

**FAST for
CHANGE**

7 DAYS TO TEND THE EARTH





This beautiful earth sustains us, and whether or not we recognize the mysteries of all living and non-living things, God is indeed present in them. The act of producing food is one of the best ways to reflect on the secrets of creation. We too often forget that creation is a constant activity of God rather than a single moment when God formed the world, wound it up and set it in motion. When we grow, raise, tend or catch food we are direct participants in this activity and we benefit spiritually when we recognize our own role in it.

This book of prayers and reflections draws our attention to daily actions that have an impact on the production of food. Our eating is tied to land and labour. Every bite of food is connected to a place on the earth where the sun, soil, and air interact to sustain life. Those who tend and cultivate cooperate directly with this interaction—both by what they do and what they do not do.

Urbanization, coupled with the ongoing challenges of farming, has reduced the percentage of people who work at producing food. Those whom we call “farmers” have more mouths to feed than ever before. Many of us trust

naïvely that there will always be food on the table or on the shelves. Many of us are busy with other activities that no longer have our hands touching the soil, sowing seeds, tending animals, or collecting the fruits of the harvest.

Think about the last time you bought food at a grocery store. Do you know where it came from? Who grew it? How it was grown, caught or raised?

As we think of the millions who are chronically hungry, we know that many play a role in producing food. We also know some of the roots of hunger exist in our own backyard. What better place to start building solidarity with hungry people and work toward food justice? In small but meaningful ways we take part every day in the natural cycles that all of us depend on for survival. Finding ways to do this mindfully calls for some reflection on the God-given essentials for producing food, as suggested in each chapter of this booklet: energy, water, soil, seeds, plants and animals, human knowledge, and rest. There is ample space to prayerfully nurture your own interaction with the creative process that leads to the meals we share around our tables.

The following scriptures are taken from *The Message*.



ALL OUR EGGS IN ONE BASKET?

From a single seed, each living thing grows into a unique creature, something new. Seeds store immeasurably diverse information which is not only wonderful, but essential. A stroll through a supermarket hints at the diversity we have in selecting our food. But is this an illusion? As it turns out, roughly 90% of the items contain one of two crops: corn and soybeans. More than half of human food needs are provided by just four crops – corn, wheat, rice and potatoes. Along with the benefits of the great success of certain breeds comes the risk of losing a key principle: diversity. What if one of these crops is hit by a devastating disease? A varied menu not only looks great on a plate, it also protects us against hunger in the future. Diversity is part of a sacred trust between people and plants.

Small change? Find seeds of a local heirloom plant variety, set it in potted soil in your home. As it grows, reflect on the diverse beauty of Creation.

Prayer: *God of Many Names, replenish the earth through the work of our hands.*

THINK STRAIGHT. AWAKEN TO THE HOLINESS OF LIFE.

Think straight. Awaken to the holiness of life. What does this 'resurrection body' look like? If you look at this question closely, you realize how absurd it is. There are no diagrams for this kind of thing. We do have a parallel experience in gardening. You plant a 'dead' seed; soon there is a flourishing plant. There is no visual likeness between seed and plant. You could never guess what a tomato would look like by looking at a tomato seed. What we plant in the soil and what grows out of it don't look anything alike. The dead body that we bury in the ground and the resurrection body that comes from it will be dramatically different.

You will notice that the variety of bodies is stunning. Just as there are different kinds of seeds, there are different kinds of bodies—humans, animals, birds, fish—each unprecedented in its form. You get a hint at the diversity of resurrection glory by looking at the diversity of bodies not only on earth but in the skies—sun, moon, stars—all these varieties of beauty and brightness. And we're only looking at pre-resurrection "seeds"—who can imagine what the resurrection "plants" will be like!"

—1 Corinthians 15:34-41

**Only 10
companies
now control
over half
of the
commercial
seed market
worldwide
worth
more than
\$14 billion.**



20 DOWN THE DRAIN?

Food production takes lots of water, and in most countries agriculture uses the largest share. As it should. Canadians, however, use more fresh water in their homes than for agricultural purposes. We have gone to great lengths to ensure that a healthy supply of publicly available drinking water comes straight to our taps. Ironically, a third of us drink bottled water at home, often fearing the quality of our water source. It doesn't make sense, considering how our abundant clean water is copiously wasted. This is a stark contrast to the lack of water and access to this precious resource that farmers and others experience in many parts of the world. At a time when global demand for fresh water is rising, we get a failing grade for water conservation.

Small change? Calculate your weekly consumption of water and decide with your household some ways to reduce it by 10%.

Prayer: *God, who separates land from the oceans, lead us to the well of living water.*



OD TURNED RIVERS INTO WASTELAND,

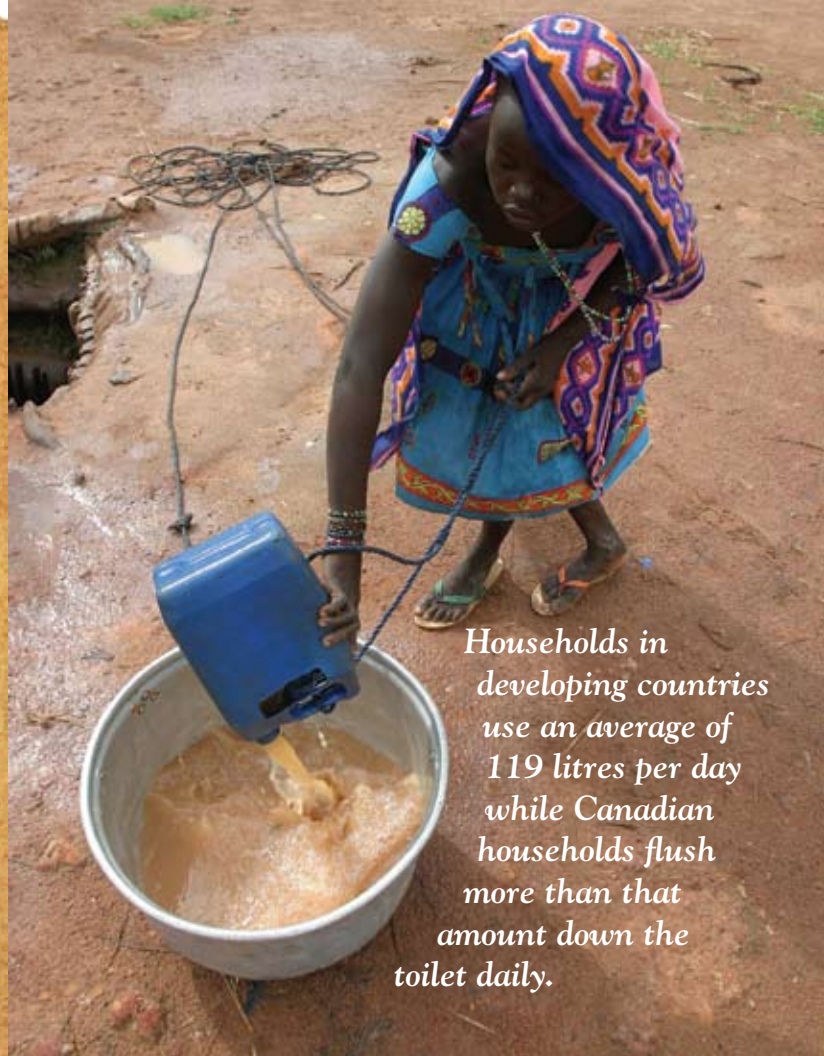
springs of water into sunbaked mud;
Luscious orchards became alkali flats
because of the evil of the people
who lived there.

Then he changed wasteland into fresh pools
of water,
arid earth into springs of water,
Brought in the hungry and settled them there;
they moved in—what a great place to live!
They sowed the fields, they planted vineyards,
they reaped a bountiful harvest.

He blessed them and they prospered greatly;
their herds of cattle never decreased.
But abuse and evil and trouble declined
as he heaped scorn on princes and sent them away.
He gave the poor a safe place to live,
treated their clans like well-cared-for sheep.

Good people see this and are glad;
bad people are speechless, stopped in their tracks.
If you are really wise, you'll think this over—
it's time you appreciated God's deep love.

—Psalm 107



*Households in
developing countries
use an average of
119 litres per day
while Canadian
households flush
more than that
amount down the
toilet daily.*

FOOD COURT

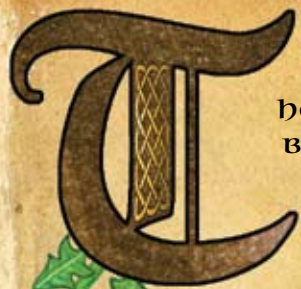


5 Is the earth hungry too?

Essential nutrients – especially the important minerals we seek on labels – come from the soil. Plant roots take up a variety of elements and compounds from the soil to become the food we put on our plates or feed to our animals. Ideally, these nutrients would all return to the soil, but urban areas often are not well organized to do this. Farming, like managing a bank account, requires dedication to maintaining a balance of nutrients in the soil. But everyone is responsible for land stewardship. Urban communities could do much more to slow the overloading of nutrients into landfills, lakes and rivers by returning nutrients to their proper place. The soil, a place where great mysteries still dwell, is our resource for nourishment, so we must nourish and care for it in return.

Small change? Practice composting in your household; discuss with neighbours or friends ways to create or improve community composting.

Prayer: *God, Maker of things great and small, reveal your presence to us in the land and sky.*



**THE VERY GROUND IS CURSED
BECAUSE OF YOU;**

getting food from the ground
Will be as painful as having babies
is for your wife; you'll be working in pain
all your life long.

The ground will sprout thorns and
weeds, you'll get your food the hard way,
Planting and tilling and harvesting,
sweating in the fields from dawn to dusk,
Until you return to that ground yourself,
dead and buried; you started out as dirt,
you'll end up dirt."

The man, known as Adam, named his wife Eve because she
was the mother of all the living. God made leather clothing
for Adam and his wife and dressed them.

God said, "The Man has become like one of us, capable of
knowing everything, ranging from good to evil. What if he now
should reach out and take fruit from the Tree-of-Life and eat,
and live forever? Never— this cannot happen!"

So God expelled them from the Garden of Eden and sent them
to work the ground, the same dirt out of which they'd been
made. He threw them out of the garden and stationed angel-
cherubim and a revolving sword of fire east of it, guarding the
path to the Tree-of-Life.

—Genesis 3: 18-24



*Roughly 60% of all material disposed of in
landfills could be composted. In Canada,
more than 6 million tonnes of organic
material is lost to landfills
each year.*



4 IS THERE A SUGAR SUBSTITUTE?

The origin of each calorie we consume is the sun. Through photosynthesis, God's miracle gift of energy for the earth, plants brilliantly transform rays of sunlight into carbohydrates we consume as energy. We take part in this gift each time we reach for the sugar bowl, bite into a doughnut, or for that matter, when we start our cars. Huge volumes of land and resources are required to grow sugar, and in many cases small subsistence farmers are displaced. The cane industry, once synonymous with slavery, now also competes with corn for making ethanol used in fuel and high fructose corn syrup in processed foods. Sugar has become pervasive in our global diet. Whether for fuel or for the sugar we put in our tea, can we taste the impact that this energy and commodity crop has on land and labourer?

Small change? Reduce your sugar use, including processed foods that have forms of sugar near the top of the ingredient list.

Prayer: *God, who holds the sun in its place, inspire our every action and movement.*



THE GOD WHO MADE THE WORLD

and everything in it,
this Master of sky and land,
doesn't live in custom-made shrines or
need the human race to run errands for him, as if
he couldn't take care of himself. He makes the creatures; the
creatures don't make him. Starting from scratch, he made the
entire human race and made the earth hospitable, with plenty
of time and space for living so we could seek
after God, and not just grope around in
the dark but actually find him. He
doesn't play hide-and-seek with
us. He's not remote; he's
near. We live and move in
him, can't get away from
him! One of your poets
said it well: 'We're
the God-created.'

—Acts 17:28

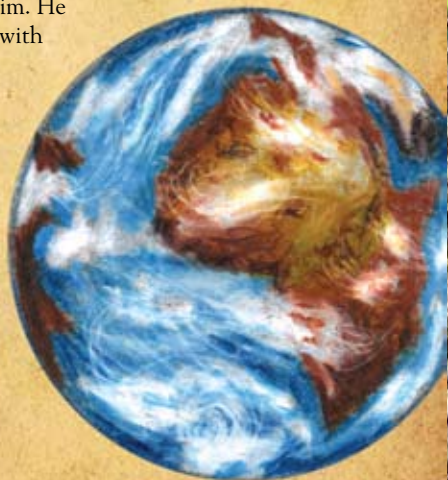
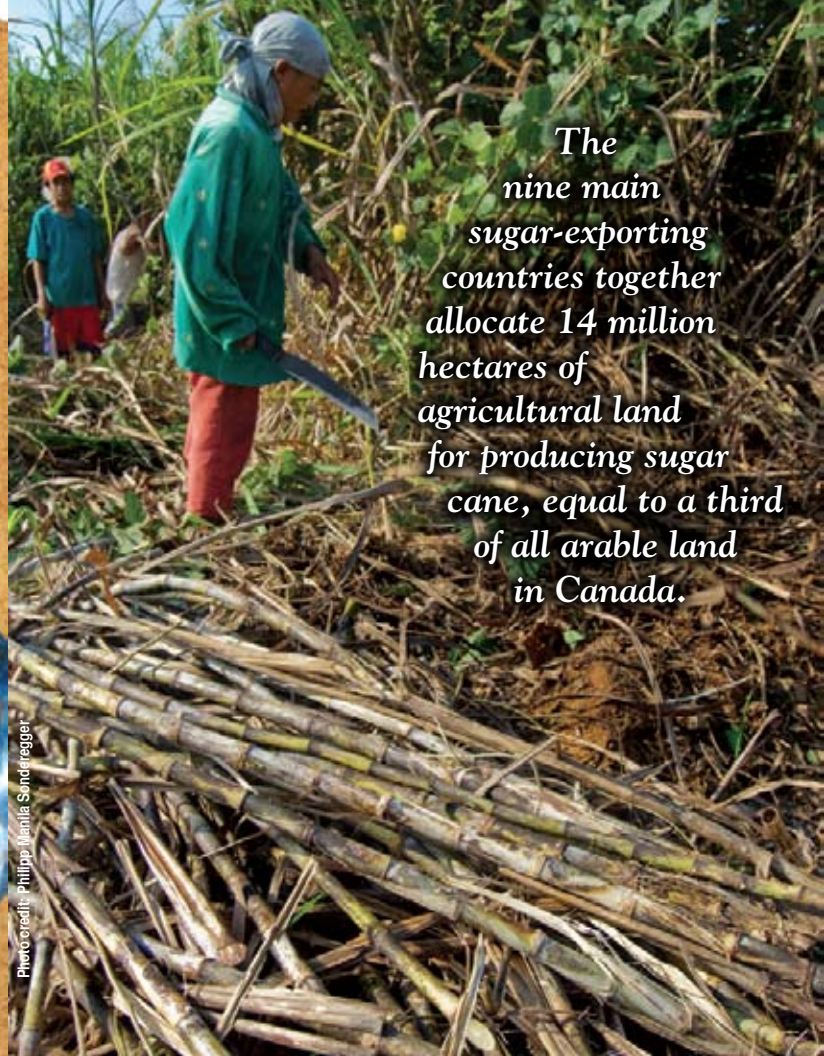


Photo credit: Philipp Manilla Sander reggen



*The
nine main
sugar-exporting
countries together
allocate 14 million
hectares of
agricultural land
for producing sugar
cane, equal to a third
of all arable land
in Canada.*



WHAT'S YOUR BEEF?

We have been keeping all kinds of animals for millennia, but how we do this has changed dramatically with the growth of population and cities in the last few decades. A lack of awareness about how animals are raised and what we feed to them prevails, but global demand for meat is rising sharply. Animals play a special role in our food system, but heightened concern about disease or animal welfare has raised fears over how we keep and care for them. The average Canadian knows less and less about raising animals, but our per capita meat consumption keeps increasing. Now livestock owners are squeezed into tighter profit margins while keeping larger volumes of animals, leaving us to question how we can sustain the diets and foods we have come to enjoy. When God said “have dominion”, is this what was intended?

Small change? Discuss with your household how to practice sustainable meat consumption and learn about where your meat comes from.

Prayer: *God, who sustains life, help us find our place among the creatures of the earth.*



OD SPOKE: "EARTH, GENERATE LIFE!

Every sort and kind: cattle and
reptiles and wild animals—all kinds."

And there it was:

wild animals of every kind,

Cattle of all kinds, every sort

of reptile and bug.

God saw that it was good.

God spoke: "Let us make human beings in
our image, make them reflecting our nature

So they can be responsible for the fish in the
sea, the birds in the air, the cattle,

And, yes, Earth itself, and every animal that
moves on the face of Earth."

God created human beings;

he created them godlike,

Reflecting God's nature.

He created them male and female.

God blessed them:

"Prosper! Reproduce! Fill Earth!

Take charge!

Be responsible for fish in the sea and

birds in the air, for every living thing

that moves on the face of Earth."

—Genesis 1: 25-28



Photo credit: Pedro Lozano



**Nearly 40% of our global grain supply feeds
animals, the amount of grain equivalent to
the annual calorie
needs of more than
3.5 billion people.**



6 A LITTLE KNOWLEDGE?

Technology is the name we give for human knowledge in action. It has advanced the cause of agriculture. Knowing the soil, how to control pests, use tools, plant seeds – these factor into the fruitfulness of efforts to produce food. But we seldom hear about traditional wisdom over the hype of scientific and technological advances. Globally, traditional and indigenous agricultural knowledge is vast and varied. But when we lose farmers, we also lose the knowledge they have of the land and the plants that grow there. Farmers collectively hold the keys to producing food for a given region, and it is women, in particular, who often take a leading role in conserving and managing traditional crops and varieties. Factors such as climate change have greatly increased their vulnerability. Support for farmers protects jobs, but more importantly a community's access to food.

Small change? Find a farmer or gardener who knows about growing food. Spend an afternoon working beside them, learning and listening.

Prayer: *God, who plants the garden, grant us wisdom and understanding.*



AM Lady wisdom...

God sovereignly made me—
the first, the basic— before he did anything else.
I was brought into being a long time ago,
well before Earth got its start.
I arrived on the scene before Ocean,
yes, even before Springs and Rivers and Lakes.
Before Mountains were sculpted
and Hills took shape,
I was already there, newborn;
Long before God stretched out Earth's Horizons,
and tended to the minute details of Soil and Weather,
and set Sky firmly in place,
I was there.
When he mapped and gave borders to wild Ocean,
built the vast vault of Heaven,
and installed the fountains that fed Ocean,
When he drew a boundary for Sea,
posted a sign that said no trespassing,
And then staked out Earth's Foundations,
I was right there with him,
making sure everything fit.
Day after day I was there,
with my joyful applause,
always enjoying his company,
Delighted with the world of things
and creatures,
happily celebrating the human family.

—Proverbs 8:12, 22-31



*Between
1991 and 2006
the number of farmers
in Canada under 35 years
old decreased by over
60 per cent and the number
of farms declined by more
than 70,000.*



REST FOR THE WEARY?

Rest is viewed differently depending on culture and personality: lazy versus productive; work-a-holic versus simple living. However, the Sabbath is a commandment given for the land and for our well-being. That's challenging in a society which values 24/7 supermarkets. We expect a year-round supply of oranges or bananas or lettuce, in contrast to the majority of people in the world. Seasonal eating, on the other hand, embodies the concept of Sabbath. It is a way to encourage rest for the land by recognizing the rhythms of food production. We can counter this illusion of easy access by observing the seasons of certain foods and honouring their sources. Choosing local alternatives to faraway foods also fosters the building of communities and a relationship to the land. True rest comes from the Creator, whose economy functions to bring people closer together.

Small change? Fast from food or certain foods today, in whatever way works for your situation. Create a restful space for this, with or without the company of others.

Prayer: *God of Rest, send out your Spirit and renew the face of the earth.*



God spoke to Moses at Mount Sinai:

“Speak to the People of Israel. Tell them, When you enter the land which I am going to give you, the land will observe a Sabbath to God. Sow your fields, prune your vineyards, and take in your harvests for six years. But the seventh year the land will take a Sabbath of complete and total rest, a Sabbath to God; you will not sow your fields or prune your vineyards. Don’t reap what grows of itself; don’t harvest the grapes of your untended vines. The land gets a year of complete and total rest. But you can eat from what the land volunteers during the Sabbath year—you and your men and women servants, your hired hands, and the foreigners who live in the country, and, of course, also your livestock and the wild animals in the land can eat from it. Whatever the land volunteers of itself can be eaten.

—Leviticus 25:1-7

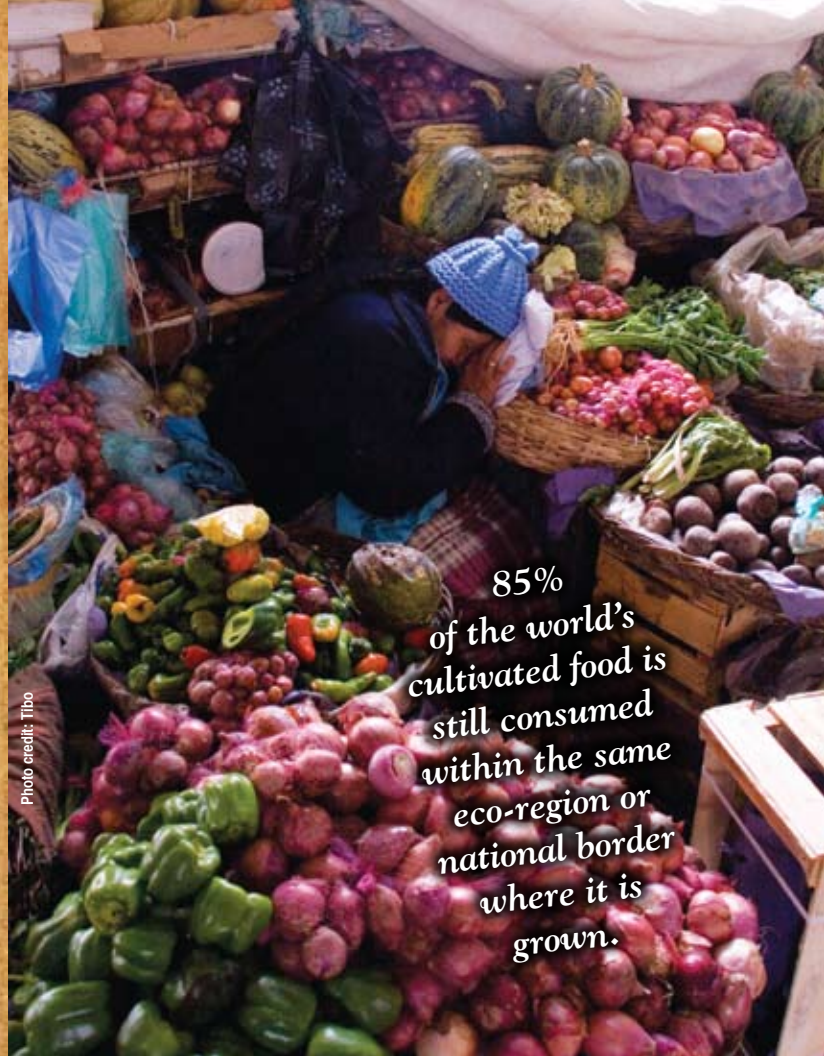


Photo credit: Tibo

85%
of the world's
cultivated food is
still consumed
within the same
eco-region or
national border
where it is
grown.



HERE TO FROM HERE?

ADVOCATE

Get in touch with your elected officials to support policy changes that benefit hungry people, promote sustainable agriculture, and also address food injustice around the world. Contact Canadian Foodgrains Bank and sign on to the Food Justice Network to learn more.

PRODUCE

Grow or raise some of your own food and get in touch with the farmers in your area. Foster dialogue on sustainable food systems and explore with others how local relationships based on food can be strengthened.

CONSUME CAREFULLY

When you shop, think about the challenges food producers face around the world and how land is used in order to provide for your needs. Make wise choices, knowing that your actions have an impact on the land.

PRAY

Pray for an end to injustice, for peace and a healthy distribution of the world's food and other resources. Encourage your faith group to reflect and pray about global food security issues regularly.

GIVE

Financially support Canadian Foodgrains Bank, its members, and other organizations that are feeding hungry people and giving support to small-scale farmers throughout the world.

REDUCE, REUSE, RECYCLE

Encourage participation in local programs such as composting that aim at sustainability. The first "R" is most important but often overlooked! We can all make some changes to reduce our carbon footprint and level of consumption.

SHARE AND LEARN

Keep informed about the issues and speak in a way that invites and explores solutions rather than finding fault. Canadian Foodgrains Bank has resources to help groups learn about and work at these concerns together.

START BY
DOING WHAT'S
NECESSARY; THEN DO
WHAT'S POSSIBLE;
AND SUDDENLY YOU
ARE DOING THE
IMPOSSIBLE.

—FRANCIS OF ASSISI



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END HUNGER

