

ONE Thanksgiving

An Interfaith Call to Action

The fall season is a favorite time of year for many Americans. We look forward to the beginning of the school year (and the first few vacation days once it's started), the leaves changing colors, football season, and of course, Thanksgiving, a national holiday for us all. If you're like most Americans, Thanksgiving means a large meal of turkey, mashed potatoes, stuffing, and perhaps a slice of pumpkin pie! Thanksgiving is about the three f's for many of us: family, food, and football. However, this Thanksgiving, we hope that you keep another "f" in mind: Famine.

Thanksgiving originated as a religious observance by the Pilgrims to give thanks to God for the blessings of harvest and life, and we are encouraged on this day to reflect and be thankful for all we have been given. However, as we celebrate over food with loved ones, we must also keep in mind those who are still struggling, those who are still hungry.



FAMINE

Right now, the Horn of Africa is experiencing the worst drought in 60 years. 13.3 million people, mostly nomadic pastoralists and farmers in the areas of south-central Somalia, north-eastern Kenya, and south-eastern Ethiopia, are severely lacking access to food and water. Exact figures are unavailable, but at least 30,000 children have died in the past 3 months, with UNICEF estimating that one child dies every six minutes in Somalia. No parents should have to choose which of their children to feed, and which to let die due to lack of food.

Drought is an act of nature, but famine is man-made. In the 21st century, we know how to prevent famine, but we need the support of our leaders to do so. Investing in early warning stems and putting resources towards better seeds, irrigation, and sustainable farming education has proven to be successful, and international assistance in the areas of disaster risk reduction and agricultural development is key to reducing the impact of massive droughts.

“Hundreds of thousands with no voice in places of power need our voice. They need our voices to tell others who remain in ignorance all around us what is happening. They need our voices to keep telling our governing officials that something must be done”.

We ask you to make this Thanksgiving a season of action. Join ONE members and add your voice to request more attention and support for the needs in the Horn of Africa.

FAITH

Faith communities play an especially important role in addressing issues of hunger and extreme poverty in the world. For centuries, faith leaders have helped shape the beliefs and actions in communities all over the world. With approximately 4 billion people of faith in the world, partnering together across faith boundaries can make a difference in fighting this famine.

“All major traditions share a belief in the dignity and freedom of the human subject.”

-Rowan Williams, Archbishop of Canterbury

No matter what your faith identity, there is a common call in each of the major religions to social justice and service. We must reflect on our beliefs, and let our faiths inform how we act to help those suffering in the Horn of Africa.

Looking for inspiration? See what some of the major faiths have to say about caring for those in need:

Every life is valuable in the eyes of Allah. “And whoever saves the life of one person, it is as if he saved the life of all mankind.”

Quran 5:32 (Muslim)

“As you plant, so shall you harvest. Without virtue, this human life passes away in vain.”

Ang 56 Guru Granth Sahib (Sikh)

“In another passage He hath proclaimed: It is not for him to pride himself who loveth his own country, but rather for him who loveth the whole world. The earth is but one country, and mankind its citizens.”

- Bahá'u'lláh (Bahá'í)

“If you wish to experience peace, provide peace for another.”

Tenzin Gyatso, The 14th Dalai Lama (Buddhist)

“Service to Divinity is through Serving Humanity.”

Sloka from, Gita (Hindu)

“If anyone has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in need but has no pity on them, how can the love of God be in that person? Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth.”

1 John 3:17-18 (Christian)

“When a person eats and drinks [in celebration of a holiday], he is obligated to feed converts, orphans, widows, and others who are destitute and poor. In contrast, a person who locks the gates of his courtyard and eats and drinks with his children and his wife, without feeding the poor and the embittered, is [not indulging in] rejoicing associated with a mitzvah, but rather the rejoicing of his gut.”

Maimonides, Mishneh Torah, Hilchot Sh'vitat Yom Tov 6:18 (Jewish)

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Famines are man-made..**

This Thanksgiving season, while we gather around the table to give thanks for the abundance in our lives, let's work together to show that we care for those suffering from lack of access to food and clean water in the world. Let us share our abundant harvest and take action as people of faith to end famine for good.

TAKE ACTION

- Educate your community about the famine in the Horn of Africa using ONE's resources.
- Sign ONE's petition for full funding of Feed the Future.
- Show the "Growing a better future with Sweet Potatoes" video in your faith community.
- Partner with another faith community in your neighborhood to plan a letter writing event to protect further cuts to poverty-focused programs.
- Take further action with numerous ONE partners including international organizations, U.S. organizations, and faith-based organizations.

The Horn of Africa is experiencing one of its worst droughts in 60 years. 13.3 million people, mostly nomadic pastoralists and farmers in parts of Somalia, Kenya and Ethiopia, are severely lacking access to food and water. In Somalia, it is being reported that a child dies every six minutes because of this famine.



Carolyn Worthge and Adeela Tajdar are ONE's Faiths Act Fellows for 2011-12. In partnership with the Tony Blair Faith Foundation, Faiths Act is the Foundation's multi-faith social action program, which mobilizes people of faith to work together on issues of health and global poverty, in order to help achieve the UN's Millennium Development Goals. Faiths Act is a global movement of people of different faiths in over 130 countries, taking action together against preventable disease and extreme poverty.

ONE and its more than 2.5 million members are committed to a multi-year campaign that will spark a more urgent global response to the immediate needs in the Horn of Africa, while also building support for longer-term strategies that will help end the cycle of famine once and for all.