

# FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT

SUNDAY, NOV. 30



## LECTIONARY SCRIPTURE: ISAIAH 2:1-5

**REV. MADDIE JOHNSON —**

As a member of the board for the General Board of Church and Society (GBCS), I have visited the UM Building which sits next to the Supreme Court many times, and each time, I am so grateful for its bold witness as the only non-governmental building on Capitol Hill. For those who have not had the opportunity to visit, as you walk through the main lobby, you are greeted by the words of the prophet Isaiah from chapter 2 verse 4 which say: “they shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks.” This vision from a state of war to peace seen through the concrete transformation of weapons into tools for food production is a profound image of what God wants for God’s children - in Isaiah’s time and today. In her 1907 essay, “Newer Ideals of Peace,” Jane Addams expanded upon Isaiah’s prophetic word by saying:

“[Isaiah] contended that peace could be secured only as men abstained from the gains of oppression and responded to the cause of the poor; that swords would finally be beaten into plowshares and pruning hooks, not because men resolved to be peaceful, but because all the metal of the earth would be turned to its proper use when the poor and their children should be abundantly fed. It was as if the ancient prophet foresaw that [...] peace would no longer be an absence of war, but the unfolding of world-wide processes making for the nurture of human life.”

Addams, co-founder of Hull House which was the first settlement house in the U.S., was the first American woman to receive the Nobel Peace Prize in 1931. She boldly claims, in conversation with our sacred text, that peace is grounded in the transformation of weapons to tools of food and abundance. A century later, the U.S. is still wrestling with a reality where weapons and war are prioritized over the feeding of our neighbors. Earlier this month, the U.S. government shutdown and the implementation of the cuts to SNAP benefits was a prime example of this priority of choosing war over peace.

As Christians, we have a responsibility to denounce “world-wide processes” that do not nurture human life; that choose war over peace. Through advocacy, education, and generosity through service and funding, we can “beat swords into plowshares” and “spears into pruning hooks” and help transform our world so that all might be fed and have enough. This Advent, as we prepare our hearts for the Christ child’s arrival, let us also prepare our communities by feeding the refugees, unhoused, wanderers, poor, and marginalized in our midst.

*Prayer: God of peace, encourage us to practice generosity and hospitality by feeding our neighbors, particularly those experiencing food insecurity due to a government that prioritizes war over peace. Transform our world-wide processes so that all might have enough, and as this transformation occurs, grant us boldness to act out of abundance in the meantime. In Your Name we pray, Amen.*

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## WORSHIP LITURGY

### CALL TO WORSHIP:

One: Holy One, open our ears to the voices of ancient prophets and prophets of today who proclaim a vision of abundance.

**All: Open our ears so we can walk in the light of the Lord!**

One: Holy One, open our eyes to the needs of our neighbors so that we might respond in loving and bold ways.

**All: Open our eyes so we can walk in the light of the Lord!**

One: Holy One, open our hearts to Your Spirit of generosity so that we might share our time, witness, and service to bring about true peace.

**All: Open our hearts so we can walk in the light of the Lord!**



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## DID YOU KNOW? SNAP FAST FACTS

*Compiled by Karen Siebert at Harvesters-The Community Food Network in Kansas City.*

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), formerly known as food stamps, is the largest and most effective hunger relief program in the U.S. SNAP helps low-income Kansans buy food using funds placed on an EBT card, giving them the flexibility to purchase groceries at approved retailers. The benefits are provided by the federal government, but states administer the program. The Department for Children and Families administers SNAP in Kansas, calling its program Food Assistance.

### Did you know?

- SNAP helps 1 in 8 low-income Americans put food on the table when they're facing tough times.
- The average SNAP benefit is \$188 per person, per month (approximately \$6 a day).
- A family's income must not exceed 130% of the federal poverty level (gross monthly income) and 100% of the federal poverty level (net monthly income after allowable deductions). For example a household of four must have a gross monthly income below \$3,483 and a net monthly income below \$2,680 to be eligible for SNAP benefits.
- The minimum SNAP benefit is \$24 a month.
- 94.4% of SNAP benefits are spent in local stores the month they are issued.
- SNAP not only helps Kansans meet their basic needs but also strengthens local communities and economies. Every \$1 of SNAP generates between \$1.50-\$1.80 in local economic activity.
- SNAP is the first line of defense against hunger in the U.S. For every 1 meal a food bank provides, SNAP provides 9.

## CALL TO ACTION

*Compiled by Karen Siebert at Harvesters-The Community Food Network in Kansas City.*

### Share Stories through Virtual Paper Plate Campaign:

There is power in sharing stories and challenging our assumptions about who benefits from food assistance. Whether you are a SNAP recipient, advocate for food justice, volunteer or staff at a food bank or food pantry, or involved in your community's food production, sharing your story matters! [Please distribute this brief story collection form](#) in your church newsletter, bulletin, or social media throughout the month of November so that we can highlight the impact of SNAP and other food supports in the Great Plains UMC.

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Helen  
Zipcode  
66605  
The commodity food  
pak helps me stretch  
meals or it provides meals  
when I don't have pay  
to feed my children.

## CALL TO ACTION

### United Methodist Health Ministry Fund Grant for Healthy Congregations:

If your church is a Healthy Congregations church, [visit here](#) to apply for a matching grant to respond to urgent food access needs in your community. These grants are designed to help churches leverage their leadership, facilities and partnerships to help build sustainable systems for food support.

### Christmas Offering to Food Bank/Food Pantries:

As a local church, determine your nearest food pantry and/or food bank and commit to donating this year's Christmas offering as a means of addressing food insecurity in your community. Even though SNAP benefits have resumed, due to the government shutdown, food banks and food pantries are severely backlogged. Also, with budget cuts to SNAP benefits being implemented in November, there will be more neighbors in your community experiencing food insecurity in the future. Here is a list of food banks and food pantries in the Great Plains:

- Food Banks in Kansas:
  - [Harvesters](#)
  - [Kansas Food Bank](#)
  - [Second Harvest Community Food Bank](#)
- Food Banks in Nebraska:
  - [Food Bank for the Heartland](#)
  - [Food Bank of Siouxland](#)
  - [Food Bank of Lincoln](#)
- Food Pantries Compiled by the Great Plains UMC:
  - Central Nebraska District: Albion, Aurora, Cairo, Central City, Columbus, David City, Geneva, Grand Island Trinity, Hastings First, Red Cloud and Shelton.
  - East Central Kansas District: Allen, Americus, Emporia First, Neosho Rapids, Perry, Reading, Rossville and Topeka Crestview.
  - Eastern Nebraska District: Alder Grove, Omaha FaithWestwood, Omaha TRI Community-Living Hope-Union Memorial, South Sioux City, St. Paul-Dakota City-Homer, Springfield and Weeping Water.
  - Southeast Kansas District: Baldwin First, Colony, Columbus, Fredonia, Humboldt, Neodesha, Prescott, Richmond, Wesley KU and Yates Center.
  - Southeast Nebraska District: Elmwood, Lincoln Connection Point, Lincoln First, Lincoln Horizons, Lincoln St. Mark's, Nebraska City, Seward and Waverly.
  - Western Kansas District: Bird City, Downs, Hardtner, Hoisington, Kiowa, Oakley and Osborne.
  - Western Nebraska District: Broken Bow, Callaway, Gering, Gibbon, Grant, Harrison, Kearney First, Kimball, Oxford and Paxton.