

# BUC COFFEE & CHAT



Welcome friends. This edition of our newsletter will focus on World Food Sunday and some local & global initiatives that improve people's access to nutritious food. Pour yourself a cup of coffee and let's chat.

## A MESSAGE FROM THE EDITOR

Several years ago I went to Cuba with a contingent from United Churches across Canada. We stayed at the Christian Centre for Reflection and Dialogue, or CCRD, in Matanzas. We were greeted warmly by our hosts and shown to our rooms, which were simply furnished but comfortable, and we felt immediately welcome. Each day in the early morning hours I woke to the sounds of the neighborhood coming to life. A deep sing-song voice would call out "panaterra".

It was a man on a bicycle selling fresh bread. In the dining hall, we were met with the sights and sounds of fresh coffee, hot milk, and plates of cooked vegetables and beans. Meals were modest but tasty, and there was a sense of pride in the offering.

On our third day in Cuba, we were invited to accompany a CCRD staff member on his delivery route. Once a day, 365 days per year, this man would load up his specially-modified bicycle with containers of food, which he would deliver to those in the community who could not afford to purchase their own. This was Matanzas'

Meals-on-wheels program. As we delivered the food, we spent time sitting with people in their homes, listening to their stories, and we both witnessed and received care and concern.

Later in the week we travelled to a farm outside of Matanzas, which was owned by the CCRD. We learned that the food grown on the farm provided meals for all patients in the local hospital, as well as all of the meals delivered by meals on wheels.

I was struck by the labour of love this simple place was a part of. The CCRD using their limited resources to be the hands and feet of Christ, loving and serving their community. On World food day, I pray that we each have enough to eat and that the food we share leads to conversation and community building. May our hearts and our tables leave enough room for all God's children. Blessings to you all.

-Angela Wigglesworth



## ENOUGH

O God of Grace and Mercy, we are a nation of all-you-can-eat buffets and fast foods. We have forgotten what it is to eat what we need to be healthy, and to know when we have had enough. Remind us of the morning manna in the desert, of simply gathering what is needed each day, and gratefully trusting in your provision for the next. Disturb us at the thought of “haves” and “have-nots.” Help us to realize that a true feast is not defined by the quantity of food, but by the certainty that everyone—even our enemy—has a welcome place at the table. Amen

World Food Sunday is celebrated on the third Sunday in October. The week leading up to it is observed as the Churches' Week of Action on Food.

Do you know what it's like to put every ounce of ability and energy into something and have it flop miserably? Do you know what it's like to do your best and find that your best just isn't good enough? Do you know what it's like to wait for something good in your life to grow and then wait...and wait...and wait?

That day when Jesus was sitting in the boat in the middle of the sea, he was speaking to a worn-out crowd that felt just like that. His followers had been working hard—really hard—to share the good news, but the message wasn't sinking in. Here they were, going from town to town, sharing Jesus' life-saving message that justice is attainable, that there are key values like kindness and generosity that, if lived out collectively, could save the world. Yet despite their important message, everywhere they went, they brushed up against people who were too

preoccupied, too bored, too self-centred, or too stressed to listen. Each time a door slammed in their face, their discouragement ramped up. It wasn't supposed to be like this.

Even though Jesus was sitting in the middle of the sea, it's like he could see into the very hearts of those gathered that day. And in

that calm, reassuring voice of his, he told them stories to help them understand themselves and make sense of their life. One of them was the parable of the sower: Some seeds will fall on the path and the birds will eat them. Some will fall on rock and the sun will scorch them. Some will fall on thorns and be choked out. But some will fall on good soil and bear an unbelievable crop.

The Parable of the Sower was a pep talk of sorts. It wasn't the kind you would hear in a locker room, though. It wasn't about how great Jesus' followers were or how they would succeed at every turn. It was realistic: Some of the work you do is going to feel like a waste of time. Some of it will even be sabotaged. But keep going. Because there will be success. Trust me. Live your mission. This, friends, is a millennia-old message we still need to hear. Especially on World food Sunday.

690,000,000 people will go to bed hungry tonight. Think about that. 690,000,000 people aren't asking, “What will we eat for dinner?” No. 690,000,000 people are asking, “Will we eat dinner?” And they ask that question night after night.

Hunger is so pervasive you'd think that the whole earth was made of dust. That no

crops could grow anywhere. But we know there's nothing wrong with Mother Nature; the problem lies in the choices we make for her.

Poverty, land grabbing, climate change, the commodification of food and water, conflict and political instability.... The causes of hunger are so complex, so intertwined, so systemic, it's natural to wonder how you and I are really ever going to make a difference.

It's like we are standing on that shore right along with Jesus' disciples and there are problems as big as the sea itself in front of us.

And even Jesus is sitting there admitting that addressing hunger isn't easy. He doesn't sugarcoat the outcome of our work: some seeds just aren't going to land where we need them to or create the results we want. But, he says, some seeds will fall on good soil and the result will be phenomenal.

So live your mission.

Jesus got in the boat that day and rowed into the sea so he could look at the whole crowd at once, so his voice would carry across the water to each and every one of them, so they would take his parable to heart and hear him say: Live your mission. Friends, one of the ways we live our mission as a United Church is by sharing what we have through our collective Mission & Service.

As a United Church we endorse the principles of food sovereignty: the right of people to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods, and their right to define their own food and agriculture systems. We believe food is a sacred gift from God. Manna from heaven. No one should go hungry.

That's why from coast to coast in Canada, our generosity supports community kitchens and meal programs, food cupboards, shelters, job training programs, community gardens, and healthy food programs. Internationally, we send food in times of crisis, distribute seeds, fund agricultural training programs and micro-lending programs, and support projects that help small-scale farmers access equipment they need and, in some instances, build infrastructure so they can transport their food to market. We work with partners like ACT Alliance and the Canadian Foodgrains Bank to move beyond the charity model by helping to work toward long-term systemic change through respectful partnerships. It's true that we aren't going to solve all the problems in the world, but for some people our support means the world.

You might remember a story the United Church's Philanthropy Unit shared not long ago about a young Canadian named Jesse. When he was 12 years old, Jesse had a traumatic brain injury. His life instantly changed because his brain didn't function the way it once did. By the time he was 17, Jesse had been hospitalized 32 times. Through the ups and downs, his mother took care of him. She was his rock. And then, sadly, three years ago she died of cancer. Without his mother, Jesse's life spiraled out of control. Two years ago, he survived the painfully cold winter sleeping in a storage unit. Then he went to Stella's Circle, a Mission & Service partner, where he was fed, received help to find a home, and is now completing a greenhouse technician college program. Today, Jesse is leading a new social enterprise that grows food for sale.

This, friends, is what happens when seeds of generosity fall on good soil.

Another story, this one stretching from Canada to Japan and then on to Kenya: In Kenya, more than 850,000 children have been orphaned due to HIV/AIDS. Some estimates are even higher. Emmanuel Baya, a farmer living in Magarini, Kenya, lost his parents when he was a child. So when he saw children looking for food under the cashew trees on his property, he felt a tug on his heart strings. To make a long story short, he opened a children's centre and school for orphans. But he didn't want to just nourish their bodies and minds, he also wanted them to be able to one day sustain themselves. And he knew he needed more skills to help. So he flew to the Asian Rural Institute in Japan, ARI for short. ARI is an agricultural training institute that teaches organic farming techniques and leadership skills and it is supported through your Mission & Service gifts. When he graduated from the program there, Emmanuel returned home and started an organic demonstration farm next to his school. Today, not only are the 287 children in his care learning how to grow food, but the farm is also serving seven neighboring communities. Volunteers at the farm are also receiving agricultural training at ARI thanks to your support. 690,000,000 people may be going hungry tonight. But Jesse and Emmanuel and all the people in their communities that they

support and the thousands of people that Mission & Service partners help aren't among them.

That's because they are amazing people, and they are supported by amazing people like you.

This is what happens when we live our mission.

Living God's mission is like planting seeds—each seed contains the basic material needed to pull off a miracle. And like Jesus says, when they hit good dirt, miracles grow. Thank you for your mission and service.

Thank you for taking Jesus' stories into your heart and letting them transform your lives. Thank you for standing on the shoreline like disciples have for millennia listening to the Parable of the Sower.

Now, let's get to work planting seeds. Let's live our mission.

Amen.



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# Feed Our World

## World Hunger Facts

One in seven people in the world – nearly one billion – experience chronic hunger, while obesity causes 3.8 million deaths worldwide before the age of 60.2

Worldwide, more than one third of the food produced on this planet for human consumption - 1.3 billion tons - is wasted per year

All of the hungry people in the world could be lifted out of undernourishment on less than 25% of the food that is wasted in the United States and Europe alone.

Jesus asks Peter, "Do you love me?"  
Peter says, "You know that I love you."  
Jesus says, "Then feed my sheep."



Let these hunger facts sink in. Jesus talks about showing love by feeding those in the world - people, nature, birds, and animals. Make a birdfeeder by taking a pipe cleaner and bend it into any shape you want.

As you string Cheerios on your pipe cleaner, lift up a prayer for those hungry in the world.

Find a place to hang your birdfeeder at home, in the park, in your neighborhood. Be with the birds, therefore feeding the world.

If working 40 hours a week is considered full-time work, then Grace Awachangoen carries two full-time jobs. "I began from 5 a.m. working all day collecting water, washing dishes, cooking," says the 30-year old Ugandan farmer. In Grace's community in northern Uganda, many households depend on farming to make a living. And farm labour and housekeeping tasks are seen as a woman's job. "I would get water in a jerry can and follow my husband into the garden to start harvesting cassava. My husband wouldn't help me, he'd just look at me," says Grace. When Foodgrains Bank member World Renew began working in Grace's community with a local partner organization, they identified three major causes of hunger: unhealthy soil, lack of access to seeds, tools and other agricultural inputs, and little cooperation between men and women on the farm. Through World Renew, Grace participated in a training where she learned new farming techniques and about the benefits of sharing workloads among husbands and wives. She went home and shared what she had learned with her husband, who replied and said, "I cannot look foolish doing women's work." But after seeing changes in the homes of their neighbours, Grace's husband began to see what could happen if they worked together. He said: "I think I have to begin helping. I see you are tired and fed up with the work." After that, Grace would go to pick the green vegetables and realize that he's already picked them. She'll go to cook a meal for their children,

How can women farmers prosper in the face of the many barriers to equality? Of the approximately 821 million people today who don't have regular access to enough nutritious food to live healthy and active lives, most of them depend on farming.

79% of women in least developed countries earn their livelihood from agriculture yet have less access than men to the necessary resources (such as credit, tools or training) that would allow them to farm to their fullest potential.

Not surprisingly women in most countries are more likely than men to face food insecurity. In addition to the heavy workload required to plant and grow crops by hand on their small farms, women around the world shoulder the majority of household responsibilities. Women walk long distances to collect water or gather firewood for cooking and caring for children.

These are all important, yet time consuming activities that threaten a farmer's ability to cope with declining access to water, soil erosion, and the increasing unpredictability of the weather.

In many places women lack secure access to land they can call their own, and existing cultural practices dictate imbalanced gender roles. These ideas shape who does what on the farm, often leaving women to do most, if not all of the labour. This divide is worsened by the greater freedom of mobility that most men enjoy compared to women, and their ability to migrate out of rural areas in search of paid work.

A first step is to make sure all farmers can produce enough food to feed their families, have enough left over to save seeds, and sell the rest and pay for other necessities. Once the basics are covered, there is room to look at balancing the scales when it comes to decision-making power, time and leadership in the household.

Due in part to their central role in childcare and meal preparation, women invest in what matters most, when they have the freedom to do so. They select diverse, nutritious foods to grow and feed to their families, pay to send their children to school, and receive medical care, or improve the infrastructure of the family home.

For the work of ending hunger to be truly effective greater investments in agriculture are required, using sustainable development practices that incorporate the knowledge, talents and participation of everyone.

When women and men work together on their farms, share household work, and make decisions together, women farmers will prosper, and their families will flourish. Lasting change is best achieved by creating equal space for everyone at the table – for women and men alike to have their voices heard and be active in building a food secure future for their household, family and broader community.

**LEARN:** If women had the same access to productive resources as men: They could increase yields on their farms by 20-30% and reduce the number of hungry people in the world by 12-17% Woman farmers receive only 5% of all agricultural training services from 97 countries

**ADVOCATE:** What Can You Do? Use your voice! As Christians, we are called to love our neighbours, and to speak out on their behalf. Canadians will go to the polls in October. There are many important issues at stake in this federal election, and as people of faith we can inform ourselves about which candidates best reflect our values and priorities for our ourselves and our neighbours, both at home and abroad.

and he's already peeled the cassava for her. He also carries water now, a task that is largely seen as something women do. "Without this training, I wouldn't see any true change in my house. Now I miss him, I think about him when I'm not with him," she says. "Now we love each other." By working together, Grace and her husband have increased the productivity on their farm thus increasing the amount of food they have for their two children.

Their family went beyond basic survival to purchase household items and grow their farm. They used to sit on papyrus mats, now they have chairs. They never had animals, but now they have goats. Grace's family is just one of 420 that are benefitting from the Foodgrains Bank-supported project. The annual average food available to farm families in their community increased from six months at the start of the project to nine months at the end of four years. That is a 50% increase! With additional income of selling surplus crops and participating in communal savings and loans groups, families filled the three-month hunger gap.

This is just one example of the many ways Canadian churches are working together to end global hunger through the Foodgrains Bank.

**BibleWise**

## Jesus Feeds the Five Thousand

**Matthew 14:13-21**

Jesus fed over five thousand people with five loaves of bread and two fish. Some words from this story are hidden in the basket. Try to find all the words listed below.

JESUS	TWELVE	PRAY
SHIP	BASKETS	EAT
SICK	FIVE	FULL
CITIES	LOAVES	MEN
DESERT	LOAVES	WOMEN
LOAVES	FISH	CHILDREN
LOAVES	FISH	GIVE
	DISCIPLES	FOOD
	GRASS	
	SIT	

P	R	A	Y	C	S	H	I	P	M
D	A	N	T	H	S	U	S	E	J
S	E	I	T	I	C	T	E	S	H
M	S	S	F	L	O	A	V	E	S
E	E	T	E	D	T	K	W	L	G
M	V	I	W	R	S	A	C	P	R
B	A	S	K	E	T	S	G	I	A
R	O	K	V	N	L	E	I	C	S
L	L	A	U	K	L	V	V	S	S
W	O	M	E	N	U	A	E	I	E
L	J	H	S	I	F	O	O	D	F
H	S	E	V	A	O	L	H	N	B

Nell de Vries and Mary Currier. More Bible Activities You Can Do. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books Publisher, 1999.

## The Story of Stone Soup

Once upon a time, there was a great famine (which means there wasn't enough food to go around). The people in one small village didn't have enough to eat, and definitely not enough to store away for the winter. People were afraid their families would go hungry, so they hid the small amounts of food they did have. They even hid their food from their friends and neighbors.

One day a wandering soldier came into the village. He asked the different people he met about finding a place to eat and sleep for the night. "There's not a bite to eat in the whole county," they told him. "You better keep moving on." "Oh, I have everything I need," he said. "In fact, I would like to make some stone soup to share with all of you."

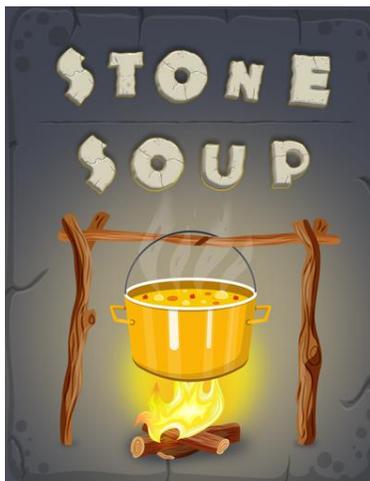
He pulled a big black cooking pot from his wagon. He filled it with water and built a fire under it. Then, he reached slowly into his knapsack and, while several villagers watched, he pulled a plain gray stone from a cloth bag and dropped it into the water.

By now, hearing about the magic stone, most of the villagers were surrounding the soldier and his cooking pot. As the soldier sniffed the stone soup and licked his lips, the villagers began to overcome their lack of trust. "Ahh," the soldier said aloud to himself, "I do like a tasty stone soup. Of course, stone soup with cabbage is even better."

Soon a villager ran from his house into the village square, holding a cabbage. "I have this cabbage from my garden," he said as he held it out for the soldier. "Fantastic!" cried the soldier. The soldier cut up the cabbage and added it to the pot. "You know, I once had stone soup with cabbage and a bit of beef, and it was delicious." The butcher said he thought he could find some beef scraps.

As he ran back to his shop, other villagers offered bits of vegetables from their own gardens--potatoes, onions, carrots, celery. Soon the big black pot was bubbling and steaming.

When the soup was ready, everyone in the village ate a bowl of soup, and it was delicious. The villagers offered the soldier money and other treasures for the magic stone, but he refused to sell it. He had many offers for a cot to sleep on that night. The next day he traveled on his way. (Adapted from the classic folktale from the Aarne-Thompson folktale system)



## BUC COMMUNITY NEWS

*"Rejoice with those who rejoice. Weep with those who weep."*

Thank you to everyone for your continued prayers and financial donations.

After careful consideration and prayer, Rev. Rita has announced that she will be retiring at the end of November. Please join me in praying for Rev. Rita as she embarks on the next part of her journey.

Due to the recent spike in covid-19 cases in Alberta, the re-opening committee has recommended that the re-opening of Balzac United Church be postponed until further notice.

If you have news you'd like to share in the next newsletter or would like to share a word of encouragement with everyone, please email the details to Angela at [balzacunitedchurch@gmail.com](mailto:balzacunitedchurch@gmail.com) or call her at 587-229-3878.

Donna Watt sends cards to our BUC church family. If you know someone who is ill, celebrating a birthday, grieving, or just needs a thank you or a bit of encouragement, please email Donna at [donnawatt34@gmail.com](mailto:donnawatt34@gmail.com)

### Upcoming Events & Special Days

**October 3:** 19th after Pentecost; Creation Time 4; World Communion Sunday

**October 10:** 20th after Pentecost; Creation Time 5; Thanksgiving Sunday; Stewardship Sunday

**October 11:** Thanksgiving Day

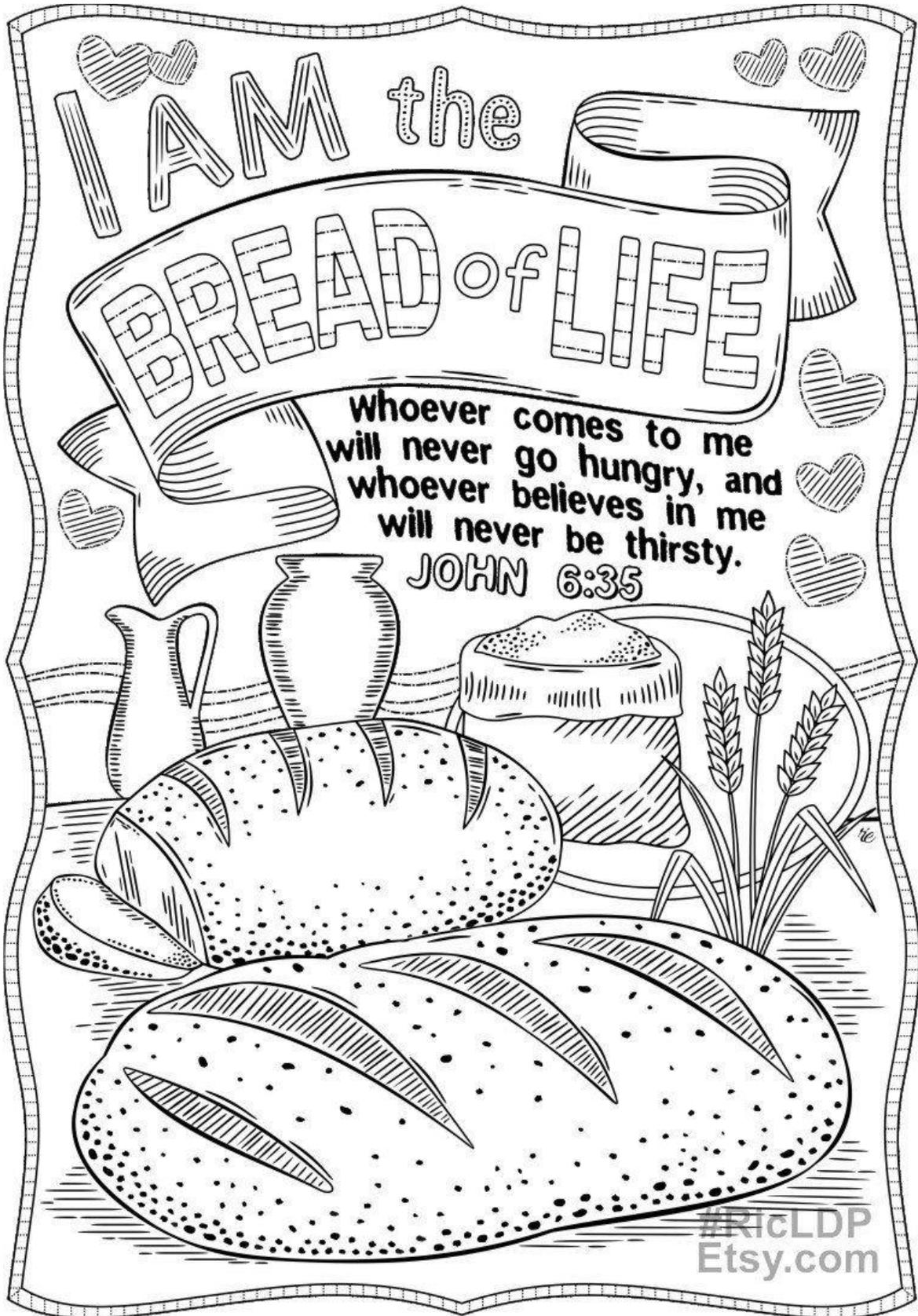
**Saturday, October 16:** BUC Youth Group Event at Nose Creek Park in Airdrie 7-10 pm.

**October 17:** 21st after Pentecost; World Food Sunday; International Day for the Eradication of Poverty; Guaranteed Livable Income Sunday

**October 24:** 22nd after Pentecost; Peace Sunday

**October 31:** 23rd after Pentecost; Reformation Sunday; Happy Halloween!





I AM the

BREAD of LIFE

Whoever comes to me  
will never go hungry, and  
whoever believes in me  
will never be thirsty.  
JOHN 6:35

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Etsy.com