experience. It should also be reviewed by a nutrition professional; a Registered Dietitian, nurse practitioner or health educator. If you do not have one in a local church, call your conference ACS director and find out if he or she can recommend one. Otherwise write to the Adventist Health Network (AHN) and ask for the name and address of the nearest dietitian in that organization. (The AHN can be addressed c/o Health Ministries Department, North American Division, 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring MD 20904.)

The completed guidelines should tell any volunteer with a quick glance what to pack in an emergency box of groceries. It should be posted in appropriate places in the work room, and copies should be made available to all of your volunteers. It should not be circulated to the general public or to clients, although if they ask to see it, they should be permitted to do so during the interview portion of their visit to the food pantry or in a face-to-face meeting with the program director. The guidelines should be freely shared with the food bank and other social service agencies in your community.

Current samples of guidelines from several food pantries affiliated with ACS can be obtained through Coalition for Compassion, the North American Association of Community Service Directors (NAACSD). Write to the NAACSD at 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904.

3. Use procedures that respond to the unique dietary needs of each household. It is important that the guidelines take into consideration the favored foodstuffs used in various ethnic and cultural groups that your program serves. Clients that come from immigrant groups may not know how to prepare some standard American or Canadian foods, or it may even create nutritional problems for them.

If your pantry serves a multicultural area, it may be well to have standard variations built in. Usually, it is best to ask the clients during the interview, even if you think you know what the answer will be. For example, a standard question at many food pantries is, "We can give you a 25-pound sack of rice, or a 25-pound sack of potatoes or a similar supply of pasta. Which would you prefer?" It is better to provide choices to the client than to indulge in ethnic and cultural stereotypes.

Sometimes there are certain commodities that you will obtain in large supply which it will not be immediately obvious to some or all of your clients how to make use of. You may need to package with these commodities a special recipe sheet with instructions on how to use them. It should clearly demonstrate how to use these foodstuffs in familiar, traditional dishes. The Kansas City Better Living Center has even experimented with producing videos that are shown in the waiting area to instruct clients how to use certain products.

It is important for dietitians or experienced cooks from a variety of cultural backgrounds to review your guidelines. Only in this way can you be sure that you are being sensitive to the needs of the people you are trying to serve. These informal consultants may also be able to help you translate your handouts into languages other than the one in which your program primarily operates.

The guidelines should also spell out how to handle special dietary needs. What if the household includes someone who is diabetic or needs a low-salt diet? What if the family is vegetarian or wants Kosher food? What if there is a person who cannot use milk products? Since specialized food supplies, like health foods or canned fruit packed for diabetics, are usually hard to come by, it is important that their distribution be restricted to those who actually need them. The guidelines need to spell out the substitutions that will be made in these special cases in order to maintain an overall nutritional balance.

It may be that certain situations rarely arise, but these are very likely the ones that most need to be covered in the guidelines. Otherwise your volunteers have no information to work with on the rare occasion when they are confronted with these needs. There will also be situations which you have not anticipated. Encourage your volunteers to do the best they can in each case, using kindness and compassion as the overall principles. And learn from these situations. Write down what information was gleaned on the spot and then make contact with experts who can help you to understand how best to handle the situation the next time it comes up.

4. Design the program to ensure that each client has access to social services. It is strongly urged that no food program affiliated with the Adventist Church distribute groceries without insisting that clients be interviewed by a trained volunteer or a professional social worker. As mentioned earlier, the need for emergency food supplies is only the "tip of an iceberg" and real compassion asks that we try to touch those underlying needs as well. In addition, it is important that each client be able to privately discuss their dietary needs, household situation, cooking equipment, etc.

There are a number of ways to approach this imperative. The most common is to set up your food pantry operation with trained Intake Workers—volunteers who sit down with each client household coming into the program, review their needs and write individual instructions to the volunteers who are packing grocery boxes. Sometimes the first interview will reveal a situation in which the Intake Worker gives instructions for a person to be able to come back additional times for more food without an additional interview, but this should not be the normal procedure.

Another way to ensure that your clients have access to social services is to work in cooperation with another agency that will interview each client and pass on instructions to your food pantry regarding what to provide, etc. In order for this to work, there must be regular joint meetings between the social workers from the other organization and the key leaders from your organization. Otherwise communication gaps will develop which will adversely impact the needy people you are attempting to help. Even with good communication, this solution is not recommended as a long-

term arrangement because of the perception that your food pantry actually "belongs" to another organization. Eventually this perception will be the cause of misunderstanding and conflict.

A third possibility is ask another organization to provide their professional social workers to come and function as Intake Workers at your food pantry. The staff members who come to help you may be on paid time for their organization, or they may be donating their time; that is really unimportant. In any case, their professional services are a gift to your program. And this is a better solution than have the intake interviews done at another site both because it is easier for your clients and because it does not create a perception that your food pantry "belongs" to another organization.

You may be part of a food pantry that has operated for a long time without doing careful intake interviews. You may feel that things have gone well and what is suggested here is unnecessary additional work. It is additional work, but if you ask someone who has been through the process of training a team of interviewers and instituting regular intake interviews, they will tell you that it is very worthwhile. They will share with you countless stories of individuals and families they were able to help because they asked the right questions and listened; help they would never have known was needed if interviews had not been done.

A training curriculum is available to train your volunteers. (See page 93.) You can purchase a complete instructor's guide from the NAD Distribution Center. The NAACSD can put you in touch with experienced trainers who regularly teach this course. It is really not very difficult to conduct proper intake interviews as part of any food pantry operation.

There are situations in which it is best to wave the normal rules and procedures. One of these situations is a major disaster. When large numbers of people need to be given bottled water and foodstuffs quickly, it is normal to operate in a different mode than the usual food pantry operation. Relief Centers operated as part of the Adventist Disaster Response program do not do intake interviews of any kind; they don't even get the names of those who come to get food. They may use a very simple guideline for packing standard boxes of groceries, but there will be no variation for family size or special circumstances, and often the guideline is dictated by what supplies are available not by principles of nutrition. Many times Relief Centers operate on a "supermarket" or "free store" model where people simply go in, move along the piles of grocery items and fill a box with whatever they want. The procedures for a disaster program are outlined in chapter 9.

5. Establish operating policies that ensure that all who need help will be aided without discrimination. Food pantries affiliated with the Seventh-day Adventist Church may not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, gender or social status in the provision of their services. To do so is a violation of Adventist doctrine and against the law.

Discrimination is very subtle. Often volunteers are blind to the way in which they treat certain kinds of people unfairly. They may assume that the goal is to help people from one particular cultural group and that the services offered are "not for" other groups in the community. They man not have the skills necessary for cross-cultural communication, and make decisions based on misunderstanding.

One of the most difficult discrimination problems happens when a program discriminates against church members or nonmembers. Because of limited resources, at times the Dorcas Society or ACS unit in a local church finds itself serving only church members or people interested in becoming church members. Perhaps without intending to, it becomes an entirely self-serving church program. In reaction to this unfortunate tendency, other ACS units have established policies under which they will aid church members only in very limited situations. They make it more difficult for church members to get assistance than for nonmembers in the community.

The whole purpose of ACS is to serve the needy in the larger community. When it becomes simply a way for the church take care of its own, it is driven by selfishness, not compassion. A pro-

gram that has fallen into this situation is unfaithful to its calling. But a program that discriminates against Seventh-day Adventists because of their religion is also unfaithful to the principles of Christ.

The only solution to this problem is to proactively position your food pantry so that it is well known in the community and a majority of the needy who come in for help are non-members. This will make it unnecessary to discriminate against church members.

6. Utilize community food resources. Do not limit the program to food donated by church members. Church members alone will never be able to donate enough food to meet the needs in your community. And the community needs a sense of ownership in your program.

The smallest food pantries provide at least 10 to 15 boxes of groceries each week; 500 to 1,000 cans, boxes or other items. Experience has demonstrated that the average-sized Adventist congregation, even two or three cooperating congregations, simply cannot donate that much. It is impossible to operate a food pantry without utilizing the community food bank, participating in the distribution of government commodities, getting donated items from businesses, or conducting public collections of donated food items.

Civic leaders, community residents and poor families all need to see your pantry as a community-based program conducted by Adventists, not just an Adventist program. In fact, if it is viewed as an Adventist program many of the needy will stay away on the mistaken assumption that the program is intended primarily to help Adventists. There are religious groups that operate social services with the purpose of taking care of their own, and this is a widely held notion among North Americans.

By making it clear that your food pantry is simply a facilitator for groceries donated by families and businesses within your community and foodstuffs provided by public entities, you position your ministry as a good neighbor, a trusted steward for common needs and community charity. This requires clear communication on a regular basis about the source of the foodstuffs you are distributing. News releases and an annual report that thank "the many donors and partner organizations in our community who have helped by providing food to combat hunger in our neighborhood" are an essential element.

Many pantries make post a sign that you can purchase from Advent*Source*. It says, "Many of the food items being distributed were provided by individuals and organizations other than the Seventh-day Adventist Church." (See the Community Services Resource Catalog.) Often another poster is placed next to it listing the name of the local food bank and other major sources of grocery items being distributed.

Other pantries include a similar statement in a fact sheet which is included with each box of groceries. A sample is shown in the box on this page. This gives an opportunity to not only keep the record straight on the food being distributed, but also to make a positive statement about the motivations for your ministry and inform your clients about other programs you offer. It is recommended that every ACS-affiliated food pantry follow this practice.

A sign and a fact sheet like these may also help solve a quandary encountered by some Adventist-affiliated food programs. They are faced by challenges from church members who question whether an Adventist-sponsored food pantry should distribute grocery items that contain unclean meat products. For example, when Pathfinder Clubs go door to door and collect canned goods, they will get a certain number of cans of pork and beans. "How can we give people food items that we know are wrong?" someone may ask.

There is no official denominational policy on this type of situation. What we believe, as Seventh-day Adventists, is that when one accepts the remnant message and becomes part of the church, one should not eat unclean meats. It is important to keep in mind that we go out to serve the general public we are there as servants and cannot impose our beliefs on them. For example, when Jesus healed the lepers it was impossible for Him to ensure that they would never use their new-found health and strength to commit crimes or sins.

Sample Fact Sheet for Food Boxes

Centerville Adventist Community Services (ACS) is happy to be able to help you in the food emergency you face today. It is our hope that this box of groceries will help prevent hunger in our community and provide an opportunity for you to move toward a solution to the problems that you face. Our prayers for you go with this box!

Much of the food in this box was donated by individuals and organizations in our community other than the Seventh-day Adventist Church. We want to acknowledge the assistance of the Montgomery County Food Bank which is the primary source of our food supply, as well as the individual donors who give the money necessary to cover operating costs, and the Super Fresh Markets, Food Lion store on North Highway 50, and the Centerville Kiwanis. Some of the food in this box comes from surplus commodities of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. ACS is pleased to help distribute these community-donated foodstuffs.

We have tried to give you a nutritionally balanced, practical supply of groceries to feed the people in your household for three to five days. We have packed this box taking into consideration the information you gave our interviewer—the number of people in your household, their ages and general health conditions, and their dietary needs, including the religious dietary rules that you have described to us. We wish that we had a better package to offer, but we can only work with the food supply donated by the community.

If there are products in this box that you do not know how to prepare or cannot use, please do not throw them away. Bring them back so we can use them to feed other hungry people. There is not enough food to go around, so we cannot afford to destroy or waste anything.

You will find that you are able to provide better food for your family at lower cost if you learn some new information about nutrition, meal-planning and cooking. This is offered in our quarterly Nutrition Cooking School. It meets on the first three Tuesdays of each quarter at 6:30 p.m. here at our center. Each evening starts with a buffet and then our instructors actually show you how to prepare each of the dishes you have sampled. The emphasis is on simple, low-cost meals that are attractive and have high nutritional value.

Other services provided by Centerville ACS may be of use to you from time to time. A complete listing of current services and activities can be heard by listening to the tape at (555) 123-4567.

Adventist Community Services
123 Main Street
Centerville, Wyoming 12345

Since there is no denominational policy, this is a matter which must be decided by the operating board or management committee of each local ACS unit. Local leaders in each food program will have to use their own consciences to decide what to do. The issue should not become a divisive one, or in our efforts to uphold one standard we will trample on others such as the unity of believers and respect for one another. Some pantries have found that if they have a good working relationship with the local food bank, it is more than happy to exchange canned meat products for canned vegetables.

We need to uphold our dietary standards by teaching nutrition classes and cooking schools, not by destroying food items that have been donated to us. In view of the hunger problem, there would be a real problem of stewardship and ethics if an Adventist-affiliated program were to take canned goods that have been donated and destroy them. If

you cannot in good conscience distribute them, compassion demands that you exchange them through the community food bank or return them to the donors.

One way to understand this issue is to ask the question, What if a neighbor of yours were convalescing at home with a broken leg and you volunteered to go buy groceries for her; she gives you a shopping list and on it is pork and beans. Would you make the purchase for her? When your program is helping to distribute foodstuffs provided by government funding or donated by the community, the issue may not be in Leviticus 11, it may be in I John 3:19.

7. Provide adequate and safe storage facilities. It is essential that the foodstuffs you distribute not become damaged or contaminated while you have them in storage. It is also true that your food supplies are a valuable commodity and need to be protected from theft and vandalism. All of this makes it important to provide proper, secure storage facilities and a clean work area.

A particular room should be set aside that is used only for food storage. It should be locked and only authorized personnel should have keys. It is important that procedures spell out who has access to the food supplies and under what circumstances they can let food be taken. A difficult problem that can destroy a food pantry program is when the word goes around that some individuals among the volunteers or in the church are taking food supplies outside of operating hours or for purposes other than helping families in need. Many times a local church that sponsors a pantry has a number of low-income members- Some of the volunteers helping out may be poor and experience food crisis themselves on occasion. It can be tempting for them to simply go and help themselves at the church, or for them to ask the pastor for some groceries after prayer meeting.

To allow a number of different individuals, including church leaders such as the pastor who are not directly involved in managing the food pantry program, to provide food at any time there is a request can wreak havoc in a program. Confusion aries over the inventory. Program leaders feel undercut and disempowered. Disagreements develop over the use of informal procedures in dispensing off-hours grocery boxes. Volunteers may be accused of taking “the best” food supplies for themselves and unfairly excluding others. The best way to avoid all of this is to have a secure, locked storage room for the food supplies and restrict the keys to a handful of responsible program managers who can be held accountable. Some food banks will disqualify pantries who do not do this, and it is highly recommended for any food program affiliated with the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Storage facilities need to be spacious enough to allow for organized placement of the foodstuffs on shelves so that volunteers can quickly pull items according to the guidelines for packing boxes. They need to provide the different kinds of storage space needed for fresh produce, bakery products, dry bulk items and canned or boxed groceries. Many pantries are cramped into small, basement space that has been carved out of territory already allocated among many competing groups and programs in the church. Nonetheless whatever space is available for your pantry, you can organize it properly to allow for a range of food items. When space is limited it is best to have a limited inventory with a full range of items, rather than to have only one or two kinds of foodstuffs.

Inventory turnover is important. All food items, even canned goods, are dated and come to a point where they are no longer safe to eat. Since food pantries use items that have actually passed the pull date used in the supermarkets, it is even more important that they get them out quickly. If you have a working relationship with the food bank, you can quickly resupply. It is a mistake for a food pantry manager to practice hording. If items are kept too long and result in someone becoming ill, and people in the church and the community know that the program manager has had a tendency to hord, serious repercussions could result. In addition, foodstuffs kept too long in poorly planned storage space can end up spoiling and ruining other food supplies nearby.

Should your food pantry have refrigerators, coolers or freezers? You may not have sufficient space for this equipment, or you may not feel that

you can raise the money to pay the extra utilities involved. This will limit the kinds of foodstuffs that you can receive and distribute. It may degrade the quality of service that you can supply to those in need. These are decisions that your operating board or management committee will have to make. If you decide that you need refrigeration equipment, you can probably get it donated by spreading the word among civic clubs, the Chamber of Commerce, church members and your other networks. Most food pantries use a succession of discarded home refrigerators and obsolete commercial equipment. It is usually equipment that was worth more to the owners as a tax benefit than as resale. It is recommended that you find a volunteer who will specialize in keeping the machines going, and that you regularly look for newer donations because your old machines will give out on you regularly.

Cleanliness need not be limited because of old, inexpensive equipment and furniture. Use disinfectant or industrial-strength cleansers liberally. Make sure that you either require volunteer crews to do cleaning routines every time your pantry is open for business or organize a special crew of volunteers just to do cleaning. You are setting an example for your clients as well as trying to ensure minimum spoilage among your food supplies.

8. Do not accept donations of home-canned foods or other items that do not meet legal requirements. Church members who can will offer significant donations of home-canned items to food pantries from time to time. This creates a difficult situation because they may be insulted when you question them about the conditions under which they did the canning, how old the products are, etc. Some churches have decided to distribute home-canned products only within the congregation.

In many government jurisdictions food pantries and social services organizations are prohibited by law from distributing food products not processed in licensed, commercial factories. It has been argued that state, provincial or local governments cannot apply this law to churches, but no test case is on record to support this argument.

Even if there are no local laws prohibiting the distribution of home-canned foods, or the distribution is limited to an area of protected religious activity, the insurance liability of the Seventh-day Adventist Church may not be ended. Because denominational insurance coverage may not protect you and your program if you handle home-canned products, it is recommended that you not do so. If some church members want to give away home-canned products, suggest that they could do this privately which would involve only their own, private insurance coverage. If they feel uncomfortable doing that, point out that ACS feels the same discomfort and that's why it does not get involved in distributing foodstuffs that have not been prepared in licensed, commercial kitchens.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church does not authorize any of its local affiliates to engage in any conduct that is prohibited by law. This includes relevant food regulations that may impact public health and safety considerations in a food program.

9. Develop a strong nutrition education program as part of the food ministry. The problem of hunger is only partly due to a lack of food supplies. A lack of information and know-how also contributes to bad nutrition among the poor. Seventh-day Adventists have a strong heritage to draw upon in addressing this part of the problem. Adventists have been involved in community nutrition education for more than 100 years.

It is imperative that the people to whom you provide emergency groceries also be given opportunities to learn more about nutrition, food preparation, and purchasing. If you are able to increase their knowledge and skill in these areas, you will have a more far-reaching impact on hunger than all the food distribution you will ever do.

Food education can take many forms. Traditional cooking schools and nutrition classes may not work very well among the poor. These traditional formats have been developed primarily around the needs of middle class people. "School" and "class" may create less than positive memories for people who have never experienced much success in the formal school system. You will need

to try many different approaches to find the methods that will work best in your situation.

Handouts, demonstrations and videos can be used in the waiting area for brief, on-site nutrition education. This is especially effective if the educational information is focused on particular foodstuffs being distributed or on current issues being widely discussed in the neighborhood or in the media.

One of the most enthusiastically-received nutrition education programs we have ever seen was a table in the waiting area at an ACS center set up much like those sampling tables you have seen from time to time at a supermarket. A volunteer nutrition instructor had freshly baked cornbread spread out, and was offering pieces to clients along with three different savory spreads that she had made. A handout sheet explained how to use cornmeal from the commodities program to make cornbread and included the recipes for the spreads. The volunteer was happy to answer questions and encouraged interested clients to let her know how their experiments with cornbread went.

This story provides an example of the elements necessary for a successful food education element in your program—creativity, practicality, and a highly personal element. Nutrition education must be taken to people, instead of inviting them to come to the educational program. More information about the design and implementation of health education programs is given in Chapter 14.

What kind of staffing, supplies and budget are needed to operate a community food pantry? This is a key question if you are just starting out. It may be an important consideration in planning for the future of your program.

To operate a minimal food pantry program for one shift (up to six hours) requires a team of seven:

A *receptionist* to greet people as they arrive, briefly explain the process to them, and answer basic questions. This person needs good listening and relational skills. He or she needs to be a real "people person" who also is familiar with the various cultural backgrounds and ethnic groups in the community. In many parts of North America it is essential that person be bilingual.

Two *interviewers* to sit down privately with at least one adult from each household seeking food. These people need to have completed the basic ACS training module on interviewing skills or have some professional background and education in social services. These people are also responsible for keeping records for the program.

Two *packers* who put together boxes of groceries according to the basic guidelines for the program and the specific information about each household passed to them by an interviewer. This requires some physical ability, as well as precision in following instructions and practical, common sense.

A *street patrol* person, most likely a strong, young man who can carry boxes out to the parking lot for older people and women, as well as keep track of what is going on in the neighborhood and on the street. He needs good eyes and ears, as well as instinctive compassion, to deal with many kinds of situations that may arise.

The supervisor or *coordinator* on duty, which may be the center director, program manager or some other person who is ultimately responsible for the operation.

A team of seven can handle 20 to 30 cases in a two-hour shift. The program capacity can be increased by increasing the number of people on the team, but there is an upper limit where the number of personnel becomes unmanageable. The demands for space also become difficult to deal with. The best way to increase program capacity is to add more shifts; open up on more days or evenings and recruit and train additional teams of volunteers.

A few supplies are needed in addition to foodstuffs and grocery items. Grocery sacks and boxes, as well as plastic garbage bags, will be needed in significant quantities. Collections of these items can be carried on through the church and church school. Limited amounts of basic office supplies, photocopying, stamps, etc., are also needed to handle program records, make informational handouts, etc. Name badges for volunteers are important, and some programs also provide a special T-shirt or smock for volunteers. Audiovisual equipment may be needed if it is going to be used in nutrition education activities.

In creating a budget for your food pantry, of course the major expense is the cost of foodstuffs. You can estimate this cost by discussing with the food bank in your area what charges they pass on for "shared maintenance." Usually it is about 12 to 15 cents a pound. The typical emergency box of groceries is 30 to 50 pounds, so each family served may cost $4.50 to $7.50 in grocery items. Office supplies, handouts, signs, volunteer IDs, etc., will not cost more than 50 cents to a dollar per family served. This information will make it possible for you to calculate a basic budget for your program.

A beginning food pantry could develop its budget around a set of assumptions like these: It will serve an average of 15 families a week for 50 weeks in the first year at an average cost of $6 per family. That means it will need a budget of $4,500 for the first year's operation. The box on this page shows how this budget might be broken down.

Operating a Soup Kitchen

There are many fewer soup kitchens affiliated with ACS than there are food pantries. This is a more demanding program. Meals have be served every day if hungry people who have no access to cooking facilities are to be properly cared for. It is virtually impossible to give a homeless person or a elderly person living in a single room apartment with no cooking equipment a three to five day supply of prepared meals. But even a small church can operate a soup kitchen, as demonstrated by the ACS program in Wewoka, Oklahoma.

Some soup kitchens operate only one day a week, but they do so in coordination with other feeding sites in the community so that at least one source of meals operates every day. Almost all soup kitchens offer only one meal a day, usually in the evening. People can survive on one or two meals a day, and soup kitchens are survival services. The smaller programs, often operated by churches, will operate one or two days a week, while the larger ones, often operated by government-sponsored homeless shelters or the Salvation Army, operate five, six or seven days a week.

If you are going to operate a soup kitchen only one or two days a week, it is important that you coordinate with the other soup kitchens and feeding programs in your area. You are not exercising compassion if you simply start serving meals on a day when other one-day-a-week operations are open, and ignore the days when no one is operating except perhaps the one or two largest, downtown homeless shelters. And the Adventist Church will not be perceived as a good neighbor.

If a severe conflict develops between the days that other community organizations are suggesting for your operation and the days that church members want to operate on, set up a meeting with a few key leaders from both the church and the community and negotiate some compromise. This may be a test of whether or not the people in your congregation are responding to the Holy Spirit's call to compassion or to some other motivation.

In a few communities a number of churches of various denominations have come together to operate their soup kitchen programs at one, neutral location. A storefront or a former residence may be obtained on a loan basis or for a one dollar lease. Each church takes responsibility for one meal a week, or sometimes as little as one meal a month if a large number of churches are involved. Food supplies may be pooled, or each church may be responsible for bringing the foodstuffs needed for the meals they prepare.

The advantage of a collaborative program at a single site is that the hungry can easily know where to go for meals. It also cuts down on the traffic in the church buildings. The disadvantages result from the lack of ownership that your church (and others) may feel toward the program. This may make it more difficult to recruit volunteers and raise money. It may also get you involved in disagreements about menu, cooking methods, etc.

It's called a "soup kitchen" because stew is easy to make and can be made with an almost endless variety of foodstuffs. The whole idea is a simple meal that can easily be made from whatever food items can be begged or found. In fact, in the original tradition of soup kitchens, the stew started to cook before all of the ingredients had arrived. All kinds of vegetables, rice and potatoes, beans of all kinds, and many other foods can be added to a stew. An Adventist in Lincoln, Nebraska, has

Sample Budget for a Community Food Pantry

Income	
In-kind donations of food & supplies	$1,000
Earmarked donations from the public	500
Earmarked donations from church members	1,000
Appropriations from ACS center budget or Ingathering Reversion	2,000
	4,500
Expenses	
In-kind donations of food & supplies	1,000
Shared Maintenance fees to food bank for 18,000 to 20,000 pounds of groceries	2,750
Packaging and maintenance supplies	250
Office supplies & copying	250
Volunteer ID supplies	250
	4,500

experimented with making chili from wheat. Whether you call it stew or chili basically depends on what kind of seasoning you give it. In some neighborhoods you can serve it with boiled or steamed rice as a curry. Chop suey is an Oriental form of stew, and spaghetti is simply a European variation on curry and rice or beans and cornbread.

If there are few foodstuffs and lots of mouths to feed, you put more water into the mix and it is soup. Usually, soup kitchens try to keep the stew as thick and hearty as possible. It may be almost the only thing hungry people get to eat that day.

Stew is easy to make. Any volunteer who can boil water and peel potatoes can make a meal at a soup kitchen. That becomes more important as time goes on, the novelty of a new program wears off, compassion fatigue sets in and it becomes more and more difficult to recruit volunteers. Stew is also easy to serve and handle. It requires only a few, basic and predictable cooking and serving equipment and supplies.

Develop a few basic recipes and menus. Since soup kitchens provide survival services variety in the menu is not all that important. There may be occasions when you get a volunteer who is a skilled cook and wants to prepare something special, but it is important to have on hand a few basic, foolproof recipes. These should be stews, soups and chili that can be made with several variations of the most common ingredients; recipes that can be put together by inexperienced cooks.

In many soup kitchens a set of plastic-covered sheets hang on a hook near the stove. They are the "safety net" that ensures that people get fed even on the nights when no one who usually cooks shows up to volunteer and the only foodstuffs are an odd lot of aging produce and some canned beans.

Should we use meat? This question comes up from time to time. It is perhaps in a little different category than emergency groceries that are distributed to people to take home and prepare on their own. Church members may object to the use of meat because they do not know how to cook it, or do not care to do so. They are especially likely to object to using meat in the stew when it is prepared in a church kitchen or in pots and pans used for other church activities.

Many people who operate soup kitchens say that the issue rarely comes up in part because there usually are no meat products available to soup kitchens from donated foodstuffs. Of course, if meat becomes available and you do not want to use it, other soup kitchens would be delighted to trade with you for vegetables, beans, rice, etc.

In a jointly-operated program with other churches and civic organizations, you may not

Alternatives to the Traditional Holiday Food Basket

”Is this all...Where’s the turkey?”

“They weren’t home so they must not need the food!”

“Where was the church in August when I really needed help?”

“They even have a better TV than I do?”

“They didn’t even say thank you!”

These are some typical responses of consumers and providers to traditional Christmas or Thanksgiving food baskets. What is meant as an expression of compassion during the holiday season is often characterized by misunderstanding, pity, disappointment, and condescension. In fact many social workers and other helping professionals have come to have a distinct distaste for this annual mobilization of church good will. Here are some of the drawbacks to the traditional holiday basket.

They provide very temporary and limited assistance only one to two times a year. While a food basket ensures a holiday meal, it does little for the on going needs of individuals or families in a fixed or temporary financial crisis. For many, hunger is a reality 24 hours a day and 12 months out of the year.

The way recipients are approached often demonstrates a marked lack of sensitivity and understanding. Circumstances that lead to poverty are varied, complicated and deep rooted. The particular needs of a family are in addition diverse and complex. Often those who provide holiday baskets are distracted from their mission of compassion by isolated incidences. They may not receive the “proper” amount of appreciation. They may observe behavior or see possessions they don’t understand. Because of this it is easy to conclude that the poor are just lazy, and unappreciative and don’t really need help. The real causes of poverty have to do with inadequacies within community and national systems which create opportunity and direct help for some while denying it to others.

Holiday baskets lack opportunity. In most cases recipient names are collected from the local ACS center or other social service agencies. Baskets are then delivered by church members to people who are virtually unknown and often different from those who receive them. This system has little potential for meaningful and caring personal contact. Sometimes the process takes on the flavor of a massive airlift which robs what little opportunity for personal contact remains.

Pride, guilt, and greed can get in the way. It is difficult to ask for help. There are a number of individuals who are too ashamed and hurt to have their name submitted for help even though they are in desperate need. It hurts to ask for help. This is particularly true in a capitalistic society, where rugged individualism and the pioneer spirit have fostered a stigma of failure for those who “failed to provide for themselves and their family.”

On the other hand “freebies” can foster greedy behavior. Some individuals and families take advantage of the good intentions of church people who provide holiday baskets. Consider the lack of courtesy and generosity during a K-Mart blue light special. There is something about a good deal that can cause even the most polite and unselfish person to have the “galloping greedy gimmies”. Most often, however, greed is a mask for fear, anger and guilt over the situation in which a person has found themselves.

So what are the alternatives?

Holiday baskets, plus. Add an extra human element to the traditional basket by taking a real interest in the individual or family. Follow up friendship extended by a Sligo church member over the period of several years resulted in a baptism. This relationship and others more recent continue to be important to both families.

Alternatives to the Traditional Holiday Food Basket, cont.

Adopt a family. Get to know a family in your church or neighborhood whom you can become friends with. Food baskets, toys, other gifts and outings will become a natural expression of that friendship.

Encourage people to volunteer at the ACS food pantry or soup kitchen. These programs offer a number of appropriate and satisfying volunteer assignments which allow for personal, meaningful and caring contact with the disadvantaged.

Join or start a program to feed the homeless. Simple manageable feeding programs can be established which are of great benefit to the recipient as well as the provider.

Encourage support of the ACS center. Centers are often in need of food donations or cash to buy food at discount and bulk prices. They often depend on the holiday season to stock enough food to make it through the winter.

These are just a few examples. When you choose a project remember to gain a thorough understanding of those you want to help and their specific needs. A simple needs assessment can be conducted to determine the nature and extent of the needs of a neighborhood or group. In addition it always best cooperate with existing groups.

Consider developing a year-round ministry; no matter how limited it may seem, it is a more effective way to express caring and compassion. Whatever project we choose, we are truly successful if it meets a legitimate need and is consistent with our personality and style.

Source: John Gavin, *Celebration* Magazine

have much choice about what to cook. If you do decide to use meat products on occasion, it may help to use the sign that you can purchase from Advent*Source* which states that some or all of the food products being provided did not come from the Adventist Church, although Adventist volunteers are serving the food.

The bottom line on this issue is quite simple. In programs where we seek to relieve the hunger of the general public, we are not being good neighbors if we try to impose our dietary principles on people who have no understanding of those principles or interest in nutrition education. To do so becomes an offense in their eyes and may block them from ever hearing our message because of the prejudice created. Unfortunately, the public views us as selfishly holding onto our own opinions about diet and elevating these to greater importance than the survival of the hungry.

There is a basis for this in scripture. We have the example of Christ. When He fed the five thousand, that which was provided included fish, and He did not hesitate to feed fish to the crowd although the principle of a vegetarian diet is an eternal principle that He was undoubtedly aware of because we find it enunciated for the first time in the early chapters of Genesis. Even among His disciples we find Him preparing fish for them on the beach at Galilee (John 21:9) and this was after His crucifixion and ascension. Why? Because that is the diet that they were used to and that was available at that moment.

There is no denominational policy on this topic. A decision needs to be made locally by each ACS center governing board or program operating committee. The unique local situation needs to be taken into consideration.

If your group decides on an entirely vegetarian diet for its soup kitchen, it is recommended that you make use of meat analogs such as those manufactured by Worthington Foods. Sad experience has shown that a soup kitchen that insists on an entirely vegetarian menu is usually short-lived and fails to meet the needs of the hungry. The poorest members of society are often the least informed and educated about nutrition, and the most prejudiced in terms of the kinds of foods they expect and want. If meat analogs are placed in the

stew from time to time, it will seem natural to them and not raise suspicions or controversy.

There are cities where an overtly vegetarian soup kitchen that advertises itself that way would be warmly accepted by some of the poor. And there are public programs in which Adventist Community Services can legitimately educate people regarding proper nutrition. These include vegetarian restaurants, cooking schools and nutrition classes. A strong, balanced program of compassion ministries will include both emergency services to feed the hungry and health education services to educate those who are uninformed about the best diet.

It is important to try to include good nutrition in what is offered at soup kitchens operated by Adventist volunteers. Seventh-day Adventists have rich information and insights about nutrition, and it would be unfortunate if these resources were not utilized in the operation of feeding programs for the very poor. A failing at many soup kitchens operated by other churches and organizations is that nothing is served except stew, poor quality white bread and something with too much sugar. Adventist programs ought to set a better example.

Along with the basic stew, your soup kitchen could provide high-quality breads, baked on site or in the homes of volunteers. (If the baked goods you serve are home-baked, it would be well to check the local laws and post a sign clearly saying, "home-baked bread.") It should also be easy to provide a simple salad bar and fresh fruit. At least provide some peanut butter to put on the bread. All of these items will greatly enhance the nutritional quality of what you serve as compared to the average soup kitchen. This will improve the health of the poor you are seeking to help.

Try to get the use of a kitchen that is designed to serve large groups or find kitchen equipment built for mass feeding. A real hardship is placed on volunteers trying to prepare and serve meals for 30, 50 or even 100 people out of pots and pans, stoves and serving trays, designed for family cooking. The use of equipment not designed for mass feeding may also cause the health inspectors or other governmental authorities to question the right of a soup kitchen to operate. This is the reason why many soup kitchens are operated in storefronts that were previously outfitted for a restaurant, or in a church or school cafeteria facility. If that type of facility is not available to you, professional cooking equipment can be obtained by looking for a restaurant going out of business.

Insist on rules and procedures to keep the kitchen and the serving area clean. Some of the street people who eat in soup kitchens do not live under the cleanest conditions, and volunteers often find they are tired before all of the cleaning up is done. The result of is that some will find it easy to begin to tolerate conditions that may end up with illness and even a complaint from the city or county health department. Don't skimp on cleaning supplies and be tough on the rules about cleaning up. Teach your volunteers procedures that ensure cleanliness in handling and preparing food, as well as serving it. If you are not clear about what these procedures are and what the local law requires in commercial eating establishments, get someone who is knowledgeable to come and instruct your volunteers.

Paper plates and bowls, and disposable spoons and forks can save your volunteers a lot of time as well as help to ensure cleanliness. Many soup kitchens cannot afford these items, but they make it much easier to make sure that no gets sick from your serving conditions, and it is a lot less dish washing that has to be done. Other soup kitchens feel that paperware is absolutely essential, even if they have to raise money to purchase it. If you don't mind handing out a little "free advertising," you may sometimes be able to get a restaurant or fast foods place to donate some of their paper supplies. But resist the urge to wash and reuse plastic spoons and forks that have been designed for one-time use. This may very likely be against the law in your city, and it is dangerous. After a number of usages, it becomes more and more difficult to get plastic ware completely sanitary.

Have volunteer chaplains and "counselors" on duty during the meals. Some still favor the tradition of the old "skid row" rescue missions in which no one could get a meal unless they first sat through a chapel service. This is perceived as

essentially manipulative and probably results in more ill-will than it is worth. There is a better way to touch the emotional and spiritual needs of the people fed in a soup kitchen.

Volunteers called "chaplains" at the soup kitchen may be professional, ordained clergy or they may be local elders, Lay Bible Ministers or other church volunteers who have experience and training in pastoral care and Bible studies. Volunteers called "counselors" at the soup kitchen may be mental health professionals or volunteers with training in how to listen and help people find the right kinds of professional services based on their expressed needs. It is important that nonprofessional volunteers have a healthy understanding of the limits of their role and training.

Volunteers in this role will have no job in the kitchen or at the serving line. They simply circulate among the people who come in and find opportunities for conversation. Sometimes they are given the task of checking the salt shakers on the tables or something of that nature, in order to provide a non-threatening reason to circulate. As they learn to observe and listen they will find someone who wants to chat privately in one corner or even in another room, or someone who wants prayer or a Bible study. Marvelous things can happen as a result of this simple approach.

The equipment and supplies required to operate a soup kitchen can be significantly greater than what is required for a community food pantry. The cost of food per person served is significantly less. In a food pantry program each box of groceries dispensed may contain enough supplies for 20 to 60 meals. In a soup kitchen program meals are served one at a time. In general, a typical program—food pantry or soup kitchen-consumes about the same bulk of foodstuffs per day of operation. And the sources of food supplies are the same—food collections at church, in-kind donations by businesses in the community, and the local food bank.

The cost of supplies is generally greater in a soup kitchen than in a food pantry. The food pantry needs only packing materials and office supplies, while the soup kitchen needs cooking, serving and cleaning supplies. Most soup kitchens also find that they have to pay for utilities because the cost of running a kitchen is such that it is more difficult to get donated usage of space. Consequently soup kitchens have to raise more cash donations; probably double the cash budget of a food pantry operating the same number of days per week.

The staffing needed for a shift (one meal) at a soup kitchen is quite flexible and really depends on how quickly the team intends to get the work done. One person working by himself could easily prepare a meal for 30, 50 or even 75 people, but it will take much longer than if there are three or four cooks. Serving will take two or three persons per serving line, and unless you intend to feed more than 60 to 75 people per meal, one serving line is enough. (Don't make the mistake of trying a self-serve buffet arrangement. You will find that with people who are hungry and live on the edge of survival, more structure is required to avoid serious conflict.)

The typical soup kitchen team includes two or three cooks, two or three servers, one or two chaplains/counselors and a team leader or program director. Successful soup kitchens usually have a different team of six to nine volunteers for each day of the week or month that they operate. Recruiting volunteers and procuring foodstuffs is a job that can easily require 10 to 15 hours a week for a soup kitchen that operates one or two days a week. A soup kitchen that serves meals five or more days a week, will require at least a half-time program director.

Operating Other Feeding Programs

What is required in the way of staffing, foodstuffs, equipment and supplies to operate a congregate feeding program or a mobile feeding program is about the same as what is required to operate a soup kitchen. The functional operations are much the same except for some of the unique arrangements involved in each approach. These specialized approaches are designed to get food to hard-to-reach target groups.

Congregate feeding programs involve serving a meal to groups of needy people who assemble for

other purposes. An inner city church that serves breakfast before Sabbath School, a lunch club for senior citizens, and a summer day camp that provides sack lunches to the children who attend are all examples of congregate feeding programs. This type of program has been used most widely with senior citizens and children. It is a way of getting food to many elderly people who would not feel comfortable going to a soup kitchen or have the strength to regularly go to a food pantry and get groceries, and to children who are dependent on adults to see that they are fed. ACS units in Bermuda operate a number of senior citizens clubs that not only provide meals, but also activities such as crafts, lectures, singing, etc. The Central States Conference is developing a children's center in Kansas City that provides day care and a hot lunch program, as well as family services.

Mobile feeding programs take food directly to points where homeless people can be contacted. These are often homeless people who for one reason or another will not go to a soup kitchen. Some do not feel safe in the available soup kitchens. Some are families who do not want to be separated as they would be if they went into the available homeless shelters where the soup kitchens are operated. Others do not have access to soup kitchens. Still others have emotional or practical problems that keep them away. These include the most "hard core" hungry who live the closest to the edge of death from starvation, or more likely from a combination of malnutrition and exposure.

The New York health screening van ministry and other similar ministries have begun in recent years to reach out to these hungry, homeless people one or two days a week with hot soup, sandwiches and fruit. The inner city program of the Miami Temple Seventh-day Adventist Church has been taking food to the homeless on Wednesday evenings for several years, as have young adult groups in Washington, D.C.; Columbus, Ohio; and San Jose, California.

This kind of outreach program is most useful when the volunteers deliver information with the food, and develop relationships with the hard-core homeless which lead to getting them into programs that can help them get off the street. There is a danger that street feeding programs can be appealing to the naivete and sense of adventure among young adult volunteers while not really making a difference. The real measure of success for a mobile feeding program is not how many meals are served, but how many hungry, homeless people are connected with more substantial programs that can make a real difference in their lives. The tools to achieve this goal include conversational skills and simple, photocopied handouts with basic information about homeless shelters, job-finding centers, educational programs, mental health clinics, alcohol and drug programs. It also requires a life of prayer and deep compassion, because street ministries deal with the most difficult and precarious cases; people whose physical and mental health is very near the edge every day.

Meals on Wheels is a program that delivers hot meals to senior citizens, the handicapped and others who would suffer hunger because of inability to have meals prepared by anyone in the household. The Loma Linda ACS center—Adventist Community Team Services (ACTS)—operates a very successful Meals on Wheels program which is funded in part by a contract with local government agencies. Volunteers deliver meals to the homes of enrolled people several days each week, sometimes delivering more than one day's meals at a time. The meals are prepared in a licensed, contract kitchen and the menus are under the supervision of a Registered Dietitian.

To enroll in the program, a person is first interviewed by an ACTS staff person. This often involves a visit in the home to determine the nature of the situation. Some people are on the program for relatively short periods of time as the convalesce from surgery or a major illness. Others require long-term assistance. Some clients pay for the program, or it is paid for by their health insurance. Others receive it free of charge, depending on their economic situation.

Meals on Wheels targets food assistance to "the invisible hungry"—people who are not usually thought of as poor, but who would suffer from hunger because of inability to prepare meals or get out to the store to purchase food. This kind of program allows elderly and handicapped people to

stay in their homes instead of being placed in a nursing home or similar institution. This is more humane for the client, as well as saving considerable cost to insurance or public assistance programs.

In addition to the delivery of meals, says Addie Tarangle, ACTS director, the Meals on Wheels program provides regular contact with people who may not have anyone to look in on them. Often the volunteers who deliver meals report on other needs they observe in the homes, and the ACTS staff responds quickly. Just the human contact, friendly conversation and caring touch of the volunteer is important to these clients.

Community gardens are tools that can help the poor to take action to feed themselves and their families. Adventist inner city projects in Boston and San Jose conducted community gardening projects during the 1970s. Thousands of block clubs and other community organizations are involved in helping the poor to raise their own food, even in very urbanized neighborhoods.

Empty lots, public park facilities and other land can be obtained for community gardening. Since the land is only "borrowed" one growing season at a time, it is relatively easy to get permission, if you can identify the owner. In some inner city neighborhoods where empty lots have sat untouched for a number of years, the neighborhood simply starts gardens and does not bother to track down the absentee owner. This may result in the gardens being destroyed without warning. One of the things that ACS volunteers can do is go to the government office were land records are held and find out who to contact for permission.

ACS inner city programs can also provide seeds, tools, and information on growing vegetables. Volunteers with expertise in gardening can serve as coaches, helping the local residents to get started. It may also be necessary to find a way to get water to the gardens. A volunteer team from a college or Academy, or Maranatha Volunteers International may be needed for a week or so to get the water system in place.

In addition to getting community people involved in preparing the soil, planting the seeds and regularly tending the gardens, it is also important to involve them in security arrangements. As the crop matures there may be a temptation on the part of many to help themselves to vegetables. It is essential to ensure that those local residents who worked in the garden decide how the food it produced is distributed.

When the harvest season arrives, ACS may want to bring in a portable canning rig and involve the entire community in a day of canning as many vegetables as possible. This "harvest festival" can dramatically demonstrate the amount of food that the neighborhood can produce for itself through gardening. Each family can take home bushels of fresh produce and many containers of canned food. It will truly be a time to celebrate and an empowering event for families that suffer from hunger, and for your volunteers.

How to Start a Food Program

If you have an interest in starting a food program in your community, there are some basic steps that are essential to building an effective hunger ministry. These steps are best taken in cooperation with the pastor, church board or Church Ministries Council in your local church. Or, if there is already an ACS center or inner city program, then instead of the pastor and church board, you should work with the center or program director and board since they have already been delegated authority for this kind of ministry. You are most likely to build a strong, successful program if you work through these steps with a small team of three to five people instead of doing it all yourself.

1. Try to get a basic understanding of the needs in your community and design your program to meet those needs. It is easy to slip into the "paralysis of analysis" and spend so much time and energy studying the problem, that nothing is left over to actually do something about it. It is equally easy to get caught up in the operation of a project and be ignorant about essential information that should be taken into consideration. It is important to gather some information before starting a food program, and to continue to gath-

er information while actually operating the program. Because Adventist Community Services lacks massive funding, does not have a large constituency, and is not well known to the public media, it must "work smart." It depends for it success on creative, intelligent, well-informed and faithful work. The leaders of a food program can never know too much about the hunger problem.

Many sources of information are listed at the end of this chapter. Others can be discovered by asking civic leaders and colleagues in other helping organizations. In addition to the volunteers needed to staff a food pantry, soup kitchen, or feeding program, it is a good idea to find one or two volunteers who will take on the continuing responsibility of tracking down and digesting useful information. These volunteers can regularly share key information with the leaders of the program and the entire volunteer group through a newsletter, staff meetings, and other channels.

Understanding the hunger problem requires more than information. It also requires insight and careful analysis of information through the application of Christian values and Bible principles. A successful program will find consultants with depth, perception and expertise—sociologists, theologians, community organizers, ethicists, social workers, etc. Through the network of Adventist center and program directors (NAACSD) it is easy to find one or two people like this at a nearby Adventist college or other institution who have a real commitment to helping local program leaders gain a deeper understanding of the human needs and spiritual issues they face.

Understanding the hunger problem also requires a long-term commitment on your part to study, discuss, listen and pray about the topic. "Good works" can become ritualized and out of touch with the real, deep needs of people and with the vitalizing power of the Holy Spirit if we do not spend quality time in thought and in dialogue with both other human beings and with God. A key question to ask yourself; Is the energy I am putting into this food program just a way to keep myself active or does it come from a deep, spiritual commitment to doing God's will?

2. Develop good working relationships with the food bank and other organizations in your community. A complaint often heard about church community service activities is that the leaders behave like "lone rangers"—they move ahead with their program without consulting with civic leaders and other organizations in the community and within wider spheres such as the denomination, the state or province, etc. Any community service program must realize that it is not alone on a desert island. In fact, the field is crowded with organizations doing good things and attempting to solve the same problems you are working on. Instead of being alone on a desert island, it is a lot more like getting into an over-crowded canoe without tipping it over!

Thousands of voluntary organizations are involved in collecting and distributing donated food, operating soup kitchens and sponsoring feeding projects. In the United States a national network of food banks has been organized. It is called Second Harvest and it distributes more than 500 million pounds of food each year; grocery items worth $750 million. It has 180 member food banks, each of which covers a metropolitan area or major region of a state.

Second Harvest and the food banks do not give food directly to needy people. They form the "wholesale"-level suppliers for 42,000 food pantries, soup kitchens, homeless shelters, and senior citizen and child care centers. ACS units in the United States get much of their food from the Second Harvest network, although to qualify a local organization must also be collecting food from donations within its own constituency, such as the local church members.

If you are starting a new food program, it is important to establish early contact with the food bank that serves your area and discuss with them the neighborhood where you are thinking about operating. Food bank leaders may suggest to you other neighborhoods that are more needy. They may point to a different target group than the one you had in mind. The question you may be confronted with is whether Adventists are getting into a food ministry to actually be a good neighbor and meet real needs, or for other reasons. This is a vital issue to settle from the beginning.

If you already have a food pantry or other food program in operation and have not made contact with the food bank and related agencies in your area, it is even more important that you establish contact. They are very unlikely to ask you to move and it is against their principles to ask you to shut down, so there is no reason to fear this kind of contact. They may be able to help you widen the effectiveness and impact of what you are doing. And they will be able to put you contact with a new and important source of food supplies.

Food banks basically play the role of a broker between the food industry and charities that run food programs. Food banks are clearinghouses organized on a permanent basis to receive large quantities and varieties of surplus, salvaged, donated and purchased foodstuffs and grocery items solicited from many sources, and safely collect, handle, store and channel them to non-profit community service organizations that distribute food to or feed the needy.

Some of the foodstuffs provided by food banks is "surplus—edible, but due to labeling errors, damaged packaging, overproduction, misproduction, shortweights, or a nearly expired "pull date" are not marketed through normal channels. The United States generates millions of pounds of such "mistakes" annually and food banks quite simply take them off the hands of those who no longer want them and place then into the hands of those meeting the needs of the hungry and homeless. In addition to receiving food from companies who prefer to donate rather than to destroy their unsalable products, food banks collect donations from a variety of other sources including community food drives, U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) commodities, agricultural salvage "gleaning", and restaurant surplus.

Food banks are usually situated in large population centers and store donated foodstuffs temporarily in warehouses equipped with shelving, coolers, and freezers. The food does not stay there long. It is moved quickly to the neighborhood food pantries, soup kitchens, emergency feeding programs and other social service organizations. The agencies that get supplies from the food bank usually pay a "shared maintenance fee" of 10 to 15 cents a pound. This fee provides the major source of the budget of the food banks.

Food banks have come to occupy an important and necessary niche within the total system of community service agencies. The food pantries and soup kitchens get an inexpensive, reliable supply of food and grocery items. The grocery manufacturers and farmers earn tax benefits for their food donations, as well as positive publicity and public goodwill. Because donations are made to a large system of food banks, the efficiencies of scale are achieved. Large corporations would consume much valuable time of their employees if they were to deal separately with each small community service organization. That is why it is unlikely that you can walk into a nearby chain supermarket or phone the regional office of a large manufacturing corporation and get someone to talk to you about donating food to your ACS unit. It is much easier to deal with the food bank serving your area.

Prior to the mid-1960s food banks did not exist at all and they did not become wide spread until the late 1970s. Today most major metropolitan areas in the United States and many rural regions have a food bank or equivalent food collection and distribution system. If you area is not served by a food bank, you may want to help get one started. ACS units have been rounding partners with other community organizations in several areas. If you form an inter-agency coordinating committee, Second Harvest will provide the group with copies of Technical Assistance Bulletin #1 which outlines how to conduct a feasibility study. You can contact Second Harvest at 116 South Michigan Avenue, Suite 4, Chicago, Illinois 60603.

3. Realize that hunger is just the tip of the iceberg. When you talk with a person who is asking for a box of groceries, you are being confronted with the end result of a lengthy process of economic and social breakdown. The needs in that household are not just physical hunger. A wholistic approach demands that you try to put the request for food in some kind of perspective, that you make an attempt to provide food in a way

that positively impacts the other needs in that person's life and in the other lives present in his or her family system.

Gail Williams, director of the ACS Chattanooga center, gives an example of this dynamic. She relates a typical situation in her "Director's Diary" column in the Collegedale Church newsletter.

A local elder brings in a homeless person with a request for a box of groceries. The eider had been phoned by an acquaintance in a distant state. The acquaintance had been contacted by the homeless person. The person was homeless due to a marital conflict and there was no possibility of reconciliation. The acquaintance had asked the local eider to make sure the homeless person had shelter and food until arrangements could be made to get the homeless person to the distant state.

The local eider had picked up the homeless person at the bus station, taken him to a motel and paid for several nights lodging before he came to get food at the center. A few days later the homeless person told the eider that the mutual acquaintance from a distant state had made other arrangements.

A few days after that a pastor from the area stopped by the center asking for assistance with the case of a homeless person. He had been phoned by someone from a distant state asking him to help a homeless person who had spent the night downtown at the bus station. The "someone" was the same homeless person who had been into the center for a box of food a week or so earlier.

While the pastor provided some work for the homeless person at the church for a few hours, "we gathered information and asked ourselves what Jesus would do," recalls Williams. "Seven phone calls later we knew that the wife of the acquaintance who had phoned by the first eider and the pastor was not enthusiastic about providing the promised bus ticket for the homeless person to travel to the acquaintance's home in the distant state. An Adventist school were the homeless person had lived for several years was not interested in renewing the relationship. The work record of the homeless person was described as unstable and unmotivated. The homeless person was not interested in establishing contacts with family members.

"There really are not many individuals or organizations ready to lend a hand with unmotivated, unstable people who want others to take care of them," notes Williams. "How many nights do you provide in a motel? How many months do you pay the rent? How many job applications do you push them to fill out and pursue? How do you see that they get to work every day if they get a job? Do you give them more groceries when they lose that job and can't find another one, again and again?"

A long-term solution in a case like this will require jobfinding, therapy to change relational patterns and perhaps joining a self-help group to overcome an addiction. All three of these elements, as well as the help provided by the food program, will need to be coordinated through case management to achieve maximum effect. The process of case management is described more fully in Chapter 8.

Responsible, caring operation of a food pantry or soup kitchen includes finding ways to "leverage" the immediate, material aid given so that the poor are encouraged to help themselves by getting into job training, family therapy, self-help groups, etc. It is the policy of Adventist Community Services to require that affiliated food programs develop a capacity for case management or link-up with a program that can provide case management. ACS leaders believe that responsible, Christ-centered caring demands this policy.

If you do not see how your program can live up to this policy, don't despair. There is a network of capable consultants who can help you obtain training for your volunteers and develop case management skills, or who can put you in touch with others who can collaborate with you in providing case management services for your clients. Ask your conference ACS director of help. Talk with your Federation president. Or contact the officers of Coalition for Compassion, the North American Association of Community Services Directors (NAACSD), the professional association of Adventists who run church-related community

action programs. NAACSD sponsors a team of consultants.

4. Continue to educate your volunteers and supporters about the hunger problem in your community and the most effective strategies for dealing with it. It is impossible to do something about the needs of the poor and hungry by just doing. Constant educational effort is also necessary. Hunger is the result of ignorance and wrong attitudes as much as lack of money and jobs.

Two persistent attitudes among church volunteers that can wreak havoc with a food program are "We don't want all the bureaucratic red tape of lengthy interviews with people who come in for help;" and "We shouldn't help people who are not deserving." The combination of these two attitudes often results in off-the-cuff judgements about who should or should not get help; judgements made by untrained amateurs. Another description of untrained persons making quick decisions about who needs help without getting much background information is "prejudice."

It is highly unlikely that you will be able to find an adequate supply of volunteers who are professionally trained and fully understand the needs of your clients. Most church-related food pantries, soup kitchens and feeding programs are staffed largely by volunteers who want to do the right thing and think they no more than they really do. They only way that you can overcome the self-defeating attitudes described above is to "educate, educate, educate" (Evangelism, page 528).

It is a good idea to find someone to serve as training coordinator. This person can utilize a number of tools to help educate the volunteers, donors and supporters of the food program:

Hold a debriefing time at the end of each day's work session. Encourage volunteers to share conversations they had, comments they heard, and things they observed. Help them to understand what they have seen and heard, and to put it into a larger perspective.

Circulate a simple, one-page newsletter regularly with reports on the ministry, information about the hunger problem locally and nationally, descriptions of other agencies with which your ministry cooperates, and practical tips, etc. The inner city ministry of the Miami Temple Seventh-day Adventist Church circulates a newsletter called Street Beat every two weeks. It goes to all of the volunteers and is handed out in church, as well as mailed to donors.

Organize an annual retreat for volunteers and invite guest speakers who can help them to relate the work they are doing to Bible principles and their faith. Also invite civic leaders and community organizers who can help them better understand the needs of the target group of needy people.

Conduct a yearly Appreciation Dinner for donors and supporters such as the church board, pastor(s), community leaders, supermarket managers that donate foodstuffs, etc. Arrange for a speaker who can articulate the needs that are being met and help those in attendance understand the strategy of your program, changes being made, etc. Also take ample time to say, "Thank you" in a special way!

Develop a basic, introductory orientation for new volunteers. This needs to be provided regularly as new people join your program. For example, The Gate inner city center in Washington, D.C., had a basic volunteer Orientation Night on the first Sunday of each month. It could also be videotaped and new volunteers can simply be asked to sit down and view the cassette when they first show up.

Provide advanced training for those in the program who are becoming leaders. Leadership development is important in any volunteer ministry. It ensures a future for the program and prevents burnout. Advanced training can take many forms—one-day workshops conducted by accredited trainers, small seminars with experts, attendance at events conducted by other organizations in the area, and trips to national and international meetings. For example, NAACSD sponsors a yearly convention for directors of community service, inner city and van ministries.

Education requires patience. Attitudes do not change overnight. It takes time for information to filter into a group and for people to begin to gain

new insights from it. Old thinking patterns die slowly. Significant changes in attitudes and deeper understandings come as a result of persistent education and supportive relationships. You cannot help your church minister to those who are hungry unless you also work hard at educating the church members.

Resource Materials - Adventist Sources

Hunger and Poverty Leader's Guide (1989, Advent*Source*); a guide for four sessions of study of the problems of hunger, both around the world in your own community, including Bible studies, presentation outlines, small group discussion guides and a planning outline for local community action. Designed to be used with the special issue of Adventist Review on hunger and poverty which can also be obtained from Advent*Source*.

Resource Centers & Networks - Adventist Organizations

There are no Adventist organizations that specialize in hunger issues alone. See listings elsewhere in this book for Coalition for Compassion, the North American Association of Community Services Directors and the primary network of Adventists who are active in community action, antipoverty and inner city work. Also Advent*Source*, which handles resources materials for Adventist Community Services; ADRA International, which has educational materials on world hunger; and ADRA North America, for information about its Domestic Hunger & Poverty Program.

Several Adventist colleges and universities are actively involved in community action efforts to combat hunger and have faculty and students who are excellent sources of information and serve as trainers and consultants.

Larry Williams directs the social work program at Southern University which specialized in training social workers for church related programs. He can be reached at Southern University, Box 370, Collegedale, TN 37315.

Fred Washington has directed an ACS center and inner city program and is currently an instructor in the School of Social Work, Andrews University, Berrien Spring, MI, 49104.

Training Opportunities

The major opportunity each year for training in all aspects of Adventist community action, inner city work, van ministries, etc., is the annual convention of the NAACSD. It is held in a different city in North America each year, hosted by a model center or project. Workshops on program development, leadership skills, grantsmanship, fund raising, recruiting and managing volunteers and other key topics are offered each year as well as a tour of one or more agencies, usually including a food pantry, food bank, or soup kitchen. It is usually held in the spring. To get the date of the next annual convention and the list of specific training seminars that will be offered, write to NAACSD at 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904.

The Southern Union Conference sponsors a Community Services Convention for its territory every second year. This is usually held in the fall at Cohutta Springs Adventist Center in north Georgia, near Chattanooga. For information on the next event and what topics will be covered, write to Church Ministries Director, Southern Union Conference, Box 849, Decatur, GA 30031.

Your local conference ACS office may provide relevant training for time to time. It is strongly recommended that you contact the ACS director and discuss with that person your training needs. They can help you find training that will best fit your immediate needs.

An annual event on the theme of global service is planned at La Sierra University each October by the Stahl Center for World Service. These events are planned in cooperation with ADRA International and ACS, and usually include some training events. Often the theme of hunger and how to combat it is included on the agenda. For information on the next annual event, write to Dr. Charles Teel, director of the Stahl Center for World Service, La Sierra University, Riverside, CA 92515.

Other Resource Materials

Cry Justice: The Bible on Hunger and Poverty by Ronald J. Sider (1980, InterVarsity Press)

Ending Hunger: An Idea Whose Time Has Come by The Hunger Project (1985, Praeger Publishers)

Hunger Action Handbook by Leslie Withers and Tom Peterson (1985, Seeds magazine)

Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger by Ronald J. Sider (1984, InterVarsity Press)

Seeds, a nonprofit, bimonthly magazine whose focus is ending domestic and world hunger. To subscribe, write to the journal at 222 East Lake Drive, Decatur, GA 30030.

Senior Gleaners Information Packet is a kit of information about how to start a volunteer program of gleaning with senior citizen volunteers. Request a copy from Senior Gleaners, 3185 Longview Drive, North Highlands, CA 95660.

Other Organizations Concerned About Hunger Issues

American Community Gardening Association is an umbrella organization of about 300 local agencies that work with neighborhood groups and social service agencies to establish community gardens. Individuals can also join. It provides a way to share information and encourage networking among people interested in this approach. It publishes Community Greening Review with reports of successful programs and other relevant news, and sponsors an annual conference. Address; 325 Walnut St., Philadelphia, PA 19106. Telephone; (215) 922-1508.

Bread for the World is a policy research and action center rooted in Christian faith that provides information about government policies and economic trends that contribute to world hunger. It publishes a variety of legislative updates, research reports, books and educational materials, including a video entitled Gentle, Angry People which explores the problem of hunger among women and children in the U.S. A taped message with an update on legislative issues in the U.S. Congress can be heard 24 hours a day at (202) 269-0494. A one-year membership costs $25 and includes a regular newsletter. Address; 802 Rhode Island Ave., N.E., Washington, DC 20018. Telephone; (202) 269-0200.

Food First is a research and public education organization dedicated to increasing public awareness of and involvement in the problems of poverty and hunger both in North America and around the world. It publishes a quarterly newsletter, Food First News, and distributes many publications and T-shirts with anti-hunger slogans. Contact Food First at the Institute for Food and Development Policy, 145 9th St., San Francisco, CA 94013. Telephone; (415) 864-8555.

Food Research and Action Center (FRAC) is the leading national organization working to end hunger and malnutrition in the U.S. FRAC documents the extent and impact of hunger in the U.S., monitors Federal legislation and regulatory activity, maintains a list of food resource centers, serves as a clearinghouse for organizations seeking information on hunger, and conducts media and public information campaigns about hunger issues. It publishes a bimonthly newsletter, Foodlines. Address; 1875 Connecticut Ave., N.W., 5th Floor, Washington, DC 20009. Telephone; (202) 393-5060.

Freedom from Hunger Foundation sponsors self-help programs for poor families in the U.S. and aboard so that they can eliminate hunger and malnutrition in their communities. The foundation publishes a free, quarterly newsletter, Newsbrief. Address; 1644 DaVinci Court, Box 2000, Davis, CA 95617. Telephone; (916) 758-6200.

HandsNet is a national computer network in the U.S. that links organizations serving the poor. It provides information on available surplus food and sources of foodstuffs, as well as many other kinds of information and communication designed to help local antipoverty organizations of all kinds to better cooperate with each other. Write and ask for a demo disk and information packet. Address; 303 Potrero St., Suite 54, Santa Cruz, CA 95060. Telephone; (408) 427-0808.

National Committee for World Food Day is an organization in each nation that coordinates the observance of World Food Day each October 16. World Food Day was established by the United Nations to increase awareness of the need to eliminate hunger around the world, and 150 nations participate each year. Ask for the Resource List and Ideas in Action. In the U.S. the address of the national committee is 1001 22nd St., N.W., Washington, DC 20437.

National Student Campaign Against Hunger & Homelessness is a national coalition of campus-

based community service organizations in the U.S. It publishes a current listing of internships and volunteer travel opportunities for students who want to get involved in hunger and poverty issues entitled Going Places. Address; 29 Temple Place, 5th Floor, Boston, MA 02111. Telephone; (617) 292-4823.

America's Second Harvest is the national network of food banks in the U.S. It provides assistance and resources to communities that want to start a food bank, as well as a clearinghouse and support system for the existing food banks. Second Harvest has developed good working relationships with the food manufacturers and supermarket industry organizations, and arranges for large donations of foodstuffs to the nation's food banks each year. It can help you identify the food bank in your area and understand how to develop a working relationship with the food bank. Address; 116 South Michigan Ave., Suite 4, Chicago, IL 60603. Telephone; (312) 263-2303. Fax; (312) 263-5626.

The Canadian Association of Food Banks is a national organization made up of the food banks operated by private charities across Canada. Its objectives are to educate the public regarding the needs of the hungry, to obtain and redistribute food by coordinating donations from national sources, to share information, train new food bank directors and upgrade food bank operations. Address; 372 Pacific Ave., Toronto, Ontario M6P 2R1.

Fight Food Waste (FFW) is a program that encourages the food industry to salvage leftover food and deliver it to soup kitchens and homeless shelters. A summary of the state Good Samaritan laws which establish standards for handling surplus, prepared foods can be obtained from SOS, 1511 K St., N.W., Suite 623, Washington, DC 20005. Telephone; (202) 393-2925.

USA Harvest is an organization that collects food donated by hospitals, restaurants, hotels, bakeries, caterers, wholesalers and retailers. It may be a source of food supplies for your program. Address; Box 628, Louisville, KY 40201. Telephone; (502) 583-7756.

United Parcel Service Foundation has initiated a program designed to distribute food to the hungry in the U.S. It is particularly interested in programs that provide prepared food to the needy. For more information, contact the UPS Foundation, Greenwich Office Park 5, Greenwich, CT 06831. Telephone; (203) 862-6201.