

A Lenten Invitation: Joining Hands in Prayer



New gardening methods secure meals for Lesotho families.

The Joining Hands Initiative of the Presbyterian Hunger Program connects U.S. presbyteries and congregations with networks in nine countries around the world, working together to end hunger and to change the root problems that keep people poor. Groups of churches in 11 U.S. presbyteries are linked to networks in nine countries. Los Ranchos Presbytery is linked to the Kopano ke Matla Network in Lesotho.

A New Way to Survive

At nine-years-old, Teboho has already faced many of the harsh realities of life. The eldest of three children, his father died three years ago leaving Teboho, his mother and two younger siblings to manage on their own. Not that life was easy before. His father worked as a miner in South Africa and, as a migrant labourer, he was often away from his family for long periods of time. When he was laid off before his death, matters only became worse.

Living on the outskirts of a town in Lesotho, Teboho would often go to town to look for food for his family. Some might call him a “street child” as he pandered for food or money. His mother found only occasional work doing laundry or cleaning for others, but never enough to pay to keep the children going to school. They often went hungry..

Gardens were also too expensive to plant. She needed to buy fertilizer, pesticides and seeds with money she didn't have. Yet subsistence farming and gardens are a key means of survival in Lesotho, where only 10% of the land is arable. In the midst of a country-wide drought- and dependent on costly imports from South Africa- there seemed no way out of the cycle of hunger and poverty.

Recognizing that most families need gardens to survive, the Joining Hands Network in Lesotho – Kopano ke Matla (Unity is Strength) – with the help of Geneva Global funds, has been training its members across the country who, in turn, train others in their communities in alternative farming methods. Rather than buying costly fertilizer, pesticides and seeds, they are taught to develop and use natural resources such as compost piles and animal dung and to cultivate seeds and plant in ways to produce the greatest yield.

Teboho and his mother learned these methods and, with their garden, are now able to provide for themselves and to sell to others. For them, this has provided a new beginning in life. The children now attend school. Teboho does not go wandering through the town searching for food. His mother sees a future with some promise and is personally invested in learning and doing more with agriculture.

It's a small beginning, but hope has been renewed and life has improved for Teboho, his mother and siblings. In this Lenten season please pray with the children of Lesotho:

Christ,

The greatest bearer of witness to the light that shines in the darkness of all hearts, that gives hope as a gift of life, has defeated the power of Hades, to awaken all life, and to give new spirit to the distorted hearts, give us courage to see the missing body and the empty tomb not as a sign of barren negligence, but as a striding power to walk out of darkness and to “Believe” that you are our “Hope.”

Today, we live in a world that is overwhelmed by poverty, with sickening voices of children crying for mercy. But we believe that Christ, who gives hope to the world in the midst of distortion and deadliness, and whose resurrection from the dead is a true symbol of life in abundance, appeals to the rest of the world to join hands and joyfully, renew life.

Jesus, give us courage and new spirit to employ our servitude to the world that is desperate for recreation. May your mighty act of dying on our behalf and rising from the dead renew us ever and ever more.

Amen!

(Material provided by Cindy Easterday, PC(USA) mission personnel and Joining Hands facilitator in Lesotho; Prayer by Rev Mojaki Kometsi, Lesotho Evangelical Church, Lesotho)

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OR TO THE ACCOUNT FOR JOINING HANDS-LESOTHO, H000110.