

Foreword for Jubilee Manual.

I remember seeing, as a child, old newsreel images of breadlines and soup kitchens – realities that I was comfortably assured belonged in the long-past Great Depression. It is one of my greatest disappointments in life (and in my country) that my children have now grown to adulthood thinking of soup kitchens and homeless shelters as a normal part of American life.

In a time of unprecedented economic strength, it should not be this way, but there is a growing segment of our population to whom the benefits of prosperity have never trickled down. The rising economic tide that was to "float all ships," has left many of our sisters and brothers swamped in poverty, hunger, and homelessness.

How the church responds to this situation says much about our true commitment to the Christ who identified directly with the poor and the marginalized. Do we look the other way? Do we cast a disapproving glance? Do we exempt ourselves from concern because of our busy-ness or because the problems are "too complicated?" Or do we find ways to join Jesus in reaching out to the "untouchables" of our society?

Jean Kim has chosen to follow Jesus. And in two years of traveling across the United States, she has found many Presbyterian congregations who have chosen that route as well. Drawing from her many years of experience and the inspiring stories of programs she has visited, Jean shares her learnings and her commitments in this Jubilee Manual which the Presbyterian Hunger Program is pleased to make available to the church.

One note of warning, however: don't read any further if you expect to sleep comfortably tonight. Like the Jesus she follows, Jean calls for decision and commitment. And there is no escaping her 77 ways that your congregation can respond. . . not because your church is too small, or too poor, or too suburban, or too busy. There is something you can do, and Jean Kim's words will haunt you until you find it.

As Jean points out, provision of services to homeless people, no matter how lovingly they are provided, is only part of the needed response to homelessness. We also need to ask "why?" "Why are so many people left out or left behind in this era of prosperity?" "Why are so many people with jobs numbered among the homeless?" "Why has our government passed laws that exacerbate the problems and at the same time discontinued programs that help prevent or remedy homelessness?" I invite you to join the Presbyterian Hunger Program and many Christians across the country in seeking answers to these questions – and an alternative public response that begins to put an end to homelessness.

It is my prayer that my children's children will grow up in a world where widespread soup kitchens and homeless shelters are once again relics of the past. Until that day, I give thanks for the efforts of faithful Christians who reach out in the name of Jesus to provide shelter, food, and hope to those in need.

Gary R. Cook
Associate for National Hunger Concerns
Presbyterian Hunger Program

World Ministries Division
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) 2000