

**“For the common good”**  
CROP WALK 2009

**January 18, 2009**

*Text: Isaiah 61:1-4, John 17:11-21a*

I.

These are exciting times—today and the next few days; which is to say, there’s lots happening. To begin with, this is CROP WALK recruitment Sunday, always an exciting day for our church, as we sign people up, after worship, in Fellowship Hall for CROP WALK 2009.

1. Tomorrow (Monday) is **Martin Luther King, Jr.** day, a national holiday when we pause and remember Dr. King’s rich legacy—highlighted, of course, by *his I have a dream* speech delivered in front of the Lincoln Memorial in Washington DC ...

It was August of 1963 ... as thousands flocked to our nation’s capital for the March on Washington for civil rights. ***I have a dream***, said King, as he lifted our hopes and vision to the promise of racial equality and justice for all people.

*I have a dream that one day our nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of our creed. We hold these truths to be self evident, that all men are created equal.*

Many of us were inspired that day when, as King’s wife, Coretta Scott King noted,

*At that moment, it seemed as if the Kingdom of God appeared.  
But it only lasted for a moment.*

2. And then, Tuesday is the historic Inauguration of **Barack Obama** as the 44<sup>th</sup> President of the United States. How appropriate that the inauguration of the first African American President of our nation follows—the day after—the national holiday honoring the man whose life commitments played such a critical role in making it all possible.

These next few days are days of immense pride and joy for our nation. We have lots to celebrate, lots to be thankful for and, of course, enormous challenges before us.

II.

On this CROP WALK recruitment Sunday, I remember one of the repeated themes in Barack Obama’s autobiographical book that many of us have read, *The Audacity of Hope*. Throughout the book, again and again, he spoke of ***lifting up the common good***.

He sounded this theme over and again throughout his campaign as well; and it's a theme that will continue to be sounded throughout his presidency.

*Lifting up the common good* ... uncovering common ground ... emphasizing ways of bringing people together—all people—to serve our common good. The impulse for this is the same energy and spirit that motivates people to serve in Americorps or in the Peace Corps.

It's a vision that we can all do something—no matter anything about our differences. We can all do something to make our collective life together—our community life—to make it better.

CROP WALK is precisely this kind of an event. It serves three purposes and they're all important.

1. To begin with, it helps raise much need funds to combat world hunger. In spite of all our modern advances in technology, hunger continues to be a serious global problem. Every day, around the planet, millions of people go hungry.
2. Secondly, when we do our three-mile walk, it serves as a symbolic event for our Miami Lakes Community. People see us walking. They see our signs and our T-shirts and it sends a message.

It's a symbolic event that points beyond ourselves; a reminder that we're all a part of the human family. And because of this, it's a great event for our families with children; this is how we pass on our faith commitment to our sons and daughters.

3. Which brings us to the third purpose: CROP WALK helps us **BE** the Church. The Christian Church, to be the Church, must stand with the poor ... the needy, the hungry. When we walk for world hunger, friends, we ARE Christ's presence in the world.

### III.

When we walk for world hunger, we're doing something concrete that makes a difference. As Christians and as Americans, at our best, we must do something because that's who we are.

Lifting up the **common good**, doing things **for the common good**; that's what we do. The *common good* is what underlies our common life in a democratic and free society.

*We hold these truths to be self-evident ...that all people are created equal ...that they are endowed by God with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.*

These timeless words from our Declaration Independence capture the essence of our common creed as a people.

We believe that all people have basic human rights; certainly rights to lives of dignity where the basic necessities of life are provided.

There's a passionate voice of justice that runs through the Bible on behalf of those who are deprived of these necessities. As Christians, each of us makes a commitment to do what we can—certainly, something—to be Christ's presence in the world ...

Wherever it is that people are hungry ... or without shelter or clothing ... or deprived of basic health care ... or being denied whatever basic freedoms as human beings.

From God's point of view, this is what love asks of us. To lift up *the common good*. God's vision and the biblical mandate for this *common good* are sounded in the reading I shared with us from John's gospel.

In this reading, part of the lengthy discourse speeches of John, Jesus is praying for his disciples. With deep yearning and an inconsolably heart, Jesus is praying that the Spirit of God protect them ... and undergird them ... and nurture them.

Jesus is going to be leaving and he's worried about them ... and so he prays:

*I ask not only on behalf of these (praying to God) but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word ... **that they may all be one.***

When we're all one, *the common good* is being served. The hundreds of CROP WALKS that take place across the country every year are *for the common good*. For the good of those who are hungry and are being left out, those on the fringes of life.

#### IV.

On Sunday, February 8<sup>th</sup>, three weeks from today, we'll walk to raise money to fight world hunger, which includes hunger right in our surrounding community.

1. Twenty-five percent of the funds we raise come back into our community.
2. The funds go to support the **Family Center** at **St. Andrews Lutheran Church** in Hialeah. Last year, the center received over \$1,500 from our walk.
3. They feed and provide much needed assistance to hundreds of individuals and families every year; and particularly in these economically stressful times.

Of course, again, seventy-five percent of the funds we raise goes to fight hunger around the world. Our walk supports *the common good* everywhere.

***That we may all be one*** is the solemn reminder from the soul of our Creator God that our lives—here in Miami Lakes and across America—are tied to the lives of every human being on the planet.

We live in a time in history when it's imperative that we rediscover—as Christians and as Americans—that, always, there is more that unites us than that divides us. We simply need to learn each other's story and build human connections around the world.

And so, after worship this morning, we invite you to go over to Fellowship Hall and to sign up today for CROP WALK 2009.

Our goal is 60 walkers, including children. Again, this is a wonderful event for families, an excellent way to teach Christian values to our children. This is how they learn about our faith and how ...

- All of God's children are important and that it's up to us, who are born into lives of relative abundance, to help those less fortunate than we ...
- There's a walk for everyone ... so we urge you: sign up today.

V.

In closing, hear these words of yearning from the heart of Africa:

***I saw a child today, Lord, who will NOT die tonight, hurried into hunger's grave. She is bright and full of life because her parents have a job and feed her. But somewhere, everywhere, 10,000 life-lamps will go out and not be lit again tomorrow.***

***O God, teach us the ways of your love ...***

And from a Canadian Indian liturgy:

***You have come from afar, and have waited long and are wearied:***

***Come, let us sit side by side ...  
sharing the same bread,  
drawn by the same source,  
to quiet the same hunger that makes us yearn.***

***Then, standing together, let us share the same spirit,  
... the same love that once again draws us together  
in friendship, unity and peace.***

Together, friends, *we are the world*. Let's help in the fight against world hunger and together make a difference.

**All praise be unto God! Amen!**

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