

**Those Who Are Bowed Down
Justice for the Oppressed**

**Third Sunday in Advent, Year A
Overview**

Focus Text: Psalm 146:5-10

Happy are those whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in the LORD their God, who made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them; who keeps faith forever; who executes justice for the oppressed; who gives food to the hungry.

Pastoral Reflection by Rev. Laura Spangler, Loyd Presbyterian Church, Winston-Salem

For 10 years I have served a very poor church. The church's total income is way below the poverty level, especially for a family of 45. Many of the folks who worship with and have leadership at the church are homeless or unemployed. Many have black or brown skin. Monthly fellowship meals are really a feeding of the hungry as the majority of guests at every meal are without work. The church pays utilities for a day shelter for the homeless in its small basement. With only weekly offerings for income, somehow the church has no debt and a little surplus. It must be that God cares about the poor and still makes a way out of no way.

Key Fact

Over 1.3 million North Carolinians live in poverty, and wealth is distributed very unevenly across North Carolina's citizens. In 2008, the richest 5 percent of households had an average income that was 25.6 times greater than the average income of the poorest 20 percent of households.