

Just three weeks ago many of you walked in the Crop Walk to raise funds that will provide help to hungry families both here in our community and overseas. While this is indeed very important and I hope you will continue to support CROP in the future, it is equally important to understand that it is the actions and inactions of government officials both here and overseas that create the conditions that cause hunger. Proverbs 13:23 says, "The field of the poor may yield much food, but it is swept away through injustice." The Bread for the World Offering of Letters is an opportunity to address underlying injustice that causes hunger. Specifically our representatives, Bill Huizenga and Fred Upton, need to support programs such as SNAP, WIC, and tax credits for low-income workers that have proven effective in reducing hunger and poverty here in the United States and programs like Feed the Future and the McGovern-Dole school-feeding program that do the same overseas.

Do you, like many people, assume that these benefits are for people not working, who are lazy? This is just not true. Most benefits go to the working poor and help these families fill in the gaps during difficult times.

When asked, the average person assumes that programs like SNAP make up a large portion of the budget, the truth is it is just about 2% of the total federal budget.

You will hear many lawmakers push the idea that religious congregations should be assuming the cost of programs that reduce hunger and poverty. The truth is the federal government is in the best position to help and as mentioned already it represents a very small percentage of the federal budget. The fact is every religious congregation in the U.S. would have to raise an extra \$428,000 annually over the next 10 years to make up the money the President's budget cut from programs that help people struggling with hunger and poverty. As I am sure you realize, this is quite unrealistic.

This year's Offering of Letters theme is For Such a Time as This , like Esther advocated for her people, we need to advocate for those living in poverty. I hope you will all join me in the gathering place to sign letters to Bill Huizenga or Fred Upton.