******

**2017 Offering of Letters**

***Doing our part to end Hunger***

We all need to do our part to end hunger, and this conviction has contributed to impressive progress toward eliminating hunger around the world. In fact, experts believe that (nearly) eliminating hunger by 2030 is feasible, and in 2015 the US and many other nations committed themselves to doing just that. Toward that end, in 2016, our leaders passed the Global Food Security Act, which makes our international aid more efficient and more effective at eliminating root causes of hunger.



Unfortunately, there is also much sobering news to report. Globally, about 800 million people still suffer from hunger. Even here in the US, the cost of hunger is estimated to be $160 billion annually, and about one child in six lives in a family that is food insecure. ***Worst of all, the budget proposals being introduced by our new president and many members of Congress slash international development aid and domestic safety-net programs.***

To put the proposed cuts in perspective, consider the following. A few years ago, a Bread for the World study concluded that roughly 95% of all food aid distributed in the US comes from federal programs such as SNAP (food stamps), WIC, and school lunches; only about 5% comes from religious and non-profit organizations such as church food pantries, Kids’ Food Basket, and the Community Action House. So, even a seemingly small decrease in federal funding of domestic food assistance could send many desperate people to food pantries and the like.

Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: … is it not to share your food with the hungry? … Then your light will break

forth like the dawn, and your healing will quickly appear. Isaiah 58:6-8

On the international front, private and faith-based development agencies such as the Catholic Relief Services receive substantial federal funding, so reductions in international development assistance would hurt the work of these agencies. Moreover, the effect of assistance goes far beyond saving lives and alleviating the suffering of those directly affected. Helping people escape from hunger and poverty helps to stabilize communities and nations, which in turn leads to less conflict and violent extremism.

Can our nation afford to ignore the plight of hungry people? The 2017 Offering of Letters gives each of us a means of telling Congress that the federal government must continue to do its part to end hunger!

Letters will be available to sign on March 25/26. See bread.org/OL for more information. Also, to learn about the Holland Bread Team, see HollandBreadTeam.org or its Facebook page.