

Prayer and Fasting in the Halls of Congress: A Pastoral Approach to Lobbying

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Describes a pastoral model for congressional lobbying and how this became the vehicle for a ministry of prayer and fasting supporting debt forgiveness for the world's 40 most impoverished nations. Raises questions for the reader concerning the need to take risks in doing effective ministry.

This story begins 13 years ago on the railroad tracks outside of Concord Naval Weapons Station in California. Episodes have appeared in the pages of *The Journal of Pastoral Care* across the years,¹ with this but the latest one. It is the story of how the pastoral and prophetic dimensions of ministry can come together to produce an interesting and often unexpected result.

Since my retirement seven years ago, I have become more deeply involved in hunger issues. I now live in the second poorest county in the State of Washington, and spend a good deal of my time as a handyman for our bi-county food and shelter program. I am also currently president of our local FEMA board that distributes block grant monies to free food agencies. Thanks to the work and resources of these and other programs, we have to our knowledge no chronic starvation in our county. Hunger and food shortages at times, but no starvation.

About a year ago, I began hearing of a world-wide movement called Jubilee 2000. The idea comes from a number of Old Testament passages (*Deuteronomy* 14:28-29, 15:1-2) that harken back to a time when enslavement to debt threatened the unity, dignity and livelihood of the Hebrew people. The name "Jubilee," however, comes from *Leviticus* 25:8-10 which proclaims every 50th year to be a Jubilee Year when all slaves are freed, all land returned to its original owner, and all debts forgiven. Under the leadership of Pope John Paul and Bishop Desmond Tutu, the year 2000 was proclaimed to be such a Jubilee Year. Waiting to be forgiven their crushing national debts are 40 of the world's most impoverished nations. As with family units inside Israel thousands of years before, these debts had often been incurred unwisely and soon became unpayable. Today these 40 nations alone owe international money lenders over 200 billion dollars and are bleeding themselves dry trying to make even part of their debt service payments.

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The Jubilee 2000 idea is to forgive these debts either entirely or substantially, and to allow all 40 countries to begin using what they would have paid out in debt service for rebuilding their social infrastructures. The most pressing of these goals is to halt altogether the starvation death count—estimated to be between 35,000 and 50,000 persons a day world-wide.

My own involvement in all this grew out of my interest in and support of an ecumenical national membership religious group called Bread for the World based in the Washington, D.C. area. In 1998, my wife Sally and I had attended Bread's mid-June national gathering in D.C. and participated with some 200 other members from across the nation in their Lobby Day. Each year Bread for the World selects one piece of legislation to focus upon. That year it was the Africa Seeds of Hope Act, which provided millions of dollars of micro-credit to self-sustaining women's agricultural cooperatives in Sub-Saharan Africa. On Lobby Day, we roamed the halls of Congress visiting our senators and representatives (usually their legislative assistants). It reminded me of a summer 45 years ago when I had worked with a church lobby group, the Friends Committee on National Legislation (FCNL), on a single piece of legislation passing through Congress.

In June of 1999 during Bread's Lobby Day, I found that I still enjoyed walking the corridors of the House and Senate office buildings. So I made a commitment to Bread's President, David Beckmann, that I would work more intensively with the 1999 legislative focus, which turned out to be "The Debt Relief for Poverty Reduction Act of 1999 (HR 1095). David had previously introduced me to Representative Tony Hall (D-3-OH). Tony had chaired the House Select Committee on Hunger until New Gingrich abolished it in 1994. Hunger issues have been Tony's consuming passion, and his response to the dissolution of his committee was to go on a 22-day water only fast.

A Pastoral Model for Lobbying

On Lobby Day in June 1999, David, Tony, and I met again and formulated my role. Instead of sitting on the Capitol steps all day, holding a sign, and handing out literature (as had been the model of many Washington fasts I had heard about), they proposed that I conduct a "ministry of prayer and fasting" within the halls of Congress in support of H.R. 1095, the Bread for the World sponsored bill already in the House Banking Committee. My ministry would be to visit some 40 House and Senate offices key to the passage of the bill, talking specifically to the office staff (and to the office holder whenever possible) about how their own religious faith related to the objectives of the bill.

For the first three weeks or so of this ministry, I said nothing about the fast unless someone asked. I found this form of visitation very much like hospital chaplaincy rounds, going from room to room, meeting and talking with "family," and taking meticulous notes of who I had seen and talked with on each visit. Each week or ten days I would return to talk again. Some began to notice the slow changes that were taking place in my body even then. Our conversations were mostly about their own church backgrounds and faith commitments. After all, I was a pastor, wore a visible wooden cross, and would occasionally pray with them.

During the fourth week, I began collecting denominational statements from each of the major faith bodies on debt forgiveness, mostly pro-

nouncements from annual meetings and denominational leaders. I would make these statements up into folders and distribute them on a subsequent visit, simply making the point that the office holder had a religious obligation to at least consider the position of his or her own denomination on debt forgiveness. Many had no idea how their denomination stood on this issue prior to my intervention.

For the first month of my fast I lived with an 81-year-old lady ten blocks from the Capitol. She took only peace and justice workers (and for very little rent). She opened her home to me, and in a short time we became good friends. We would often spend the evenings together in her living room talking politics and family. She was a tremendous support for me. My other source of support through the entire 45 day fast was the office staff of Jubilee 2000/USA, located only two blocks east of the Capitol. Both their director, Carole Collins, and the associate director, David Bryden, graciously put the entire office at my disposal. I had free use of the copier, the telephones, the fax machine, and the computers. They provided a couch for me to rest on and set up media interviews for me. The progress of my fast was featured in all their major publications and on their web site. Through my own page on the web site I was soon receiving E-mail from all over the world. By the beginning of the fourth week, my "story" was beginning to be picked up by many of the major wire services.

I was anxious, however, that this publicity not undercut the interpersonal bonds I was building with office staff. So at the start, I requested a three week moratorium on local publicity and got it willingly from the Jubilee 2000/USA board as well as from Bread for the World. When my fast moved finally into physical starvation, and my growing weakness and gauntness could no longer be hidden, I would talk freely about it to office staff when asked.

It might help the reader to know that I had done two previous 40 day water only fasts. The first was in 1987 after Brian Willson, Duncan Murphy, and I were deliberately run down by a munitions train headed for the loading docks at Concord Naval Weapons Station loaded with bombs and bullets meant to kill Nicaraguan and Salvadorian civilians. Duncan and I jumped before we were run over, but Brian lost both his legs and nearly his life. I remember being so angry that I never experienced serious hunger during the fast. The second 40 day water only fast I did in jail, where my nearly 100 arrests for blocking munitions trucks and trains had earned me a 7 week sentence. That was in 1991. I had come out of both of these fasts weak but basically healthy and had made a good recovery within a month.

My Washington, D.C. fast in the fall of 1999 differed from these in two respects: I was active and on my feet six to eight hours a day, and it was to an "open-ended" fast. This meant that even I had no idea when the fast would end. My only tangible indicator would be my physical strength. When I no longer had the strength to enter a congressional office and establish good interpersonal contact, my ministry would be at an end, and so would my fast. So I might carry on this ministry as long as possible, and planned first to use a cane, then a walker and finally a wheelchair. During the first five weeks of the fast, I walked four to six miles a day up and down the corridors, between office buildings, and to and from work.

My hunch regarding my strength proved largely correct. In fact I seemed to gain stamina as the day wore on. Just about every other physical parameter of my previous fasts seemed to hold for this one too. My weight loss was approximately 35 pounds (down from 161 on a 6' 2" frame), my

pulse rate kept constant at an even 66, my body temperature dropped into the 94-96 degree range, my blood pressure gradually descended to 85/60, and my nightly sleep went from 8 hours to 3-4 hours. Metabolic slowdown accounted for most of these changes—my body had gone into semi-hibernation to conserve energy.

The Part Played by Prayer

So far I have focused almost exclusively on the effects of fasting. But this was a "ministry of prayer and fasting," and certainly in my own mind, the former was every bit as important as the latter to the mission of the ministry. I found that prayer sustained fasting and that fasting enhanced prayer. One way fasting enabled prayer was to provide two to three hours of quiet time after 2:00 a.m. or 3:00 a.m. (when I awoke) for focused prayer. I brought from home my large wooden crucifix and fastened it to the wall in front of the chair where I would sit to pray. The first part of my prayer time each morning would simply be to gaze at Jesus on the Cross. Over the weeks I found myself being drawn closer to him. At first this was a rather silent affair, but more and more I found myself talking to him, asking him for guidance and discernment, and, above all, for strength to get through the day. This strength I tangibly experienced as I walked the corridors keeping his image before me. My good physical condition may have contributed to my continuing stamina, but I remain inwardly convinced that it was this intimate contact which carried me through the day. I rarely had need of the couch at the Jubilee2000/USA office.

The second part of my morning prayer was more formally structured. For Bible readings I used a lectionary. Then came prayers of thanksgiving and intercession for my family and friends, and finally prayers for "all sorts and conditions of people"—those in jail, on the street or in refugee camps, persons suffering with terminal illnesses, and finally those who were dying that day, especially from starvation. As I shall discuss later on, it was this latter group that became the focal point of my whole ministry.

I concluded my petitionary prayer each morning by remembering and praying for everyone I was visiting. This I do as well when I am on duty at the hospital. I did this in D.C. by keeping detailed visitation records in a large loose leaf notebook, transcribed each evening from two small note pads that I carry in my jacket pockets for ready reference during the day. As I opened the large notebook during prayer time, I had the names (and the images) of every person I had encountered in the some 40 offices on my rounds. Basically, I asked for God's blessing on their work, and God's guidance as they made decisions about debt forgiveness.

Had not my fast given me these extra hours each morning, I might not have found the time for this one activity which gave strength and purpose to my ministry. Whether the metabolic changes that occur during an extended fast enhance prayer in other ways (such as the production of endorphines or other neurotransmitters) I have no idea. My only sense is that prayer and fasting seem to complement one another, the experience also of monastic communities down through the ages.

Why Take Such Risks?

Before I describe the last two weeks of my congressional ministry, I want to address the question of why I undertook so risky a ministry in the first

place. At my summer meeting with Representative Tony Hall, he turned to me and asked whether I was sure God intended for me to risk my life in this way. I was able to tell him that I was at least reasonably sure, and had arrived at this point in my life with a prayerful sense that I had been given some unique gifts for the task. Among those gifts were the experience with long fasts, excellent health, and exceptional physical strength for my 71 years. I also brought to this ministry thirty years of experience as a pastoral counselor, hospital chaplain, Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) supervisor and university teacher. And finally, through my fortunate colleagueship with Henri Nouwen at Yale, I had become familiar with many forms of prayer and meditation, both as a spiritual director and as an occasional retreatant at monasteries and retreat houses. I was presently interested, I told him, in using these gifts in a unique way to affect the outcome of the bill.

My resolve focused on this outcome. Representative Spencer Bachus, chair of the Monetary Policy Subcommittee of the House Banking Committee, had told me that (according to the best population estimates his committee staff come up with), HR 1095, by itself, if fully funded and implemented, would save "tens of thousands covered from death by starvation each day" in just the 40 impoverished countries covered by the bill. This estimate so affected me that I could think of little else. It became the overriding goal of my ministry. To save the life of just one person a day from starvation would have been enough incentive at this point, but "tens of thousands" shocked me to the core. It became the reason why I continued on when it became so difficult and why I was willing to take increased risks toward the end of the fast.

As I put it at the press conference on the 45th day of the my ministry of prayer and fasting:

As you can imagine, I am continually being asked the question, "Why are you fasting?" There are two reasons I am fasting. The first is quite personal and based on my religious faith. As I have grown older, it has become increasingly apparent to me that we have fundamentally undermined God's will for Creation. God has given us a world of great abundance to share with one another, and we have not shared. Instead there is hunger and starvation among many of God's people, so I must share in that. I have lost the desire to eat when others cannot eat, and the will to benefit from their poverty.

In recent days it has become clear to me in prayer that I can no longer stand apart from my starving brothers and sisters in any way, but must be among them, facing the same threat of starvation. For in my own eyes, as I know it is in the eyes of God, I am not of greater value than they, nor is my life worth more than theirs. This much I know.

I also know that Congress has the power to save thousands of lives a day from starvation and starvation related diseases with the legislation now before it.

The second reason I am fasting is rather public. It is to put a living face on starvation. Most of us never meet a truly starving person—hungry perhaps—but not starving. For the past three weeks I have been in the state of starvation, not too unlike millions of my brothers and sisters around the world. I have done this for one reason only, and that is to allow the members of Congress and their staffs to meet a starving human being—to gaze at a wasted frame and sunken cheeks, to shake a cold and bony hand, and to hear their name spoken by a starving person.

I am, in my starvation, representing millions of faceless, voiceless and powerless people, thousands of whom are dying each day in the countries covered by this bill. I am no statistic hobbling into their offices. I cannot be dismissed and forgotten as a meaningless number. I am a person, and will remain a person, to whomsoever tries to put me out of their mind or memory.

As one reporter observed, "Duncombe says he doesn't want to die, but he recognizes an irony in his particular form of protest—the more damage he does to himself, the more effective he is." The reporter then goes on to quote me, "The more I represent the actual starvation of millions of people through my body, letting my body talk for me, the more chance the Spirit of the Lord has to act within these people to to inform their consciences and to give them another perspective."

The Final Days

The last days of my ministry to Congress were not easy. Walking became a real effort at times, even with a four-legged walker. Yet two unexpected events encouraged me. One morning about ten I received a page from Representative Tom DeLay's office. Could he see me in an hour? I had visited his office many times trying to get an appointment to see him without luck. Tom is the Majority Whip of the House, and with Representative Dick Armye, the Majority Leader and Representative Dennis Hastert, the Speaker, determine the fate of all bills which successfully make it out of committee and seek an early date for debate and vote on the floor of the House. Hundreds of bills each year, with full committee endorsement, never see the light of day again at their hands. We feared that this might be the fate of H.R. 1095 as well.

With some curiosity I made my way past armed guards stationed in the inner sanctum of his Capitol office suite. As I hobbled in, Tom rose to greet me and for the first few minutes we talked about my fast and the reason why I was risking my life in starvation. Then he said: "You know, my pastor just came off a 40-day fast himself. I don't know how you do it. I really admire you guys." From here on in it seemed easier. I asked him if he was familiar with H.R. 1095 and he said he wasn't, so I summarized it for him the best I could. He listened quietly and then said: "I will read the bill today, but if that is a fair description of its contents, then I see no reason to delay floor debate on it." I left literally floating on air!

The second event occurred the following day. I had met my own Senator Patty Murray the first week of my ministry to Congress at her informal 8:30 a.m. coffee hour held each Wednesday morning. From there our relationship grew over the weeks to one of trust and mutual respect. As she later told Seattle reporter Michael Paulson:

My first thought was to dismiss him as someone with a crazy cause. I didn't know too much about it. But he kept coming back and I started listening to him. There was something in him that struck me. It struck me that someone would give up so much of themselves to make a U.S. Senator aware that other people were suffering. I was very struck that he said that he had come to Washington to meet senators and representatives and I was the only one he'd been able to see.¹

It was during the last days of my ministry in Congress that Senator Murray arranged a three way meeting between herself, Senator Joseph Biden (D-DE), Ranking Member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, and myself. Days earlier, the companion bill to HR 1095 (S.1690) had been introduced in the Senate by Senator Connie Mack (R-FL) and immediately

¹Michael Paulson, "Becoming One of the Starving Millions, Pastor Wasting Away," *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* (October, 15, 1993).

sent to the Foreign Relations Committee. The chairperson of that committee is Senator Jessie Helms (R-NC), known for his dislike of foreign aid bills and his propensity to bottle up any bill not suiting his personal philosophy.

I had visited Senator Helms' office many times, and on a few occasions had talked with Josh Miller, the legislative aide for foreign affairs. Josh was a pleasant young man who listened well. However, I suspected from the start that my concern for starving people never got to the ears of the Senator. What interested me about the Senator's office was the sheer number of framed photos on the wall, all of himself. One day I began to examine them more closely and discovered that a sizeable number of these photos included The Reverend Billy Graham. There was even a plaque commemorating the Senator's financial support of the Ruth and Billy Graham Children's Home. On September 23rd, Billy Graham had issued a statement strongly endorsing Jubilee 2000 and debt forgiveness for impoverished nations.

Our three way meeting was called to discuss ways that Senator Helms might be willing to favorably discharge S. 1690 so it could be debated and voted upon on the Senate floor. Senator Biden first outlined his latest strategy as Ranking Member of the committee. He proposed that we not ask for open hearings, as Senator Helms often used these hearings to grandstand proposed that we let the bill lie unacted upon until early next year when the President was expected to request a supplementary appropriations measure of close to a billion dollars. The bulk of this money was to go toward our June 1999 commitment to the G-7 foreign ministers in Cologne—to pay our share of that G-7 commitment to buy back 90 billion dollars of third world debt in order that the 40 most impoverished countries might enjoy some measure of debt relief. 670 million of this amount would be earmarked to pay for H.R. 1095/S.1690. Senator Biden proposed that at that time, he quietly prevail on Senator Helms to release the bill undebated and attach it as one of the many riders to the supplementary appropriations measure.

I then called attention to the recent Billy Graham debt forgiveness statement and Helms' obvious respect for Graham, suggesting that Graham be flown to Washington to meet privately with both Senators Helms and Lott (both Southern Baptist, as is Graham). I had also discovered that Eunice Shriner, now living in the DC area was a good friend of Billy Graham and had been a key player in interesting him to make his Jubilee 2000 debt forgiveness statement. Senator Biden said that he was a personal friend of hers and would call her.

Whether the Billy Graham visit would take place or not, I had the feeling on leaving that meeting that my ministry might play a part in securing Jessie Helms' quiet acceptance of the bill in the future.

The End of my Ministry

My decision to end the fast at 45 days was made easier by a number of things coming together at once. The first was these recent meetings in which I could begin to see positive indications of the bill's eventual approval (which happened to be my original condition for ending the fast). The second factor was Representative Bachus' pledge to continue the fast in Congress. The week before he had sent a "Dear Colleague" letter to every member of the House of Representatives, describing both my fast

and a nation-wide Jubilee 2000 "Rolling Fast" then underway and inviting his colleagues to join in. He and the other congressmen volunteers would do a relay fast, each fasting one day a week until January first. The third factor was a press conference organized by Jubilee 2000/USA, Spencer Bachus and Tony Hall. I was to be the lead-off speaker followed by five congresspersons and a number of Jubilee 2000/USA speakers. This was scheduled for October 21st, the 45th day of my fast. Yet the clincher was the sheer physical exhaustion I experienced the morning of the 21st as I struggled to walk the short distance from my new quarters, only three blocks from the Capitol. I had thought that I might continue for at least 50 days, but I realized then that I might not even get through that day without collapsing. It was as though God was telling me that my ministry had finally come to an end.

My eldest daughter Betsy and her family had driven down from Maine to attend the press conference and to see me. The purpose of the press conference was to showcase our debt forgiveness bill to the national media. Each congressperson who spoke also lifted up my willingness to risk death so that the plight of world starvation might have a human face. As my own congressman Brian Baird put it: "By the example of his own denial of the most basic element of survival, he is reminding us that there are so many people who every day have no choice."⁴

Yet I will remember most vividly what Senator Biden said toward the end of our conference the day before. Reaching across the table, he grasped my hand and said: "Reverend Duncombe you have been an inspiration to many of us, and I hope for the whole Congress. You have shown us how any country of us can rise above personal interest and partisan politics and lead this country by putting ourselves at risk for the good of all"

Reflection

As I have talked with congresspersons and church lobbyists the past few months, none can remember a model of congressional lobbying structured around pastoral visitation—with or without prayer and fasting. Church lobbyists in D.C. are trained as experts in legislative process. Some have served as congressional aides with various congresspersons. They function as advocates of legislation which reflects or supports denominational concerns. Although some are seminary trained or supports denominational concerns of anyone experimenting with a pastoral approach to lobbying.

For me, the parallel between hospital visitation and lobbying was compelling. As alluded to above, the long halls of congressional office buildings next along these halls is much like going from room to room on chaplaincy rounds. First you meet the "family" (the office staff), taking care to know each by name. Not only do they have issues of their own worthy of your attention and prayer, but their lives and opinions influence the office holder ("the patient"), who you may or not see until later. If at all. When you leave the room, careful notes are taken so the next visit may be a productive follow-up. The trust engendered by the pastoral process then becomes the foundation for whatever advice (or legislative recommendations) is later given.

⁴Michael Paulson, "Hunger Strike for Debt Forgiveness Ends," *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, (October 22, 1999).

My decision to use the pastoral model linked to prayer and fasting came from its previous use in jail. As readers of this journal may remember, my jail fasting first elicited curiosity, then reflection on personal values, and finally great compassion among many of the inmates. The most dramatic display of these qualities seemed to come from the longer term prisoners and lifers.⁵ If this can happen in prison, I wondered, might it not even happen in Congress?

In the same way that any extended period of pastoral visitation in a hospital setting is difficult to evaluate as a whole, it would be less than realistic to attempt an evaluation of my entire "ministry of prayer and fasting" over the full 45 days. I can bring to mind various memorable "teaching moments" where there seemed to be a real breakthrough. I would also have to admit that there were many persons and even whole offices that seemed to regard my efforts with outward indifference. Perhaps only time will reveal what actually occurred in the minds and hearts of those I visited.

I come away from this fasting experience, as I had with previous fasts, with a sense of respect approaching wonderment about the human body. How a human body can function so normally without food for a month and a half still astounds me. I have been a student of the human body all my adult life, and have had the privilege of teaching human anatomy and physiology at the graduate level. But I can't begin to understand how such a thing is possible.

The one thing I did learn this time around, however, is that whatever effectiveness I had as a pastor was proportional to the personal risk I embodied as a faster. Because the one goal of this ministry was to help save thousands of lives each day from starvation, to risk death by starvation myself was a morally acceptable means to this end. I have no doubt that without pushing myself to the physical limits of starvation, little would have been accomplished by my ministry. If Senator Biden's comment to me can be generalized to include the ministry as well as politics, then might not also the willingness to take sizable risks for the good of others be a missing element in ministry? I leave the reader to ponder this question. Any thoughts or comments about this article will be gratefully received and responded to.

Afterword

There have been a number of important developments since this article was submitted in November of 1999. At this writing (8/1/2000), both debt relief bills (H.R. 1095 and S. 1690) are technically alive but in fragments, some of which are attached to broader appropriations bills. However, only \$123 million of the needed \$370 million was funded by the end of the last session of Congress. This session began with an ever bleaker outlook. By this past July, only \$75 million had been appropriated by the Senate and \$68 million by the House Appropriations Committee.

The only bright spot was a late March \$600 million authorization bill (S. 2382) passed by the Helm's led Foreign Relations Committee. But this was immediately tied up by Senator Phil Gramm, chair of the Banking Committee, in a jurisdictional dispute.

Then things began to turn around. In what has been called the

"Wednesday Night Miracle," the House Appropriations Committee's \$68 million vote was unexpectedly overturned by a bipartisan coalition in what resembled more a revival meeting than a sleepy late night legislative session. Speaker after speaker arose to talk about the need for human compassion, human justice and "doing what is right before God." When the vote was taken, the House had more than tripled the \$68 million—and with money that had been earmarked for foreign military aid! Twenty-six Republicans crossed over to provide a 216-212 margin of victory. As one veteran congressional observer commented: "Wednesday night broke the back of the Republican opposition to debt relief."

The differences between the House and Senate figures were to be worked out in conference committee in early September. The President promised to veto any amount falling significantly short of the \$475 million he is asking, no minor threat in an election year.

Meanwhile on the Senate side, there was a quiet movement in progress to win back control of the Helms-Biden \$600 million authorization bill (S. 2382) from Senator Gramm. Senator Connie Mack, original sponsor of last session's debt relief bill (S. 1690), is brokering an agreement between the Treasury Department and four other Republican Senators to attach to a late September omnibus spending bill the balance of what by then has not been appropriated.

And just today I talked with a friend in Washington who was personally assured by a member of the House leadership, and in the presence of other Republican congressmen, that the Republican leaders of both houses will agree in the final days of the session to a funding figure that the President won't need to veto. The figure was not specified, but the context suggests it will be at least in the high \$300 million range.

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What influence I may have had on this process remains speculative at best. One Republican congressman told me late last year that my fast had "shaken up" the House leadership. On the Senate side, I received an unsolicited letter from Jessie Helms thanking me for my Christian example in Congress—this, two months before he led his Foreign Relations Committee to a unanimous \$600 million authorization for debt relief. Then in late July this past year, his Chief of Staff called me at home to say that the Senator was "very aware of my fasting witness in Congress" and that I shared with him his "deep concern for the starving children of Africa." He asked my home address and telephone number "so that the Senator can keep in touch with you in the future about the progress of the bill."

Some of these later developments took place during a second Washington visit. I returned to Capitol Hill again to continue my ministry of prayer and fasting on June 11th, this time focusing on those in leadership positions in the appropriations process. This fast lasted 50 days. But that's another story for perhaps another article!

Postscript: October 25, 2000. Today both houses of Congress passed, and the President signed, funding for debt forgiveness totalling \$435 million, the full amount that we were requesting. Representative John Kasich (R-OH) called the vote "an historic act of grace" and Representative John LaFalace (D-NY) claimed it to be "the most important foreign policy initiative for the new millennium." ♣

⁵David Duncombe, "From Yale to Jail: A Journey in Ministry," *op. cit.*