

JUST EATING?

Practicing Our Faith at the Table

Readings for Reflection and Action

PROGRAM PARTNERS

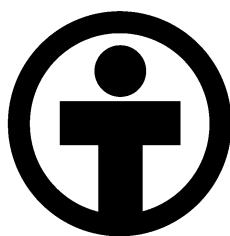
Advocate Health Care
Church World Service
Presbyterian Hunger Program, PC(USA)

JUST EATING?

Practicing Our Faith at the Table

Leader's Guide
for Group Study

A joint project of:



CHURCH WORLD SERVICE



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Written by Jennifer Halteman Schrock

Background

Just Eating? Practicing Our Faith at the Table began as a joint venture of Advocate Health Care's Congregational Health Partnerships program and the Northern Illinois Region of Church World Service (CWS). Informal conversation about eating turned into a regular meeting to explore how we might be able to sponsor a project that would unite Advocate's interest in eating and health and CWS's long history of working with hunger and justice issues.

A Practicing Our Faith grant from the Valparaiso Practice Grant Program provided just the right framework for our project. Faith practices are things that we do that incorporate our faith commitments into the most basic parts of our lives — for instance honoring the body, providing hospitality, and keeping sabbath. The Valparaiso Program funds individuals or groups that help specific communities nurture a way of life shaped by Christian practices. (For more information go to www.practicingourfaith.org.) With a grant from Valparaiso we hired a curriculum writer, Jennifer Halteman Schrock, who created a seven-week study program around several themes we thought were important.

Six churches piloted the draft curriculum and provided vital feedback to us about how it had gone. Their experience and responses were incorporated into extensive revisions that were funded by grants from the Chicago Presbytery Hunger Commission and the Presbyterian Hunger Program. A grant from the United Church of Christ Genesis Fund provided assistance for the design and formatting of the material in preparation for printing.

The development of this program has been a wonderful collaboration of many people and organizations. Special acknowledgement goes to Jennifer Halteman Schrock, the curriculum writer, who was able to work gracefully with so many “cooks” and to incorporate all of our ideas and passions so beautifully.

Program Partners

Advocate Health Care

Advocate Health Care is a faith-based health system serving the metropolitan Chicago area. Affiliated with the United Church of Christ and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Advocate has eight hospitals with 3,500 beds and over 200 sites of care. Advocate's mission is to serve the health needs of individuals, families and communities through a wholistic philosophy rooted in our fundamental understanding of human beings as created in the image of God.

Because Advocate is a faith-based organization, its relationship with congregations is an important part of its identity and service. These relationships are nurtured primarily through the Office for Mission and Spiritual Care and the Congregational Health Partnerships (CHP) program. CHP works with faith communities to develop and support ministries of healing for the congregation and community.

Church World Service

Founded in 1946, Church World Service is the relief, development, and refugee assistance ministry of 36 Protestant, Orthodox, and Anglican denominations in the United States. Working in partnership with indigenous organizations in more than 80 countries, CWS works worldwide to meet human needs and foster self-reliance for all whose way is hard.

Within the United States, Church World Service assists communities in responding to disasters, resettles refugees, promotes fair national and international policies, provides educational resources, and offers opportunities to join a people-to-people network of local and global caring through participation in CROP WALKS, the TOOLS & BLANKETS Program, and the “Gift of the Heart” Kit Program.

Presbyterian Hunger Program

The Presbyterian Hunger Program (PHP), a ministry of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), works to alleviate hunger and eliminate its causes, responding with compassion and justice to poor and hungry people in local communities, in the United States and throughout the world. PHP provides grants for direct food relief, development assistance, public policy advocacy, hunger education, and lifestyle integrity. PHP's Joining Hands Against Hunger offers a new strategy for wholistic international hunger ministry; Enough for Everyone provides concrete ways for congregations to act as faithful disciples in the global economy; the Food & Faith initiative brings awareness about the need to build food systems that are socially just and sustain the integrity of God's creation.

Writer

Jennifer Halteman Schrock, M.Div., is a freelance writer and active lay member of the Mennonite Church U.S.A. She also works for Merry Lea Environmental Learning Center of Goshen College, a nature center with a budding agroecology program and an emphasis on sustainable living. Jennifer lives in Goshen, Indiana, with her husband and two sons.

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Just Eating Leader's Guide

Curriculum Overview

Introduction

Just Eating? While this phrase could mean *only* eating, the word, *just*, also means “being honorable and fair in one’s dealings.” This play on words captures a paradox that this curriculum addresses. Eating can be a mundane activity done with little thought or reflection; or it can be an opportunity to thoughtfully live out our faith and practice justice.

What does it mean to practice our faith at the table? The *Just Eating?* curriculum will help you better understand the relationship between our Christian heritage and our food. Drawing on Jesus’ story and the rituals of the Christian faith, this curriculum examines four aspects of our lives with food:

- the health of our bodies
- the access others have to food
- the health of the earth, which our food choices influence, and
- the ways we use food to extend hospitality and enrich relationships.

You will be challenged to think about each of these areas, to see how they relate to each other, and to consider what changes your faith may ask of you. Together with other believers, you will reflect on selected scripture, pray together, dialog, and celebrate the Eucharist. You will also be invited to try spiritual disciplines that may be new to you, such as fasting, using food preparation as a time of prayer, engaging in food advocacy, or changing items in your diet.

Practicing Our Faith at the Table attempts to apply our Christian faith in wholistic and healthy ways. We all spend a lot of time eating or preparing to eat, and the habits we form reflect our values and shape our lives. May God bless you as you explore *Just Eating?*, and may your life be enriched.

Objectives of this Curriculum

- to bring into dialog our day-to-day eating habits, the Christian faith, and the needs of the broader world
- to explore faith practices which encourage healthful eating
- to support each other in taking personal and group action that reaches beyond this seven-week curriculum

The Group Leader's Role

- help group members get acquainted and bond as a group
- handle housekeeping details such as providing the student booklets and scheduling meetings
- lead a reflective form of Bible study that involves praying the scripture
- introduce the key ideas listed in each session plan using the activities or discussion questions suggested
- facilitate group discussion

- assist the group members as they evaluate future directions during the final group session
- coordinate meals if the group chooses to share any
- radiate warmth, enthusiasm, and hope

Each Participant's Role

- to attend all group sessions if possible
- to read the offerings for daily reflection in the Participant Guide
- to try at least one Faith in Action Step and one Healthy Eating Tip suggested in the Participant Guide each week
- to help the group discern future directions during Session 7

Format

This curriculum includes:

- **A Leader's Guide** outlining seven group sessions. The sessions are intended to take place on seven consecutive weeks but could also be used monthly. Each session includes:
 - **A suggested session plan** covering the unit participants read the previous week.
 - **Leader Resources:** Some pages are needed for the group session; others are supplementary. Resources for a particular session follow that session plan; resources that pertain to the whole curriculum are on pages 13-19 following the Introductory Session.
 - **Ideas for an optional meal** that groups may choose to share.
- **A Participant Guide:** You will need a copy of this guide and so will each participant. Each unit includes:
 - **An introduction** which frames the topic from the perspective of the Christian faith.
 - **Five days of daily readings.** Each entry juxtaposes a scripture text, a reflection on the text, and a contemporary reading.
 - **Suggested responses.** These are labeled either Faith in Action Steps or Healthy Eating Tips. Participants are asked to try one Faith in Action Step and one Healthy Eating Tip each week.
 - **Resources.** Look for these practical helps at the end of the Participant Guide. They suggest readings and helpful web sites.

Time Frame

The session plans below are designed for groups of 6-12 people who can meet for an hour seven times. Suggestions for adapting the plans for other circumstances follow each lesson plan:

If you only have 45 minutes

Tips for omitting or shortening part of the lesson plan follow each lesson plan.

If you have 90 minutes or more

Additional ideas and resources for groups who have more time.

If your group is larger than 12 people

Tips for simplifying and rearranging activities to accommodate a crowd.

More ideas for adapting the session

Additional activities and discussion questions to substitute for an element of the suggested lesson plan that might not fit your group.

If you are able to share a meal

Each unit includes suggestions for a shared meal that highlights the week's theme. These meals are described in the Leader's Guide resource pages. Groups with larger time blocks available may choose to eat together each week. Other groups might select one or more of the meals and schedule a gathering outside of their regular meeting time. See Leader Resource I-5, pp. 18-19, for an overview of the meal ideas.

If you have 5 group sessions instead of 7

- Give out the Participant Guide a week before the class starts and ask people to read Unit 1 before the first meeting. Combine the Introductory Session and the session covering Unit 1. Do Activity 1 from Unit 1 and Activity 2 from Unit 2.
- Do Units 2, 3, 4 as written.
- Combine Units 5 and 6 by choosing either Activity 2 or 3 from Unit 5 and omitting discussion of a group direction from Unit 6. If people seem interested in taking a next step together, you will need to schedule an additional meeting.

If you have 13 group sessions (a quarter of the year)

Do the Introductory Session as written and then spend two weeks on each unit. Options include:

- Allowing more unstructured time each week for group members to share their reflections and experiences. Also add discussion topics or activities from the "More Ideas" section at the end of the unit.
- Following the lesson plans as written the first week and sharing a meal together the second week.
- Inviting guest speakers who work with nutrition, hunger, agriculture, hospitality, and so on or take field trips to appropriate organizations in your community.

Introductory Session

*Note that readings in the Participant Guide **precede** the discussion of the given topic. The Introductory Session occurs before your group has received their Participant Guides. Your next group session will cover the materials labeled Unit 1 even though it is your second meeting.*

Quick Overview of this Session

- Introductions (10 min.)
- Group discussion: Name food issues and make connections between them. (30 min.)
- Review the structure of the curriculum, upcoming topics, and expectations. (10 min.)
- Introduce *lectio divina* and use this model of Bible study with Acts 2:43-47. (10 min.)

Key ideas

- Eating is something we often take for granted. Eating is also a justice issue worthy of reflection and careful decision-making.
- Ethical issues related to food include:
 - stewardship of our bodies and our health
 - unequal division of resources so that many are hungry
 - stewardship of the earth, the source of all our food, and
 - food sharing as an opportunity for building relationships.
- The Christian practice of communion grew out of food sharing experiences that involved diverse people eating a full meal together. This practice is still a resource for us today.
- *Lectio divina* is an ancient spiritual discipline that involves lingering over a scripture passage in a prayerful manner and listening for God's voice.

Important Questions

- How are my personal household issues with food related to larger issues in my community and the world beyond it?
- How can the Christian ritual of sharing communion guide us as we attend to food issues?
- How are the four areas this curriculum covers interconnected? How might a problem with physical health, planetary health, community, or hunger cause problems in another area?

Advance preparation for leading your group

- Read through the Participant Guide and Leader's Guide so you have an idea where this curriculum is headed. Remember to check the sections on ways to adapt or revise the lesson plans.
- Review the meal options summarized on Leader Resource I-5, pages 18-19, and decide whether shared meals would work at some point. Select a tentative date or dates.
- Review page 21 on planning for next week's communion service and decide who will lead this ritual. Arrange for an ordained person to attend your group if needed.
- Find a visual symbol of the Eucharist that you can use throughout this unit as a reminder of your focus. A chalice and paten is the obvious choice. A picture of Jesus eating with his disciples or a painting showing bread and a cup would work too. Arrange your symbol at a central place in the room where you will meet.

- Make a large poster based on the diagram on Leader Resource I-1, page 13, for use throughout the course. The two-minute version involves drawing two lines and writing the headings of the units this course covers. If you take pride in your design abilities, you can illustrate each topic by filling in each quadrant with photos clipped from magazines.
- Make copies of Leader Resource I-4, pages 16-17, containing the scripture texts for the *lectio divina* exercises in each group session. Cut them in slips to distribute each week as needed or keep the sheets whole and have people pass them back to you after use.

Advance preparation for Introductory Session

Make sure you have enough Participant Guides and have them ready to pass out.

Assemble the supplies necessary for this lesson plan:

- a blackboard, white board, or flip chart and markers
- a package of large sticky notes (enough for each person to have several)
- a marker for each person
- a sheet of poster board and one copy of Leader Resource I-2, page 14, showing a picture of bread and a cup
- copies of Leader Resource I-4, pages 16-17, cut so that each person can have a slip with Acts 2:43-47 on it

Write the following on your board so that people can see it as they gather:

“Think of a meal you really enjoyed eating.”

“Think of a time that a meal was a problem for you for some reason.”

Leader Resources for Introductory Unit

- I-1 Picture of circles diagram, picture of diagram with four quadrants, page 13
- I-2 Picture of loaf of bread and chalice to copy, page 14
- I-3 Outline of a method of *lectio divina*, page 15
- I-4 Acts 2:43-47 to copy for *lectio divina* activity, pages 16-17
- I-5 Use to review ideas for shared meals, page 18

Suggested Lesson Plan: Introductory Session

As people gather

Give group members several sticky notes and markers to write with. Ask them to think about the issues and experiences that have motivated them to join a study entitled *Just Eating* and jot a few down. They should write one idea on each sticky note in large letters.

Introductions (allow 10 minutes)

Ask group members to introduce themselves by sharing their names and a story. Refer to the white board and invite each person to tell a story about a meal he or she really enjoyed eating or a meal that was problematic. This is intended as an icebreaker, but it may also lead into the next activity and help your group identify the food issues that concern them.

Activity 1: Beginning with life experiences (allow 30 minutes)

- a) On a blackboard or white board, draw three circles, each large enough to write in. If you don't have a board, tape large pieces of paper to the wall. Label the first circle “Household/Personal,” the second circle “Community,” and the third circle “World.”

Invite group members to name the issues and experiences that have motivated them to join a study entitled *Just Eating? Practicing Our Faith at the Table*. Some people will already have written ideas on sticky notes; other ideas will emerge in the course of discussion. The following questions may be helpful prompts:

- What food-related struggle is in your face most often?
- If you drove around our community for 15 minutes, what evidence of food-related problems would you see?
- Are you satisfied with the access our community offers to wholesome food?
- What food-related issues have you seen in the news lately?
- What issues have you encountered while traveling in other countries or other areas of our own country?

b) As people offer ideas, have them add their sticky notes to one of the three circles you drew. You may find you can't always agree on where a problem belongs, or will want to put the same idea in more than one circle. (Note that you don't have to have sticky notes to do this; you can just write on the board. But sticky notes allow you to move your ideas around, change your mind without making a mess and re-sort your ideas onto the second drawing.)

c) Reflect on the lists you have generated. Discussion questions include:

- How are our personal and household issues with food related to issues in our communities and the broader world? What links do you see?
- If you had to agree on three concerns as top priority, which would your group pick?

d) Now show the group the poster you prepared diagramming the four areas this curriculum covers and briefly explain each area: nurturing our bodies, hunger, food and the environment, and creating community with food. Explain that these are the topics this curriculum covers and you will spend a session on each one. Re-sort your sticky notes into the four quadrants of your drawing. Most will fall into these four categories, though some may not and some may be hard to classify.

e) Take a copy of Leader Resource I-2, page 14, showing a loaf of bread and a chalice and tape it in the middle of your poster. Ask the group if they have ever thought about the Lord's Supper in relation to any of these food issues. Point out that bread and a cup are central symbols of the Christian faith, and a ritual that involves eating and drinking is at the center of Christian practice. "How can the Christian ritual of sharing communion guide us as we attend to food issues?" Explain that this is a question we will ask throughout this curriculum. Share the New Testament background given in the introduction to Unit 1 in the Participant Guide, p. 3.

Activity 2: Introducing the Participant Guide (allow 10 minutes)

a) Pass out the Participant Guides and review the Table of Contents. Compare to the diagram you just used and clarify the time and place of each meeting if necessary.

b) Turn to Unit 1, Day 1. Review the components of a day's reading:

- a faith practice named in the title of each day's readings
- a scripture
- a short commentary on the text and/or faith practice
- a contemporary reading, and
- a suggested Faith in Action Step.

Point out the additional Action Steps and Healthy Eating Tips at the end of Unit 1, p. 9.

c) Explain that this week's readings and faith practices all focus on the sacramental meal central to Christian practice and known by a variety of names — the Lord's Supper, communion, the Eucharist, or breaking bread together.

- d) Ask participants to ponder the five days' reflections before the next group session and try out at least one Faith in Action Step and one Healthy Eating Tip.
- e) Answer questions as they arise.

Activity 3: Modeling Lectio Divina (allow 10 minutes)

- a) Have everyone turn to Resource 1-1, page 48 in the Participant Book, entitled "What is *Lectio Divina*?" Introduce this prayerful approach to reading the scriptures using the information given on this page. You needn't explain at length, as participants can refer back to this page and will get the idea by doing it. Mention that each group session will include a *lectio divina* exercise, and participants may find this practice helpful for their daily readings.
- b) Pass out the slips of paper containing Acts 2:43-47. Before beginning the *lectio divina* exercise, tell the group they will hear this brief passage read by three different voices and will be asked to reflect on three different questions during the silence that follows.
 - c) Begin *Lectio Divina*
 - Ask:** In the following reading, what word or phrase attracts you?
 - Read Acts 2:43-47 aloud.** Allow 1-2 minutes of silence.
 - Ask:** "Where does the content of this reading touch your life today?"
 - Read:** Second voice reads Acts 2:43-47 aloud. Allow silence for 2-3 minutes.
 - Ask:** "What is Christ inviting you to do or be this week?"
 - Read:** Third voice reads Acts 2:43-47. Allow silence for 2-3 minutes.
 - d) **Sharing:** Invite those who wish to share the word or phrase chosen without elaborating on it. After everyone has had a chance to do this, invite anyone who wishes to comment on his or her reflections.

Closing

- a) Close with a brief prayer thanking God for your group's desire to confront food issues. Invite group members to remember the person on their left with a prayer or a supportive gesture this week.
- b) Ask your group about the possibility of sharing a meal outside of class or extending a class period for this purpose.

Suggestions for Adapting this Session

If you have 45 minutes

- Limit introductions to people's names; then ask one or two volunteers to tell a story about a meal they enjoyed.
- You will need to omit the *lectio divina* exercise. Make sure class members are aware of the information provided on page 48.

If you have 90 minutes or more

- For Activity 1c), instead of just asking how the three spheres are related, provide scratch paper and pencils and ask each person to draw a diagram using 3 circles. Invite people to share their diagrams and explain why they arranged the circles as they did. You will be surprised by the variety of ways people conceptualize this!

- Allow more time for the *lectio divina* exercise. Invite people to share their word or phrase without elaborating before the second reading of the text.
- Engage the group in discussing meal possibilities. Copy Leader Resource I-5, pages 18-19, summarizing meal options. Is it possible to eat together each week or at least sometimes? Which meals would people like to share?

If you have more than 12 people

- Limit introductions to people's names. Have people trade meal stories with a person beside them as a way of getting acquainted. The rest of the lesson plan should work as written. Be mindful of time as larger groups move more slowly. There may not be time for people to share after the *lectio divina* exercise.

More Ideas for Adapting this Unit

- Mention that one of this week's Faith in Action Steps (p. 6) suggests finding a symbol of brokenness related to our lives with food. Invite anyone who does this to bring the chosen object next week.
Examples: A woman who struggles with body image might bring in a magazine showing only thin, beautiful women. A man concerned about children's nutrition might bring in a box of sugary cereal. A teacher who has seen the effects of hunger on children's learning might bring in a handout with a failing grade on it.
- Invite participants to bring photos, drawings, or newspaper clippings each week that relate to their reading. Have them place these things in the quadrants on diagram 2, used in Activity 1d).

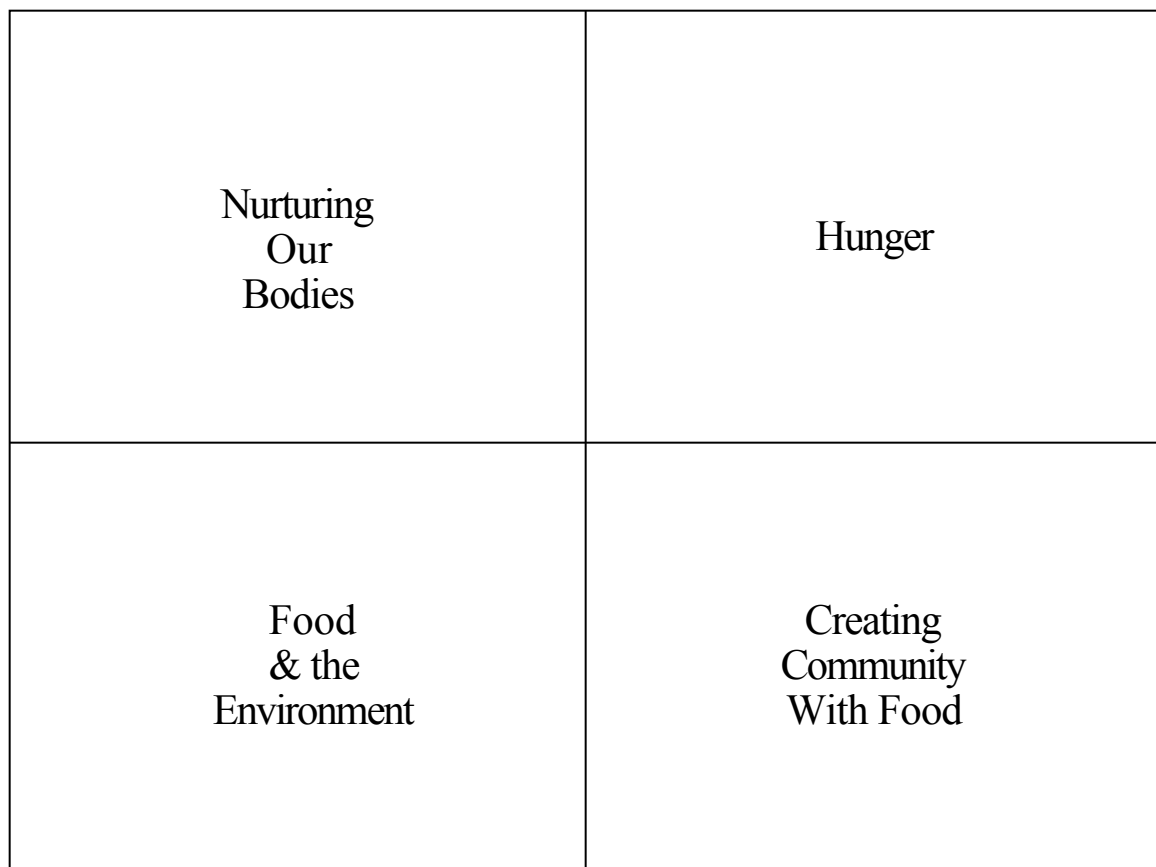
Leader Resource I-1

Visual Aids for Teaching Introductory Session

Diagram 1: This is what your blackboard might look like during Activity 1, a-c. (The finished diagram should show little sticky notes clustered around the 3 circles also.)

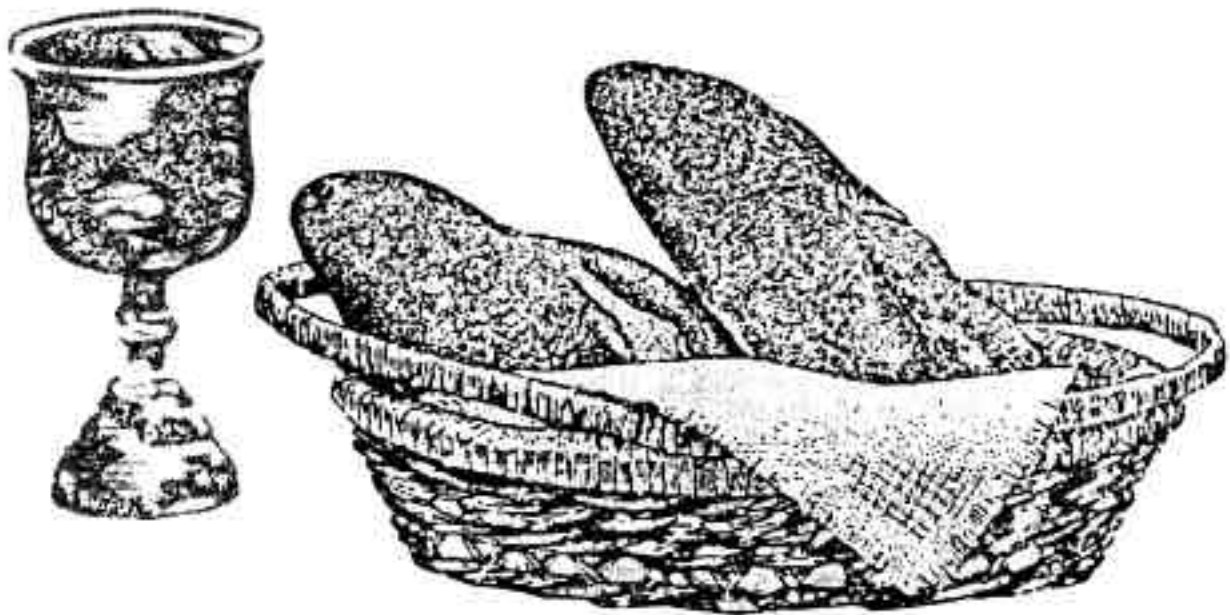


Diagram 2: This is what your poster for Activity 1d) might look like. This poster will be used several times during the course.



Leader Resource I-2
Bread and Cup Graphic

Make one copy of this picture. During the Introductory Session, you will place it in the middle of the poster you made showing the areas this curriculum addresses. Trim off this text.



Leader Resource I-3

Lectio Divina Shared in Community

Each session includes a brief period of reflection on one of the scriptures included in the previous week's readings. Use this format for your group reflections or adapt it. If you are tight on time, read the passage only once and omit sharing aloud until the end of the experience.

Listen for the Gentle Touch of Christ the Word

- **One person reads the passage** of scripture. Others listen for some segment that is especially meaningful to them.
- **Silence** for 1-2 minutes. Each hears and silently repeats a word or phrase that attracts.
- **Sharing aloud:** Each person shares this word or phrase without elaborating on it.

How Christ the Word Speaks to ME

- **A second person reads** the same passage.
- **Reflect on this question:** "Where does the content of this reading touch my life today?" Silence for 2-3 minutes.
- **Sharing aloud:** Group members briefly share a sentence or two if they wish: "I hear, I see..."

What Christ the Word Invites Me to DO or BE

- **A third person reads** the same passage of scripture.
- **Reflect** on this question: "I believe that God wants me to _____ today/this week." Silence for 2-3 minutes
- **Sharing aloud:** Invite anyone who wishes to comment on his or her reflections.
- **Ask people to remember** the person on their right this week and close with a one-sentence prayer.

Leader Resource I-4

Scripture for Lectio Divina Exercises

Each member of your group needs a copy of these texts. You can cut them in strips and pass the appropriate strips out each week or use the sheets whole and collect them for reuse.

Introductory Session: Acts 2:43-47

“Awe came on everyone because many wonders and signs were being done by the apostles. All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.”

Unit 1: Luke 24:28-31, 33

“As they came near the village to which they were going, [the stranger] walked ahead as if he were going on. But they urged him strongly, saying, ‘Stay with us, because it is almost evening and the day is now nearly over.’ So he went in to stay with them. When he was at the table with them, he took the bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; and he vanished from their sight... That same hour, they got up and returned to Jerusalem; and they found the eleven and their companions gathered together.”

Unit 2: Isaiah 55:1-2

“Ho, everyone who thirsts,
come to the waters;
and you that have no money,
come, buy and eat!
Come, buy wine and milk
without money and without price.
Why do you spend your money
for that which is not bread,
And your labor for that which does not satisfy?
Listen carefully to me and eat what is good,
And delight yourselves in rich food.”

Unit 3: Excerpts from Lamentations

“All [the] people groan as they search for bread;
They trade their treasures for food to revive their strength.
Look, O Lord, and see how worthless I have become.”
- *Lamentations 1:11*

“The precious children of Zion,
Worth their weight in fine gold —
How they are reckoned as earthen pots,
The work of a potter’s hands!...
...The tongue of the infant sticks to the roof of its mouth for thirst;
the children beg for food, but no one gives them anything...”
- *Lamentations 4:2-4*

“...Happier were those pierced by the sword
Than those pierced by hunger,
Whose life drains away, deprived of the produce of the field.”
- *Lamentations 4:9*

Unit 4: Genesis 1:29-31

“God said, ‘See, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food. And to every beast of the earth, and to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food.’ And it was so.”

Unit 5: Matthew 25:31-40

“When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on the throne of his glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, and he will put the sheep at his right hand and the goats at the left. Then the king will say to those at his right hand, ‘Come you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.’ Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing. And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?’ And the king will answer, them, ‘Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me...’”

Unit 6: Galatians 5:22-6:2

“By contrast, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against such things. And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live by the Spirit, let us also be guided by the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, competing against one another, envying one another.

“My friends, if anyone is detected in a transgression, you who have received the Spirit should restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness. Take care that you yourselves are not tempted. Bear one another’s burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.”

Leader Resource I-5

Meal Suggestions

Many groups will want to share a meal together at least once during this course. Others may have time to eat together each week. Each session except the Introduction includes ideas for a shared meal that relates to the theme of the session. Below is an overview of the suggested meals.

Unit 1: Food Sharing as Sacramental

A New Testament Communion similar to the early Church's practice of sharing food across social classes in a way that provides for all.

The food: A loaf of bread and a pitcher of juice, surrounded by a potluck assortment of foods brought by participants. Participants are assigned a cost limit ranging from 25 cents to a few dollars and one person brings a "splurge" food. The group finds ways to share this assortment. See Leader Resource 1-1, page 26.

Unit 2: Nurturing the Body

Adventure Potluck: Each person is asked to bring a healthy food he or she enjoys but which may be new to others. Participants have a chance to teach others to enjoy this food too.

The food: Everyone contributes a dish.

Or:

Wholesome Foods Banquet: This eating experience contains over 20 fruits and vegetables. The leader walks participants through the experience of savoring their food, bite by bite, and shares nutritional information about the ingredients. A script is provided.

The food: Brown rice or whole grain couscous topped with a vegetable stew; a mixed fruit salad. The leader prepares the food or enlists several volunteers. A recipe is provided on page 36. See Leader Resource 2-2, pages 35-38.

Unit 3: Hunger

Hidden Hunger and the Food We Eat. The group shares a few simple foods together while the leader provides information about the countries these foods come from and who picks and grows them. This meal acknowledges the fact that many of the people who provide us with food struggle to get enough to eat themselves. It emphasizes the power consumers have to effect change and includes a prayer for farm workers.

The food: Tomato soup or a tomato-based vegetable soup; bread or crackers, bananas, and coffee. See Leader Resource 3-8, page 52.

Unit 4: Food and the Environment

The Ecology of Your Lunch. During a simple meal, the leader shares environmental stories about the foods the group is eating and the ecosystems they come from. Some will be sad stories; others will inspire awe and respect for creation. A table centerpiece includes items that serve as food for other species.

The food: A soup, salad, sandwich, and dessert provided by volunteers.

See suggested ingredients on Leader Resource 4-5, pages 70-74.

Or:

Celebrating Local Foods: Participants bring dishes prepared with locally grown ingredients. If local ingredients are unavailable, they ask the retailer/manager where the food items come from. At the potluck, people report and discuss their findings to those sitting at the table. A festive atmosphere with music, speakers, even dancing, is recommended. Older folk can describe the food system as they remembered it, and perhaps demonstrate canning techniques. Local farmers and farm workers could be invited to talk about their lives and answer questions. Kids could plant a sunflower seed in soil-filled paper cups to take home and grow on their windowsill. The overall theme would be “celebration of God’s creation and the bountiful earth.”

The food: Everyone contributes a dish.

Unit 5: Creating Community with Food

Taste of Home Potluck: Each member brings a comfort food — something from his or her family of origin or a food that evokes memories of hospitality and fellowship. Group members will share their memories while they eat.

The food: Everyone contributes a dish.

Unit 6: Discerning God’s Call

First Fruits Potluck: Group members bring foods that represent something learned during this curriculum or a change they are making. During the meal, they will have a chance to share why they brought the food they did. Everyone will receive a blessing.

The food: Everyone contributes a dish.

Suggested blessing after each person shares: May God bless your offering with a rich harvest.

Unit 1

Food Sharing as Sacramental

This will be your second session. Group members should have read Unit 1 in the Participant Guide before attending, but can fit in and learn even if they have not.

Quick Overview of this Session

- A *lectio divina* exercise focused on Luke 24:28-35. (15 min.)
- An exploration of sacramental meals in the Christian tradition and what they mean. (15 min.)
- A meditative communion service, including time to share experiences with readings and action steps. (30 min.)

Key ideas

- A sacrament is a mystery that makes God's presence in the world visible. When we eat together, sharing the basic stuff of life, God is there.
- The elements we receive at communion are a symbol of God's overwhelming love, poured out for us.
- Sharing food in this way also represents our desire to be part of a world where all are included around the table; where food is shared and all have enough.
- Fruitful sacraments transform us, gradually shaping individuals and communities into the body of Christ.

Important Questions

- Can you think of a meal that you experienced as an outpouring of love from another person? Is there a food that you always associate with a beloved friend or an experience of peace and wholeness?
- What is a sacrament? In what sense is sharing food sacramental?
- Are you open to being changed by participating in this sacramental meal?
- What do you have to share from your time spent with readings, action steps, and eating tips?

Advance Preparation

- Make copies of Luke 24:28-35 on Leader Resource I-4 and cut them up for the *lectio divina* exercise if you didn't already prepare these sheets last week.
- Prepare the elements for breaking bread together. Bake or buy bread, find a chalice and paten, a pitcher and beverage, plates. Bring enough so that everyone can have a generous chunk of bread.
- Read "Before You Begin," below. If you do not plan to lead the breaking of the bread yourself, (Activity 2) arrange for your pastor to join you this week to officiate. Give this person a copy of the lesson plan for background, but also indicate that he or she is free to do things the way your denomination normally does them.
- If you do plan to lead the breaking of the bread, review the story of the Last Supper and suggested prayers.

- Write this quote on your board or flipchart: “Fruitful sacraments always have one practical and visible result: people’s lives are profoundly changed because God’s purposes for life and time are gradually being appropriated.”¹
- Consider expanding your communion service into a full meal as described on Leader Resource 1-1 or schedule this meal at another time.

Leader Resources for Unit 1

- I-4 Scripture for *lectio divina* exercise, pages 16-17
- 1-1 A New Testament Communion: Optional meal for Unit 1, page 26

Before You Begin: A Word About Breaking Bread Together

Celebrating a sacramental meal with your group may create two problems for you: Who will officiate at this communion experience if you are not an ordained person? And what if not all of your group members are baptized Christians, qualified to receive it? Here are two options for handling these issues:

Approach #1: Follow New Testament practice

In the early Church, there were no priests assigned to the role of officiating at communion. The earliest Christians grew up celebrating the Jewish Passover with their fathers officiating if the Seder was a family meal or the host officiating if it was a larger group. The New Testament says little about who broke the bread in the first Christian congregations. Apparently, who was to fill this role was not an issue. The *Didache*, a church manual from the early second century, tells us that “prophets or teachers” officiated at the breaking of the bread. That would be you. You agreed to teach this course, didn’t you?

If the question of who may eat and who may not comes up, explain that at the earliest communion services, there probably weren’t rigid rules about who could eat and who couldn’t. These early communion services were also supper, and bread was the staple of the Mediterranean diet, not a ritual side dish. Nobody got to drop kids off at a daycare before coming. What is more, Jesus included even Judas in the Last Supper!

For those who are not sure they belong at this table, emphasize that if they have come to this table open to being transformed by the experience, they are welcome. “Are you open to being changed by this shared meal?” If you ask your group this question before you serve them, you will not cheapen the bread and cup.

Approach #2: Honor the polity of your denomination

If you have doubts about causing conflict or are uncomfortable with approach #1, invite a pastor or priest to your group to officiate at this meal. Also abide by your Church’s understanding of who should receive communion. Clarify that to receive the bread and the cup is a statement that you have committed yourself as a follower and a fellow sufferer with Christ. Provide an alternate food such as grapes (not yet wine) or roasted soybeans (not yet bread) for those who have not yet made this commitment.

¹ Regis A. Duffy, *An American Emmaus: Faith and Sacrament in the American Culture*. (New York, Crossroad Publishing Co., 1995), 105.

Suggested Lesson Plan

As people gather

- Review names and have any newcomers introduce themselves.
- Pass out the slips of paper containing the passage from Luke 24 and find a volunteer to read during the *lectio divina* exercise.

Activity 1: *Lectio Divina* (allow 10-15 minutes)

Begin with a *lectio divina* experience using Luke 24:28-33. Before beginning, you will need to summarize the circumstances leading up to the meal described in these verses. (See Luke 24:13-27.) Also remind the group of the format you used last week:

- reading the passage aloud
- listening for a word or phrase that attracts
- asking how the passage connects to one's own life
- listening for what Christ is calling you to be or do, and
- sharing the word or phrase and other reflections if desired.

See Leader Resource I-3 if you need to review in more detail.

Activity 2: *Exploring Sacramental Meals* (20-25 minutes)

Move from your prayer time to a discussion of what it means to share a sacramental meal. Explore the three questions below in a way that fits your group. The progression written here begins with the scripture readings covered in the Participant Guide this week and moves to life experiences, but some groups may find it easier to begin with their own experiences and then relate these to the readings.

What is a sacrament? What does it mean to say that sharing food can be sacramental?

The following ideas may be helpful. For additional information, ask your pastor for resources on your denomination's understanding of communion as a sacrament.

- The word, *sacramental*, comes from a Latin root meaning *sacred*. If something is sacramental, it is holy and worthy of reverence or respect. It is the opposite of *ordinary* or *mundane*.
- The word also derives from Roman practices of making pledges of loyalty or commitment. When we participate in a sacrament, we commit ourselves to God's reign and God's ways.
- A sacrament is a mystery that makes God's presence in the world visible.
- A sacrament is a symbol of God's overwhelming love and grace, poured out for us.
- A sacrament says "I love you" with actions and experiences, just as there are times when a kiss, a cup of tea, or a diamond ring can say "I love you" in ways words can't.

What made the meals described in this week's scripture readings sacred experiences?

Recall the following stories covered in the Participant Guide:

- the Last Supper (Mark 14:12-25)
- the meal following a walk to Emmaus (Luke 24:13-35)
- the Early Church sharing joyful meals together (Acts 2:43-47)
- the Corinthian supper (I Cor. 11:17-33), and
- the escatological banquet described in Isaiah 25:6-10.

Make a list on your white board or flip chart as people respond. Your list might look something like this:

A meal is holy when...

- ...We experience God's presence in a unique and powerful way
- ...It represents an outpouring of love
- ...It required a sacrifice of some sort
- ...We eat with a sense of profound gratitude
- ...Food is shared equally and all have enough
- ...It brings together people who cannot share a table elsewhere
- ...It is eaten in a spirit of love and respect
- ...It reminds us of our relationship to God's creation: to sun, wind, rain, seasons, the web of life.

When has sharing food been a holy time for you?

If people need help thinking about this, point to specific items on the list you just generated. Ask questions such as these:

- Can you think of a meal that you experienced as an outpouring of love from God or from another person? Is there a food that you always associate with a beloved friend?
- Was there a time you shared food with an outsider or enemy?
- Describe the most meaningful communion experience you have ever had.
- Is there a meal you would like to tell your children or grandchildren about someday?

Activity 3: Breaking Bread Together (allow 25-30 minutes)

This experience is designed to evoke a New Testament communion where a sacramental meal was also supper. Due to time constraints, it is probably not possible for you to make this a full meal, but there are simple ways you can suggest the connection between the Eucharist and everyday tables.

- If possible, share the elements while sitting around a table together with plates.
- Offer group members a generous chunk of bread and a glass of juice instead of just a ritual bite and sip. It will take more time to eat and drink, but will make God's outpouring of grace and mercy more vivid.

a) If you plan to eat around a table as suggested above, move there now. Remind the group that today's eating experience is a New Testament communion, and in the first century, this ritual was part of an every day meal that fed the body as well as the spirit.

b) Refer to the quote that you wrote on your board: "Fruitful sacraments always have one practical and visible result: people's lives are profoundly changed because God's purposes for life and time are gradually being appropriated." Ask:

- Do you believe this? Has it been your experience?
- Are **you** open to being changed by sharing this bread and this cup with this gathering of the body of Christ today? Ponder this question.

c) Give the following instructions or proceed as is customary in your tradition:

The bread and cup will be passed around the circle. When the bread comes to you, take a nice, big piece and offer it to the person next to you with the words, "Christ's body broken for you," or the question, "Are you open to being changed by sharing this bread?" When you receive the bread, you may respond with silence, by saying "Praise God," or by answering the question about change. When the cup comes to you, dip a corner of your bread into it and pass it to your neighbor.

d) Briefly tell the story of the night Jesus ate with his disciples in your own way and your own words. Review one of the stories of the Last Supper beforehand: see Matthew 26:17-30, Mark 14:12-25, Luke 22:14-30, or John 13:1-20. Break the loaf in two and pass the halves around the circle. Do not rush. When everyone has bread, pour your juice or wine from pitcher to chalice, saying, “Christ’s blood, shed for you.” Send the cup around the circle.

e) When everyone has been served, pray this prayer together or a similar one. Voices are marked if you would like to copy this page and make the prayer a group reading.

Leader: *Christ Jesus, we give thanks for the food we have received.
We share this loaf of bread and this cup together in your memory.*

Voice 1: We claim the promise that you are here among us,
shaping our time together and our lives beyond this circle.

Voice 2: *We remember the many ways our world is broken
and celebrate your power to work even amidst brokenness.*

All: We look forward in hope to the time
when none of us will suffer from excess,
and no one’s stomach will be empty. Amen.

f) While you finish eating, invite people to share an insight from their experiences with Faith in Action Steps. If you asked people to bring a symbol of brokenness this week (see page 12), invite them to place it on the table and comment if they wish.

Closing

Summarize the key ideas listed at the beginning of this lesson plan and remind people to work through Unit 2 before the next meeting.

Suggestions for Adapting Session 1

If you have 45 minutes

- Do not allow time to share following the *lectio divina*; move directly into Activity 2.
- Maintain a brisk pace during Activity 2. Summarize a few key ideas rather than letting them gradually emerge from the group.
- People may not have time to eat and drink the larger amounts suggested above. Serve the usual ritual amounts.
- Make sure you get to class early and are well organized so you do not waste time shuffling papers, unwrapping bread, etc.

If you have more than 12 people

- As they arrive, have people sit in groups of four for the *lectio divina* exercise. When it is time to comment, let them share in these smaller groups.
- Keep in mind that a larger number of people slows down the mechanics of communion and you may need to shorten Activity 3 as suggested under the 45-minute plan above.

If you have 90 minutes or more

- Consider having a full meal with your communion. Potluck is one option. Another option is the potluck with a twist described on Leader Resource 1-1. This meal illustrates the challenges the Church faces when people of differing social classes eat together.
- Include favorite communion hymns or other music as part of your time together.

More Ideas for Adapting this Session

Not every group is meditative by nature. Some will have wrapped up their communion experience before the end of your session. Here is another direction you may wish to go.

Return to the diagram you made last week, showing four quadrants and a communion cup. Lead into upcoming sessions by showing how a problem in one quadrant is often linked to or causing problems in another quadrant. Work through several examples such as:

- A man is overweight and at risk for a heart attack partly because of a fast food habit. Ask: How might this man's nutrition problem be related to hunger? The environment? Loneliness and alienation? Spending time with *Fast Food Nation*, listed in the bibliography, could help you with those questions.
- The superintendent of an impoverished school system signs a lucrative deal with a soft drink company. In exchange for pouring rights in his school, the company offers money he hopes to use to improve educational opportunities and alleviate hunger. Ask: How does poverty contribute to poor nutrition? What would you do if you were the superintendent?
- Use a situation you've seen in the news lately.

Leader Resource 1-1: Optional Meal for Unit 1

A New Testament Communion, Potluck Style

At some point, you may have participated in a hunger meal where people were divided into groups according to world resource distribution and then received either a lavish meal, an adequate meal, or a meager meal. This potluck is on that order. However, people are challenged to figure out how to *share* foods representing both wealth and poverty, rather than just experience injustice. This meal is modeled on the early Church's struggle to feed people of all social classes at one table.

Before the meal

- The week beforehand, prepare slips of paper with sums of money written on them. Amounts should range from 25 cents to a few dollars. Most should be under a dollar. Explain that for next week's potluck, members may spend no more than the amount of money on the slip they receive. Ask for one or two volunteer willing to bring a splurge item—a food most people can't afford to eat regularly or wouldn't have time to prepare. These volunteers can spend as much as they want. Distribute the slips with cost limitations to the rest of the group. Make it clear that people with limited resources should feel free to bring a plain pot of rice, a handful of peanuts, or other unconventional potluck offering if that is all they can afford.
- Review page 7 in the Participant Guide entitled, "Breaking Bread Together: Seeking Unity" and the text from I Corinthians that you find there.
- Provide communion elements and resolve the issue of who will break the bread as directed in the Unit 1 lesson plan.

During the meal

Prepare a table with place settings for everyone and a chalice and paten as the centerpiece. As people arrive, have them put their food offerings around the communion elements. Celebrate communion as directed in the Unit 1 lesson plan, then share the other foods people brought.

While you are eating, discuss some of the following questions:

- How did it feel to bring only 25 cents worth of food? What options were open to you? How did you decide what to bring?
- How did it feel to bring the most expensive food item?
- What concerns did you have about the menu before you arrived? Did you look forward to this meal?
- What methods did you find to share food equally? Did they work well?
- If your congregation or other group began celebrating communion in homes within the context of a meal, what issues would arise? How would your congregation change?

Unit 2

Nurturing the Body

This will be your third group session. Participants should have read Unit 2 in the Participant Guide before attending, but can still fit in and learn even if they have not.

Quick Overview of this Session

- Share a group *lectio divina* using Isaiah 55:1-2. (10 minutes)
- Take a quiz on nutrition facts and review answers. (20-30 minutes)
- Sample healthy finger-foods and discuss the healthy eating behaviors you tried. (included in time above)
- Imagine and draw a picture of a setting that encourages healthy eating; share ideas. (15-25 minutes)

Key Ideas

- God's love for us includes our bodies.
- Unsaturated fats, whole grain carbohydrates, vegetable sources of protein, and plenty of fruits and vegetables are the keys to a healthy diet.
- We are not alone in our decisions about food: we live in a society that discourages healthy eating, and our own bad choices can harm others.

Important Questions

- What did *you* learn this week about healthy eating? What tips and Faith in Action steps did you work on this week?
- What might a kitchen/grocery store/ballpark/restaurant look like if the primary goal was to encourage healthy eating?
- When your church or other group eats together, is it done in ways that encourage healthy eating? What might need to change?

Advance Preparation

- Review the nutrition quiz and answers on pages 31-34 of the Leader's Guide. Also review Resources 2-2 to 2-6 in the Participant Book, pages 52-56.
- This session includes a snack that might be easier to eat if participants were gathered around a table. Consider how your space may affect the lesson plan.
- Prepare finger foods to share that illustrate main points in the nutrition quiz. Suggested foods are:
 - Slices of whole wheat bread with either a chickpea dip (hummus) or olive oil for dipping.
 - Finger fruits or vegetables. Try to include a few that are not commonly eaten by your group.
- Find out the nutritional value of the fruits or vegetables you chose. You can find this information on pages 37-38. Or see www.healthalternatives2000.com.
- Have the sheets with today's *lectio divina* reading ready to pass out.
- Round up drawing paper and markers for Activity 2.
- Consider whether your group could share the optional meal described on Leader Resource 2-2. Schedule a time if appropriate.

Leader Resources for this session

- 2-1 Nutrition quiz and answers, pages 31-34
- 2-2 Optional meal #2: Choice of Adventure Potluck or Wholesome Foods Banquet, pages 35-38.
Suggested recipes for the wholesome foods banquet and script, pages 36-38

Suggested Lesson Plan

As people gather

Review names as needed. Recruit a reader for the *lectio divina* exercise. Soft music may help set a meditative mood.

Activity 1: *Lectio Divina* using Isaiah 55:1-2 (Allow 10-15 minutes)

- a) See that everyone has a sheet with Isaiah 55:1-2 on it and remind the group of the format you used previously for *lectio divina* exercises.
- b) Share the following background information: Isaiah 55 is an invitation to the reign of God using a metaphor from the Ancient Near East, where new kings provided a great banquet for their people to celebrate their inauguration. In this passage, God is welcoming biblical people into a new covenant with a free banquet. Lead the exercise as follows.
 - Before you begin, ask the others to **listen for a word or phrase** that attracts them; then reflect on this word or phrase during the silence that follows.
 - **Read Isaiah 55:1-2 aloud.** Allow at least 2 minutes of silence.
 - **Ask:** "Where does the content of this reading touch your life today?" Allow silence for 2-3 minutes.
 - **Ask:** "What is Christ inviting you to do or be this week?" Allow silence for 2-3 minutes.
 - **Sharing:** Invite those who wish to share the word or phrase chosen without elaborating on it. After everyone has had a chance to do this, invite additional comments. These questions may also be helpful:
 - How and when do we spend money on food that is not nourishing?
 - What might a *healthy* banquet look like? This question can serve as a transition into Activity 2.

Activity 2: *Take a nutrition quiz and review answers* (20-30 min.)

- a) Have your group turn to page 51 in their Participant Book and give them several minutes to complete the Nutrition Quiz. Emphasize that this is a learning exercise and they will check their own papers.
- b) Go over the Nutrition Quiz using the answer key and the additional information on Leader Resource 2-1, pages 31-34. For some groups, this information will be review. Others may need to spend more time on the main points.
 - Questions 2 to 4 deal with choosing the right fats. After question 4, have the group turn to Resource 2-2 in their Participant Book. Ask if people worked with any of these tips this week and allow them time to share their experiences.
 - Questions 5 to 7 deal with eating whole grains instead of refined grains. After question 7, have everyone turn to Resource 2-3 in the Participant Book and scan the options there. Hear about participants' experiences with these tips.

- Question 8 looks at fruits and vegetables. After this question, turn to Resources 2-4 and 2-5 in the Participant Book and hear about participants' attempts to eat more of these wonderful foods.
- Questions 9-10 look at protein. After question 10, point to Resource 2-6 in the Participant Book and hear from those who chose to make changes in this area or are thinking about it.
- Share the healthy snacks you brought. Mention the nutritional virtues of the fruits you chose. Point out that the bread is whole grain, the chick pea dip is an alternative source of protein and the olive oil for dipping is an unsaturated fat.

Activity 3: Envisioning settings that encourage healthy eating

(allow 15-25 minutes)

- a)** Make a transition: The next activity focuses on helping people see how structures around them encourage or discourage healthy eating. Begin by asking if anyone tried the Faith in Action steps on Day 3 (p. 13, avoiding TV ads) or Day 4, (p.14, making a list of all the places you buy food.) Invite comments from those who did.
- b)** Pass out paper and markers and ask each person to imagine a setting where food is served or sold. Examples might include a church fellowship hall, a grocery store checkout lane, a restaurant, a ballpark, or your own kitchen. Now ask them to imagine what this setting *could* look like if the primary goal were to encourage healthy eating and have them draw what they see. Artistry is not important but detail is helpful.
- c)** Invite people to share their drawings and comment. Are these alternative realities possible? What would it take? Point out that until we can see how the structures around us shape our lives and can envision alternatives, it is difficult to make changes.
- d)** If you have time, discuss the food practices your congregation or other group shares. Do they encourage healthy eating? Is it possible to change them if they don't?

Closing

Close with this prayer or a similar one:

*O God, we give thanks for the body of each person sharing this circle.
We thank you for muscle, bone and blood; for each strength, each unique shape,
each intricate organ. As we eat this week, open our mouths to the aromas, the
textures, the tastes of nourishing food. Shape our appetites to fit the needs of our
bodies. Amen.*

Suggestions for Adapting Session 2

If you have 45 minutes

- Omitting the healthy snacks is one way to shave time from this session.
- If you have a well-informed group, don't belabor the nutrition quiz. Many people are aware of this information but still need help living it.
- Omit Activity 3 if necessary. Raise the questions given in Activity 3 and discuss them instead of having people take time to draw their ideas.

If you have 90 minutes or more

- Share a full meal together instead of just a healthy snack. Choose either the Wholesome Foods Banquet or the Adventure Potluck described on Leader Resource 2-2.
- Allow more time to look at the Day 5 reading (Honoring Christ's Body) and your church's food practices at the end of Activity 3. This could result in a rousing discussion; maybe even a change in coffee hour!
- Do the Action Step suggested for Day 4 (listing places you buy food or eat) in class and share observations.

If you have more than 12 people

- Seat people in small groups for the *lectio divina* exercise. Share within these groups at the end of the exercise.
- Allow more time for the nutrition quiz, since more people may have questions or comments to share. Arrange your food on several platters so that people can receive theirs more quickly. You may need to modify Activity 3 as suggested above.

More Ideas for Adapting this Session

- If you have a group that doesn't find time to use the Participant Book, begin by asking each person to share one thing they do "right" in terms of healthy eating. Then look over the nutrition checklists on pages 52-56 of the Participant Book together. What healthy eating tips would they add?
- Turn to page 13 in the Participant Book and discuss the reading on Engaging the Powers. What "powers" do your group members sense at work in their food lives?
- Leader Resource 5-1, page 80, could be used with this session. It is a survey inviting people to think about how they experience shared meals in your congregation.

Leader Resource 2-1

Nutrition Quiz with Answers

The nutrition quiz questions are also found in the Just Eating Participant Booke, page 49.

1. Which is the *best* predictor of your future health?
- a) Your weight**
 - b) Whether you are apple or pear-shaped
 - c) The amount of sugar and fat in your diet
 - d) The amount of fruits and vegetables you eat

Main point: Next to whether or not you smoke, your weight is the best predictor of your future health. It is more important to keep your weight in the healthy range than to worry about your shape or the latest miracle food.

More information: Two long-term studies showed that even people who have gained only 11-22 pounds since they were in their 20s were more likely to develop heart disease, high blood pressure, type 2 diabetes and gallstones than people who had gained 5 pounds or less. If you were lean in your 20s and then gained 20 pounds, your weight may still be in the healthy range, but your health risks have increased. The greater the weight gain, the greater the risk.

2. Heart disease rates in a given country are most closely linked to:
- a) the amount of fat in the country's diet
 - b) the amount of saturated fat in the country's diet**
 - c) the genetic makeup of the population

Main point: Saturated fats are the fats linked with heart disease. Not all fats are bad fats and some fats are actually good for you. It is better to replace saturated fats with unsaturated fats than to replace the fats in your diet with extra carbohydrates, which won't cut your heart risks.

More information

- In a study of seven countries, the country with the highest average total fat intake was Crete, where people use a generous amount of olive oil, an unsaturated fat. Crete also had the lowest rate of heart disease!
- Eating unsaturated fats instead of saturated fats or extra carbohydrates lowers bad cholesterol without lowering good cholesterol, prevents the increase of triglycerides, reduces development of erratic heartbeats which can cause cardiac death and reduces tendency of clots to form in arteries.

3. Put an S in front of the item if it high in saturated fats.
Put a U in front of the item if it is high in unsaturated fats.
- | | | | |
|--------------|-------------|----------------|---------|
| U__olive oil | U__corn oil | U__canola oil | U__nuts |
| S__red meat | S__cheese | S__coconut oil | U__fish |

Main Point: Saturated fats are abundant in meats and dairy products. They are usually solid at room temperature. Plant-based oils are generally high in unsaturated fatty acids. They are liquid or soft at room temperature. Products such as olive oil, corn oil, canola oil, nuts, fish contain unsaturated fats, while red meat, cheese, and coconut oil are examples of those high in saturated fats.

More information

- Exceptions to the rule: coconut and palm oils are high in saturated fat and fish contains beneficial unsaturated fatty acids.
- While most nuts are low in saturated fats, brazil nuts have a lot. Cashews and peanuts are fairly high, but like most nuts, they are also high in beneficial monounsaturated fats.
- Omega-3 fats, also known as N-3 fats, are important because the human body cannot make them from scratch. They are not as plentiful in our diet as they once were. One reason for that is that most meat animals are fed grains rather than foraging on wild plants and seeds. Another is that they are destroyed by the hydrogenation process food companies use to keep foods fresh longer. Sources of Omega-3 fats are fish, flax seeds, canola oil, and unhydrogenated soybean oil. Eat one source of them a day.
- Eggs are surprisingly low in saturated fats. They are high in cholesterol, but are also packed with protein, good fats, folic acid, and B vitamins. An egg is a better choice for breakfast than a doughnut.

4. Put an X before the items below that contain trans fats:

- x___ shortening x___ margarine
x___ fast food french fries x___ most commercial baked goods
x___ foods with "partially hydrogenated vegetable oil" on the ingredient list

Main point: All of these foods contain trans fats and should be used sparingly or avoided. Trans fats are man-made fats that are even more damaging than saturated fats. They are linked to higher levels of triglycerides and lipoprotein and therefore increased rates of heart disease.

More information

The U.S. in 2006 will require food companies to list the amount of trans fats in a product on the label. Until then, we consumers must fend for ourselves and know that if a food contains partially hydrogenated oils in the ingredients, it contains trans fats.

5. What is lost when whole wheat grains are refined? Put an X before all that apply:

- x___ bran and wheat germ x___ vitamins
x___ fiber, magnesium x___ unsaturated fats

Main point: Whole grain foods contain far more nutrition than foods made from refined grains. All should be checked.

More information

- White flour first came on the market as a novelty for the upper classes. Despite its nutritional poverty, it was a status symbol.
- The fact that refined flour can be stored much longer also motivated food companies to refine grains. Storage further reduces nutrition.

6. Which of the following ailments are you more likely to suffer from if you eat primarily refined grains? Check all that apply:

- x___ diabetes ___ chicken pox x___ constipation and other GI problems
x___ heart disease x___ mouth, stomach, colon, gallbladder and ovarian cancer

Main point: Whole grain foods have multiple health benefits. They have been shown to protect you from all the items listed except chicken pox!

More information

- Two large studies have shown that people who ate the equivalent of a bowl of oatmeal and two pieces of whole wheat bread per day were 30% less likely to develop type 2 diabetes than those who ate less than 2.5 grams of grain fiber.
- The Nurses' Health Study also showed that women who ate an average of 2.5 servings of whole grain foods a day were 30% less likely to develop heart disease than women eating one serving a week.
- Constipation accounts for over two million doctor visits a year. The fiber in whole grains helps prevent this.

7. Which of the following are whole grain products? Check all that apply:

☐ a bread advertised as "made with wheat flour"

☒ brown rice

☐ a bran cereal

☒ whole wheat noodles

☒ old fashioned oats

Main point: It is important to read food labels carefully. Brown rice and whole wheat noodles contain whole grains but "made with wheat flour" applies to any baked good. Bran cereal is good for you, but lacks the vitamin and oil-rich germ that a whole grain gives you. Look for foods that list whole wheat, whole oats, or some other whole grain first on the ingredient list.

8. Which of the following meet the current U.S. recommendation for your daily needs for fruits and vegetables? Put an X by all that apply.

☐ three apples, 1 cup of cooked green beans

☒ a cup of blueberries, two cups of a spinach salad with tomatoes and cucumber, a cup of fruit salad containing cantaloupe and bananas, a cup of stir-fry with broccoli, cauliflower, and carrots, a glass of orange juice.

☐ two glasses orange juice, a banana, an order of French fries, a baked potato

Main point: In early 2005, the federal government published a new set of dietary guidelines for Americans.² They recommend *nine* servings of fruits and vegetables per day. A serving is a half cup for most and a cup for leafy salads. The cup of fruit salad and the cup of stir-fry both count as two servings of 1/2 cup each. New guidelines suggest eating four and a half cups a day. The middle choice not only gives you 9 servings; it also gives you 10 different sets of plant compounds.

More information

- The first choice is a good start and gives you five servings of fruits/vegetables but not much variety. It is important to eat a variety of fruits and vegetables because each plant contains its own unique set of phytochemicals and vitamins.
- The third choice is better than nothing, but it includes potatoes. Nutritionally speaking, potatoes are mainly a source of starch and should not be counted as vegetables.
- Eat for color variety. Foods that are the same color often have similar nutrients.

² See *Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2005*, www.healthierus.gov/dietaryguidelines/

9. Put an A in front of the items that best describe animal sources of protein (meat and dairy products). Put a V in front of the items that best describe vegetable sources of protein (beans, legumes, nuts, grains).

A___ Are high in saturated fat.

V___ Are also a source of fiber.

V___ It is more efficient and creates less pollution to produce this kind of protein.

Main point: The first statement describes animal proteins; the next two describe vegetable proteins. Both kinds of protein are good for you, but animal proteins also give you saturated fat you probably don't need. Vegetable proteins provide fiber and other nutrients. Replacing at least some of the meat we eat with vegetable sources of protein is better for our bodies and the planet.

More information

- It takes 50 grams of grain to make one gram of edible protein from beef. The U.S. could feed 800 million people with the grain that livestock eat.³
- In the U.S., animals raised for food produce 130 times more waste than humans do.⁴

10. Which statement below is most accurate?

x___ Our bodies need protein daily because we don't store amino acids.

___ Vegetarians need to carefully calculate their consumption of complementary proteins to avoid a protein deficiency.

Main point: Our bodies need protein daily, but *many* foods contain protein. It is very hard to get too little protein in North America. Vegetarians should eat a wide variety of foods but do not need to be nutritional accountants to eat well.

More information

- Humans need about eight grams of protein per day for every 20 pounds of weight. That's about 50 grams a day for a woman and 65 grams for a man.
- Animal proteins are usually complete proteins, meaning they contain all the amino acids the body needs to make new proteins. Vegetable proteins (except for soybeans) often lack one or more of the essential amino acids. This does not mean they are inferior sources of protein; it just means you need to eat a variety of foods.
- Even foods that are not thought of as sources of protein contain several grams of protein. Potatoes, rice, broccoli, corn, mushrooms, and white bread are examples.
- Many ordinary dishes include complementary proteins. Macaroni and cheese, tofu and brown rice, pita bread and hummus, corn tortillas and beans, and a peanut butter sandwich are examples.

Unless a footnote indicates otherwise, the answers to this nutrition quiz are based on Walter C. Willett's book, *Eat, Drink and Be Healthy*, New York: Free Press, 2001. pp. 35-97. See this excellent book for more information.

³ Pimentel, Cornell University, 1997.

⁴ Stephen Webb, *Good Eating. The Christian Practice of Everyday Life Series*. Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2001, p. 24.

Leader Resource 2-2: Optional Meal for Unit 2

Sharing Wholesome Foods

If you wish to eat together this week, try either the Adventure Potluck or the Wholesome Foods Banquet below.

The Adventure Potluck

This meal gives you the opportunity to convert each other to new, healthy foods. It may also inspire you to rethink your approach to the time-honored tradition of potlucks in the future. A “healthy potluck” is a contradiction in terms in most settings! On the other hand, even healthy potlucks have perils: the more choices, the more people eat. If your group struggles with weight issues, opt for the Wholesome Foods banquet instead.

Before the Meal

- Ask each person to bring a healthy food that he or she enjoys eating.
- Also invite participants to bring copies of recipes, favorite healthy cookbooks or information on healthy places to shop.

During the Meal

- Take turns sharing stories about the foods on the table. Ask:
 Why is this food good for us?
 How did you learn to enjoy it?
- Thank each person for his or her offering.

The Wholesome Foods Banquet

It is not the richness of the food that makes this meal a banquet: it is the variety of fruits and vegetables served up. The suggested menu, found below, includes a fruit salad and a vegetable stew. The stew can be served over brown rice or whole wheat couscous. This meal includes over 20 plant foods, each packed with its own unique combination of vitamins and phytochemicals.

A suggested recipe and a script mentioning specific foods is provided for this meal. If you do not think your group would enjoy this recipe, you can substitute a vegetable-rich stew from your own tradition or alter the spices used. You will need to alter the script to fit your food.

Before the meal

- Ask for volunteers willing to prepare a fruit salad, a pot of stew, a pot of rice, or couscous.
- Make copies of the recipe on page 36 for them to use.
- Become familiar with the script on pages 37-38 so that you can read it smoothly. If you are altering the suggested ingredients, make the appropriate changes in the script.

During the meal

- Slowly read the script on pages 37-38 while people are eating. The goal is to help people eat slowly, savor their food, and learn more about the nutrients they are eating.

- Discuss: Does this food appeal to you? What barriers might prevent you from eating this way on a regular basis?

Suggested Menu

Algerian Stew served over brown rice or whole wheat couscous
Mixed fruit salad

Algerian Stew with Chicken or Chickpeas

Adapted from *The Garden Variety Cookbook* by Sarah Schlesinger

Serves 8

Preparation time: 25 min. Cooking time: 30 minutes

4 T. olive oil
2 medium onions, sliced
4 cloves garlic, minced
2 T. ground cumin
1 t. ground cinnamon
1/4 t. cayenne pepper or more to taste
4 c. chopped fresh or canned tomatoes, drained
4 carrots cut in 1-inch pieces
2 c. cauliflower florets
2 bell peppers, seeded, cut in 1-inch pieces
2 medium turnips, peeled and cubed
2 sweet potatoes, peeled and cut in 1-inch pieces
1 1/2 c. low salt chicken broth or vegetable stock
3 c. drained, cooked chick peas (garbanzo beans) **or** 2 lbs. chicken breasts cut in 1" strips
2 medium zucchini, sliced
1 c. seedless raisins
6 T. chopped fresh parsley
2 apples, peeled and cored

1. Heat the olive oil in a heavy soup pot over medium heat. Sauté onion and garlic for 5 minutes until tender.
2. Stir in cumin, cinnamon, and cayenne. Mix well.
3. Add tomatoes, carrots, celery, cauliflower, pepper, turnip, broth, chick peas. Bring to a boil, reduce heat; and simmer 20 minutes.
4. If you are adding chicken instead of chickpeas, add it now and cook for 5 minutes.
5. Add zucchini and raisins. Cook 5 minutes more.
6. Stir apple and parsley into stew just before eating. Serve over whole-wheat couscous or brown rice.

Brown Rice or Whole Wheat Couscous

Couscous is a pasta-like wheat product made from coarsely ground wheat. It can be found in the rice section of most grocery stores. The nice thing about couscous is that it cooks in five minutes. Follow directions on the package. If you use brown rice, remember that it needs to cook longer than white rice: about 45 minutes. Follow the directions on the package.

Fruit Salad

Make a mixed fruit salad containing at least seven different kinds of fruits. The fruits mentioned in the script below are strawberries, blueberries, and kiwi, but you can alter the script. Consider local availability, what's in season, and ethnic preferences. To find nutritional information on other fruits, try www.askdrsears.com and click on the family nutrition link. Or see www.healthalternatives2000.com.

nutritional information on other fruits, try www.askdrsears.com and click on the family nutrition link. Or see www.healthalternatives2000.com.

Options

- Omit items you can't find or substitute other vegetables in the stew. Alter the script below to fit your changes.
- To make the chopping and peeling go faster, have a few volunteers meet beforehand to prepare the stew and fruit salad together. Reorganize the lesson plan so that the stew can cook during the first part of your group. If cost of fresh vegetables is an issue, divide up the ingredient list among volunteers or pool funds to reimburse the shopper.
- Buy extra fruits or vegetables to make a colorful centerpiece for your table.
- Note that Leader Resource 3-10, page 56, shows the distances the food traveled when the author made a similar meal. The Wholesome Foods Banquet does not focus on this point, but since the menu is the same, this handout may be of interest. If you are not doing a meal with Units 3 or 4, you may wish to use Leader Resource 3-10 now.

Script for Wholesome Foods Banquet

After everyone has a plate of stew, read through the instructions below. Be careful not to rush.

Please listen and attend to your food rather than talking to your neighbor during this meal. We will eat in silence.

Spend a minute looking at the stew on your plate... Notice the colors of the food... If you can identify some of the vegetables, imagine what they looked like before they were chopped. Picture them growing on a healthy green plant... Give thanks for this meal.

Now spend a minute working with your nose. What spices can you distinguish? How would you describe the aroma of this food? Does it appeal to you?

Listen to your stomach. Are you hungry? Or are you just eating because it is mealtime and everyone else is eating? Pay attention to what your stomach tells you.

Slowly pick up your fork and taste a small bite of the stew. Choose the mouthful that looks tastiest to you. Chew slowly and take the time to savor this bite. Choose another morsel that looks especially good to you and take the time to savor it.

Now choose a piece of **tomato** and chew it slowly. This native of South and Central America is one of the most nutrient-dense foods we know of. It contains as many as 4,000 different phytonutrients and is rich in potassium and vitamin A. Potassium is essential to proper heart function and helps maintain water balance within cells. Vitamin A is needed for vision, bone growth, healthy skin, hair, and mucous membranes.

Tomatoes get their color from lycopene, a pigment that has been shown to protect men against prostate cancer. Enjoy this bite of tomato and imagine it nourishing your body.

Find a bite of **cauliflower** on your plate and chew it slowly. Reflect on its distinctive flavor. Cauliflower is in the crucifer family, whose members are all good sources of cancer-fighting agents. This vegetable gives you vitamin A, vitamin C, potassium, phosphorus, and folic acid.

Now spear a **sweet potato** and take a moment to admire its rich orange color. Let it dissolve in your mouth. One sweet potato gives you double your daily requirement of vitamin A and a good dose of potassium, calcium, and ascorbic acid.

Notice the **chickpeas** in your stew. These power-packed veggies give you protein without adding saturated fat to your diet. A half cup serving of chickpeas gives you 29% of your daily protein requirement. Chickpeas are also a good source of fiber, folate, and manganese.

Omit if serving couscous:

For your next bite, select a small forkful of **brown rice**. Chew it slowly and enjoy the texture. Today, six out of ten people in the world are eating rice. In China and Japan the word for rice also means “meal.”

The brown rice you are eating still contains the germ and bran layers of this grain. It has more vitamins, minerals, amino acids, and fiber than white rice. Brown rice is especially rich in fiber. A high fiber diet prevents digestive problems. It is also linked to lower cholesterol, lower risk of heart attack, and reduced risk of certain cancers.

Omit if serving brown rice:

For your next bite, select a small forkful of **couscous**. Chew it slowly and enjoy the texture. Couscous is a pasta-like wheat product made from coarsely ground wheat. It is originally from North Africa but can be found in the rice section of most grocery stores today. Whole wheat contains 13 B vitamins, vitamin E, and protein. B vitamins help your body cells convert carbohydrates into energy. A deficiency of vitamin B1 makes you tired.

Now try your fruit salad.

Start with a vivid red **strawberry**. Strawberries are high in fiber, vitamin A, and vitamin C. Enjoy the texture and flavor.

The **blueberries** in your fruit salad have made news in the last few years. They have the highest antioxidant capacity of all fresh fruits and vegetables tested. Antioxidants protect your cells from free radicals: byproducts of the body’s metabolism that can be damaging. Blueberries are also high in vitamin C, vitamin K, and manganese. Vitamin K plays a role in blood clotting and regulates calcium in the blood.

The **kiwi** in your fruit salad is a significant source of vitamin C and copper. You need copper to form red blood cells and supply oxygen to the body.

Take a moment to listen to your stomach again. Are you as hungry as you were when you started eating? Finish your meal at your own pace, continuing to pay attention to the tastes and smells of your food. When you are no longer hungry, stop eating even if there is food on your plate.

Unit 3

Hunger

This will be your fourth session. Group members were asked to read Unit 3 in the Participant Book before attending, but can still fit in and learn even if they have not.

Quick Overview of this Session

- Hear the stories of the hungry through a *lectio divina* exercise that employs both ancient and modern voices. (20-25 minutes)
- Hear the stories of the hungry by examining our own memories. (Time included above)
- Experience the reality of hunger by sharing the cheapest bread and beverage available. (Time included above)
- Learn about people who are working against hunger and reflect on the ways their work addresses the root causes of hunger. (25-30 minutes)
- Imagine ways individuals in your group might respond to hunger. (10-15 minutes)

Key Ideas

- Hunger is a spiritual problem, not an inevitable consequence of limited resources. The UN calls it a lack of political will. Jesus might have called it a rejection of servant leadership.
- Root causes of hunger include poverty, powerlessness, debt, violence and militarism, increasing populations, environmental degradation, economic globalization, and AIDS.
- Many wise and compassionate people are working against hunger. They offer us signs of hope and welcome our help.
- Faith practices and lifestyle choices that remember the hungry can open the door for God's Spirit to move in surprising ways.

Important Questions

- What is the closest you've ever come to hunger?
- Why are people hungry? Would you agree with the introduction in the Participant Book that says there is enough food for all, but not all people can afford it?
- Which of the root causes of hunger have you witnessed or experienced? What would you add to the list?
- What responses to hunger do you find most authentic? If you had a year of your life to give to those who are hungry, how would you spend it?

Advance Preparation

- Buy a loaf of the cheapest bread you can find and prepare a pitcher of Kool-Aid or other inexpensive powdered drink to serve during the *lectio divina* exercise. You will also need cups and napkins.
- Each person will need a copy of this week's *lectio divina* from Lamentations (pages 16-17) and a slip with a comment or story from someone who is hungry today. These are found on Leader Resource 3-1, pages 43-44. Make one copy and cut it apart.
- If you choose to do option 2, copy the first person accounts by people who work against hunger on Leader Resources 3-3 to 3-7, pages 47-51.

- Consider whether your group can share this week's optional meal, described on Leader Resource 3-8, page 52. Schedule a time if possible.
- Write instructions for Activity 1 on a white board or flip chart.

Resource pages for this session:

- 3-1 Voices of the Hungry, page 43
- 3-2 Hunger Quiz and answers, page 45
- 3-3 People Against Hunger: Konrad Bald, page 47
- 3-4 People Against Hunger: Manuel Onalan, page 48
- 3-5 People Against Hunger: Frances Moore Lappé, page 49
- 3-6 People Against Hunger: Lisa Joels, page 50
- 3-7 People Against Hunger: Bongi, page 51
- 3-8 The Hunger Hidden in Our Food: Optional Meal for Unit 3, pages 52
- 3-9 Reading for Optional Meal, page 53
- 3-10 Chart showing the distance food from a single meal traveled, page 56

Suggested Lesson Plan

As people gather

Put your loaf of bread and pitcher of Kool-Aid on a stand or table in the center of the room with a stack of empty bowls nearby. As people arrive, invite them to take a bowl and silently review the ways they have thought about or acted in response to the hunger readings this week. Pass out the readings from Lamentations and assign one person to read each of the segments during the *lectio divina* exercise. Also give each person one of the contemporary voices of hunger from Leader Resource 3-1. Some will be familiar from the Participant Guide.

Activity 1: Hearing the Voices of the Hungry (Up to 25 minutes)

a) Begin by lighting a candle and offering the following instructions. Participants may find it helpful if you write them on the board.

“This week’s *lectio divina* exercise will be a time of silence and lament for the 852 million people who cannot count on having enough to eat. We will begin by hearing the words of scripture which tell of hunger thousands of years ago. During the silence that follows, you are invited to do any of the following:

- Read the comment from a hungry person that you have before you. Listen to these voices with the same reverent attention we give to scripture.
- Take a piece of bread from the table and place it in someone else’s empty bowl or offer a drink.
- Name a specific person, group or country that faces hunger.
- Name a ministry that works against hunger.
- Remain silent. Malnourished people do not have the energy for speech and activity.
- As usual, listen for words or phrases that speak to you and for what Christ is saying to you today.”

b) Move from voices on paper to personal experiences. Ask your group:

“What is the closest you’ve come to hunger or to someone who struggled with hunger? Not just emptiness between meals, but a day-to-day worry about where the next meal is coming from?”

Depending on the socioeconomic status of your congregation, people may have difficulty answering that question. Hunger, like domestic violence, is something people hide. Not everyone will wish to share personal experiences. Others may never have been asked this question and will be grateful for the opportunity to share. Still others will think they have

never known a hungry person. The objective is not to embarrass people, but to help them see an invisible problem. These additional questions may jog people's memories:

- Who in our congregation has a job that might make him aware of hunger in our community? A teacher? A social worker? A volunteer?
- Do you know any elderly people who live alone and have difficulty getting around?
- Was paying for groceries ever a challenge for you when you were a college or graduate student?
- Where do you cross paths with people who make no more than minimum wage?
- What about international friends who may be well off here, but grew up in a country where hunger was rampant? Have you ever asked them to tell you about childhood experiences?

c) Close your time of reflection with this prayer from Latin America or a similar one:

*O God, to those who have hunger give bread,
and to us who have bread give us a hunger for justice.*

Activity 2: Responding to Hunger (up to 35 minutes)

a) Review page 17 in the Participant Book, outlining the root causes of hunger. Ask:

- Which of the root causes of hunger have you witnessed or experienced?
- What would you add to the list?

b) Leader Resources 3-3 to 3-7 tell stories of individuals who are working with hunger issues in one way or another. They feature:

- A volunteer who raises money for hunger through CROP WALKS
- A Filipino community organizer
- A well-known researcher, writer, and theorist
- A woman providing hands-on help to young families
- African women coping with AIDS

Break into pairs or groups of three or four and give each group one or two case studies to examine from Leader Resources 3-3 to 3-7. (Two people can read off of each sheet.)

c) Discuss the following questions within small groups. They are also printed on the case studies.

- What motivated this person to become involved with hunger issues?
- How did he or she go about exploring the problem?
- What appears to be the cause — or causes — of the hunger this person is addressing?
- Which of the root causes of hunger does this person's ministry address? See the Participant Guide, page 17.

Allow 10-15 minutes for reading and discussion within small groups and then return to the larger group. Ask groups to introduce the person they read about and share their answers to the discussion questions.

Activity 3: Responding to Hunger

After each group has reported, ask: "If you had a year of your life to devote to the hungry, how would you spend it?" Encourage participants to flesh out their "hunger year" in as much detail as possible. You may wish to suggest a few examples such as the following to get ideas flowing:

- Lobbying/advocacy around poverty and hunger
- Peacemaking efforts
- Working with government programs such as WIC
- Becoming involved with a food pantry or shelter

- Providing job training or jobs with reasonable wages
- Organizing a community CROP WALK
- Simplifying your life in order to give money to the poor
- Spending time in prayer
- Spending time with people who are poor or becoming poor yourself in order to be with and understand those who are hungry
- Being a mission volunteer
- Donating or investing money

Closing

Check the first two suggestions under Adapting Session 4, page 60. If you'd like a volunteer to report on local foods for next week's session on food and the environment or want your group to bring a natural object next week, now is the time to ask them.

Suggestions for Adapting Session 3

If you have 45 minutes

- You will need to omit Activity 3 or shorten Activity 2 by keeping the discussion within small groups.
- If your group is small and time is short, focus on just one of the case studies suggested in Activity 2 without splitting up.

If you have 90 minutes or more

- Make copies of the Hunger Quiz located on Leader Resource 3-2, page 45, and begin the session by working through this together.
- During Activity 2c), give each group two case studies to reflect on so they have more breadth and can compare the two.
- Consider sharing a Hidden Hunger meal, remembering the people who grow and pick our food. See Leader Resource 3-8 and 3-9, pages 52 to 55.

If you have more than 12 people

- More than one group may be reading the same case study.
- Return to the smaller groups for Activity 2c) instead of discussing this with the whole group.

More ideas for adapting this session

- If your group worked through the Participant Book this week, they may wish to discuss their reading and the faith practices they tried. If they have experiences with hunger ministries in your community, they may wish to discuss these. Ask about the week, the readings, the Faith in Action steps people chose. Hear from your group instead of going into the case studies. What are the root causes of the hunger you see in *your* community?
- Follow Activity 2 as written, but instead of using the case studies provided in the Resource Pages, provide information from local hunger ministries in your area.
- If your group doesn't read the Participant Book, walk them through the faith practices they missed. Working through the hunger quiz, Leader Resource 3-2, is another way to paint the big picture.

Leader Resource 3-1

Voices of the Hungry

“My husband knew he was going to be in the field for three weeks. He also knew that I would be here by myself with very little money and no dishes or pots and pans. So he went down to McDonald’s on Sunday when hamburgers were thirty-nine cents and bought twenty-one of them. I’ve been eating one hamburger every day for the last twenty days.”

- a young Marine’s wife*

“I’d say [to my kids], ‘We’re going to try all these new kinds of really cool foods that we’ve never tasted before.’ I was like ‘Wow, look, they come in cans and packages where you just add water.’ They would laugh... and clap their hands and jump up and down and I would laugh too, but underneath I felt just terrible about it because I knew they couldn’t eat in a healthy way and neither could I.

“I’m supposed to have a low-fat diet because I have high cholesterol, but that’s not what was available. When you’re poor you take what ever you can get...”

- an upper middleclass mother plunged into poverty by an unexpected divorce

“This time I had all the papers I needed to prove that we were really poor and that the five kids were really hungry. But the woman I talked to still acted like we must be doing something wrong. She warned me about food stamp fraud and she said my husband’s salary seemed too low for all the hours he was working. She said they could put me in jail if the figures I was giving them had been altered in any way. By the time they eventually began giving us food stamps, I was scared to death that they might decide to put us in jail for something that we were doing wrong.”

- a U.S. mother

“The first thing malnourished children do is cut down on discretionary activity like talking, reading, and interacting. They sleep more, they play less, and they connect less. By the time most kids get to me, they have become so listless and tired that they have slept through many opportunities for learning... Since learning is cumulative, just think how much learning is lost over many years of hunger.”

- a Boston pediatrician who runs a Failure to Thrive program, Hunger in America

“By this time we was living on nothing but the bread and lunch meat that I stole from the mini-mart. I wanted to stop... saying grace over the lunch meat I stole really bothered me. I could hardly swallow it. I’d get cramps and feel like I had to throw up. I felt so guilty that one night I told the owner what I been doing. Luckily he felt bad for me and he began giving me the lunch meat that was past the date.”

- a teenage mother, Hunger in America

* The first five quotes from Loretta Schwartz-Nobel, *Growing Up Empty: Hunger in America*. New York: HarperCollins, 2002.

“I am the head of my household since the death of my mother. She died in my hands. Since then, I have given up on school. I must give my attention to my younger brothers. It is what I promised my mother... The problem is to feed them. When they come from school to get lunch, and find nothing, they return to school crying. Often I also cry when they cry.”

– *a teenager orphaned by AIDS in Rwanda*

If all 36 million Americans faced with food insecurity stood in line at a food pantry in New York City, the line would stretch to Los Angeles and back twice.

“I never take care of crowds, only of one person. If I stop to look at the crowds, I would never begin.”

– *Mother Theresa*

The U.S. poverty line is about \$18,000/year for a family of four. A single parent working fifty hours a week at minimum wage can only earn \$12,875 a year.

“It wasn’t my turn to eat breakfast this morning.”

– *a U.S. child*

“My children were hungry and I told them the rice is cooking, until they fell asleep from hunger.”

– *from Egypt*

“I asked God for enough to eat and clothes to wear, but he does not reply.”

– *from Bangladesh*

Leader Resource 3-2

Hunger Quiz

This is an optional exercise for the Unit 3 session. Most of these questions are covered in the Introduction to Hunger in the Participant Book, page 17.

1. The number of hungry people in the world is closest to the entire population of:
A) New York City B) the U.S. C) North America D) the Western Hemisphere
2. **True or False:** World hunger has decreased over the past century, with the greatest gains made since 1995.
3. **True or False:** Most people who die of hunger die in a famine related to natural disasters.
4. How many people die of hunger each day, worldwide?
A) 4,000 B) 10,000 C) 20,000 D) 24,000
5. What percent of the number of deaths above are children under five?
A) 25% B) 50% C) 75% D) 90%
6. What percent of people suffering from hunger worldwide are women and girls?
A) 80% B) 70% C) 60% D) 50%
7. In the United States, ____ percent of the population lives in poverty.
A) 6% B) 9% C) 12.5% D) 30%
8. If all 36 million Americans faced with food insecurity stood in line at a food pantry in New York City, the line would stretch to:
A) Chicago B) Denver C) Los Angeles D) To Los Angeles and back
9. **True or False:** It is possible for a family of five to fall below the poverty line even if both parents are working full time.
10. **True or False:** Globalization benefits hungry people by enabling them to find new markets for their goods.
11. Who said, "I never take care of crowds, only of one person. If I stop to look at the crowds, I would never begin."

Leader Resource 3-2

Hunger Quiz Answers

1. D) According to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the number of chronically hungry people in the world is estimated at 852 million. This is closest to the population of the Western Hemisphere, roughly 875 million.

2. False: trick question. Hunger *has* decreased over the last century with the greatest improvements made in Asia. However, the period from the mid-1990s to the present has seen an increase in hungry people. Between 1995 and 2001, the number of malnourished people across the developing world grew an average of 4.5 million a year. The AIDS pandemic in sub-Saharan Africa is a factor.

3. False. These deaths account for less than 10% of hunger deaths. Many more die from hunger related to war and even more die from chronic malnutrition due to poverty.

4. D) At least 25,000

5. C) 75%

6. B) 70% Gender matters when it comes to hunger. The elderly are another at-risk population.

7. C) 12.5% That's 36 million people.

8. D) A line of 36 million people would reach to Los Angeles and back.

9. True. Two parents working full time at minimum wage (\$5.15/hr.) would earn about \$20,600. The poverty line for a family of five is \$22,030. Also note that the method for calculating the poverty line was developed in the 1960s before health care costs rose dramatically. Many families living over the poverty line still experience hunger.

10. More often than not, this is false. The liberalization of trade, along with communication and transportation advances, has created new market opportunities if one has the capital, infrastructure, training, and vision to take advantage of these opportunities. Hungry people, especially small-scale farmers, who make up a large percentage of the poor, rarely benefit. Rather, increasing hunger and the threat of famine are often the result as cheap imports rush in and the poor find their markets eroded by goods from industrialized nations. A Church World Service executive reports that a Filipino who worked with people displaced by commercial mining operations in Mindinao once told him, "If you are rich, globalization means development. If you are poor, globalization means death."

11. Mother Theresa

Leader Resource 3-3

People Against Hunger: Konrad Bald

Volunteer — It's good for you, and others, too!

I will never forget having to beg for food. As a teenager, I trudged from farm to farm in post WWII Germany, asking for help. My family had nothing to trade so I just begged. Luckily — and maybe it was because I was so skinny -- the farm wives were generous and would usually give me some bread. Good farm bread!

My fortune took a turn when my high school advisor told me about a U.S. program, run by the military, to bring selected German students to study in the United States for one year to learn about democracy. The advisor urged me to apply, which I did. That fall I found myself headed for Cornell with a one-year scholarship. The most important thing that happened during that year was the meeting of my wonderful wife, Dell, who was also a student at Cornell. I came to the United States as an immigrant in 1952 and built my career. Dell and I moved to Barrington, IL, in 1981, where we joined the Atonement Lutheran Church.

In 1983 the pastor at Atonement asked me to represent the church at a CROP WALK meeting. That got me on the committee to plan the first-ever Barrington CROP WALK. It also involved me with local hunger agencies and opened my eyes to some parts of the community I had not known about. It was a surprise to learn that there was so much hunger in the richest country in the world!

After I retired from the nerve-wracking corporate world in 1984, I decided to get more active in social ministries, and so started my second “career” as a volunteer. My positions with the CROP WALK, the Northern Illinois Food Bank, Public Action to Deliver Shelter (PADS), the Steven Ministry, among others, have kept me busier than ever. It is also more rewarding than my previous work, and I would highly recommend finding ways to volunteer to everyone. There is much to do!

- Konrad Bald, who tells his story above, is known as “the longest serving volunteer” with the Northern Illinois Food Bank. He has served for 15 years with the Northwest Suburban PADS and has become the number-one CROPWALKER in the U.S. In his 21 years of walking, Konrad has raised more than \$100,000 to feed the hungry. His highest single year saw him top \$21,000 — an individual effort that exceeds many CROP WALK totals for entire communities! Konrad is also an avid organic gardener and bakes a mean loaf of sourdough rye bread!

Discussion Questions

- What motivated this person to become involved with hunger issues?
- How did he go about exploring the problem?
- What appear to be the causes — of the hunger this person is addressing?
- Which of the root causes of hunger does this person's ministry address? See page 17 of the Participant Book.

Leader Resource 3-4

People Against Hunger: Manuel Onalan

I was born in Chananaw, one of the tribal villages in the central Cordillera mountains of northern Philippines that was least influenced by the encroachment of outside culture. Travel outside the village became more common in the 1960s. Villagers slowly learned about the market economy by selling and exchanging goods.

As the quest for more production heightened, people cleared wider mountain slopes to plant cash crops, particularly coffee and white beans. This resulted in deforestation and massive topsoil erosion; riverbeds were silted and fish habitats destroyed. Deforestation has also led to the disappearance of the Philippine national bird (the monkey-eating eagle), hawks, reptiles, and other wild animals that used to prey on rodents and rice birds. With their predators gone, the rodents and rice birds now do a lot of damage to farmers' crops.

Producing beans is physically difficult, and the return from all that hard labor is a very small amount of cash. Our tribal people are always at a disadvantage when they exchange their agricultural produce for manufactured goods at the town center or in Tabuk, the provincial capital.

I left the village after third grade to continue going to school, and I didn't plan to return. During the last two years of my college days in the mid-1980s, I got a job working for an American electronics company and at night I attended resistance meetings and protests against the Marcos dictatorship. [During this time,] my appreciation of the Cordillera indigenous cultures was reawakened. That gave me the impetus to return home.

As there was no structure in place for my people to help themselves, I committed myself to help build systems for the tribe's development. With some active elders and young leaders of the tribe, we regularly gathered during evenings and Sundays to brainstorm what to do. At the end of 1988 we organized Ichananaw Tribal Assembly to serve as the institutional channel for the tribe's development. A council of elders was set up as the collective leadership.

The assembly drew up a short-term program to respond to the urgent needs of the tribe such as repairing irrigation canals, widening the foot trails, installing a potable water system, establishing solidarity linkages with outside groups, and continuing awareness-raising among the people on issues such as reforestation.

Today we produce and directly market a variety of red rice called *unoy* to wealthier people, and we are thus able to bring in more money per hectare. By selling the special red rice, farmers can dictate the price of their product and avoid becoming captive to the price fluctuations that are so common in the white rice market.

One cornerstone of ITA's strategies is widening its linkages and partnerships with groups that espouse the principles we believe in. In 1997, ITA established a *bodong* with Mennonite Central Committee, a U.S. development agency. A *bodong* is a peace covenant traditional to people in the Cordilleras. By entering into a *bodong*, the two groups committed themselves to foster the respect of life, to pursue peace and cultural understanding, and to promote development.

- Adapted from "First Person: Manuel Onalan," in *A Common Place*, November 2003. This is a magazine of the Mennonite Central Committee. To subscribe, e-mail acp@mcc.org.

Discussion Questions

- What motivated this person to become involved with hunger issues?
- How did he go about exploring the problem?
- What appear to be the causes of the hunger this person is addressing?
- Which of the root causes of hunger does this person's work address? See page 17 of the Participant Book.

Leader Resource 3-5

People Against Hunger: Frances Moore Lappé

For two years, 1967 and 1968, I worked as a community organizer in Philadelphia with a national nonprofit organization of welfare recipients — the Welfare Rights Organization. Our goal was to ensure that welfare recipients got what they were entitled to by law.

Most evenings I came home in tears. Perhaps I had helped someone get her full welfare payment, or forced a landlord to make a critical repair. But I realized that even if I succeeded each day in my immediate goal, I was in no way addressing the root causes of the suffering that was so evident to me. The woman I worked most closely with died of a heart attack at the age of forty-five. I was convinced she died of the stress of poverty.

During these years I became more desperate, not less. But I just kept on doing what I was doing, because I did not know what else to do... Then in the spring of 1969, I made the most important decision of my life... I vowed not to do *anything* to try to “change the world” until I understood why I had chosen one path instead of another, until I understood how my actions could attack the roots of needless suffering.

Very soon, after only a few months, I began to hone in on food.

Why food? In part I was influenced by the emerging ecology movement and the “limits to growth” consciousness. But part of the reason I chose to focus on food was more personal. I became aware of people around me in Berkeley eating differently from the way I did. Some of the foods I had never heard of — bulgur, soy grits, mung beans, tofu, buckwheat groats. What were all these strange things: I was attracted by the incredible variety of colors, aromas, textures. I remember devouring my first “natural foods” cookbook as if it were a novel...

...My diet was changing. My feelings about myself were changing. At the same time, I was learning about “world food problems.” Soon I was reading everything I could find on food and hunger. Something told me that because food is so basic to all of us, if we could just grasp the causes of hunger we would clear a path to understanding the complexities of politics and economics that overwhelm and paralyze so many...

...I read, took notes. I audited courses from soil science to tropical agriculture... I responded to the information I was learning, letting it lead me to the next question. Overall, I wanted to find out just how close we were to the earth’s limits. I wanted to find out for myself the causes of hunger. I wanted to find out what were the important questions to ask ...

...Newspaper headlines and textbooks were all telling me that we had reached the limits of the earth’s ability to feed people. Famine is inevitable we were (and still are) told. Yet my own modest research had shown me that in my own country the food system was well-designed to get rid of a tremendous abundance of grain created by a relentless push to increase production. Because hungry people throughout the world could not afford to buy that grain, it was fed to livestock to provide more meat to the already well-fed. Suddenly I understood that questions about the roots of needless hunger had to focus not on the simple physical limits of the earth, but on the economic and political forces that determine what is planted and who eats...

- from Frances Moore Lappé, *Diet for a Small Planet*, 20th Anniversary Edition. New York: Ballantine Books, 1991, pp. 17-21.

Over thirty years ago, Frances Moore Lappé wrote a one-page handout on her findings that later became the book, Diet for a Small Planet. She has worked on food issues ever since and is a co-founder of The Institute for Food and Development Policy, better known as Food First. This organization is a member-supported, nonprofit “peoples” think tank and education-for-action center. Their work highlights root causes and value-based solutions to hunger and poverty around the world, with a commitment to establishing food as a fundamental human right.

Leader Resource 3-6

People Against Hunger: Lisa Joels

I started HELP (Helping Enlisted Lives Prosper) after I went to Philadelphia and listened to Colin Powell speak at the President's Summit on Volunteerism. He said, "Go out and help a neighbor. The hardest thing you'll ever do is hold a stranger's hand." It was at a vulnerable time in my own life and his words really got to me.

My son has cancer and he had just gone into remission. I felt so grateful that I wanted to give something back. I'd heard that a lot of enlisted families were having a hard time but I'd never explored it. This time was different; I felt energized and determined. As soon as I got back home, I began driving around the base and knocking on the doors of all the new families. First, I introduced myself; then I asked them how they were doing and if they needed anything. It didn't take long. When I got about four houses into it, I found a girl living in a totally empty house. She didn't tell me anything was wrong, she just seemed really glad that someone had stopped by to welcome her. She invited me in. As soon as I got inside, I said, "Hey, where's your furniture?" She said, "We don't have any." I said, "Where's your car?" She said, "We don't have one." I said, "Where do you sleep?" She pointed to a sleeping bag crumpled up in the middle of the floor. Then I asked if she and the baby had enough food to eat. First, she nodded yes, then her eyes filled up with tears. I was dumbfounded. I came home and I said to my husband, "... You're not going to believe this but, honest to God, I just found these people right down the road from us who have absolutely nothing. She's sixteen years old with a four-month-old baby. Her eighteen-year-old husband was too proud to say, 'I have no bed. I have no food. I have nothing.'"

-from *Loretta Schwartz-Nobel*, *Growing Up Empty: The Hunger Epidemic in America*, New York: HarperCollins, 2002.

My name is Crystal Currie. I am a single mother in the United States Marine Corps. I came to Quantico, VA (from Okinawa, Japan) on 29 September 1998. I was six months pregnant, scared and ready to get out of the Marine Corps. Once I arrived in Virginia, I was placed in Base Housing. I paid out of my pocket, 75% of the rent without furniture of any kind. I had just gotten here and didn't know what to do or who to ask for anything. I was then told about this organization called HELP (Helping Enlisted Lives Prosper). A lady by the name of Lisa came to visit me at the barracks and told me all about herself and the organization. She then took me to a garage sale and I picked out a lot of baby things such as: baby bed, baby swing, car seat, clothes, bottles, toys, baby chair, etc. She also had some furniture for the house. I had gotten end tables, couch, chairs, kitchen tables, dressers, beds, etc. She then took me shopping for groceries and for other necessary needs for the house.

- from the HELP website, www.help-enlisted.org

Lisa Joels founded Helping Enlisted Lives Prosper at Quantico, a Marine training center in Dumfries, Virginia. HELP builds relationships with America's junior military families by providing basic necessities for their homes free of charge and guiding them toward programs that meet their needs. Lisa also teaches classes in cooking, money management, and life skills.

Discussion Questions

- What motivated this person to become involved with hunger issues?
- How did she go about exploring the problem?
- What appear to be the causes of the hunger she is addressing?
- Which of the root causes of hunger does her work address? See page 17 of the Participant Book.

Leader Resource 3-7

People Against Hunger: Bonggi

The South African province of KwaZulu-Natal is the site of the fastest growing HIV/AIDS infection rate in the world. Here, Church World Service supports the Sinikithemba Center in the city of Durban. A local hospital established this center, with a name that means “We give hope” in Zulu, in order to provide a wide range of medical and support services to families living with AIDS. The Center’s AIDS pin program, for example, enables local women to earn an income using their skills in traditional Zulu beadwork.

In an atmosphere of trust and community, over 300 women are threading together a more hope-filled future for themselves and their families. Says a woman named Bonggi, whose life has been altered forever by AIDS, “My son was only six months old when I found out he had AIDS. I didn’t know I was HIV-positive until he died. I didn’t have a job. My life turned upside down. A friend suggested I visit the Center for people living with AIDS. They taught me how to help myself. Now I make beaded crafts that the Center sells for me. With that money I can help support my family and myself.”

In addition to assisting their efforts at self-sufficiency, the Center educates the women on all aspects of HIV/AIDS and works to dispel the myths that stigmatize the sick. As a result, Bonggi and her sisters who take part in the program face the future with greater confidence and self-respect. Says Bonggi, “Now I can accept everything that I am. I know I am HIV-positive. I know I can do something about it. I can help other people and other people can help me by encouraging me. People should welcome every person that reveals his or her HIV status. We must not be pitied, cast away, or looked down upon. We are all the same in the eyes of God.”

The reality of AIDS is lived out one life, or death, at a time. And more often than not, it is a woman’s reality, either as caregiver, or as a person living with AIDS, or both. Empowering HIV-affected women by fostering income-generating projects is an essential part of the CWS AIDS strategy in Africa, and elsewhere.

- *From Service, Spring 2002, A Church World Service Publication. For more information see Global AIDS: Facing the Crisis, at www.churchworldservice.org/FactsHaveFaces/aidsfactsheet.htm*

Discussion Questions

- What motivated this person to become involved with hunger issues?
- How did she go about exploring the problem?
- What appears to be the cause — or causes — of the hunger she is addressing?
- Which of the root causes of hunger does her ministry address? See page 17 of the Participant Book.

Leader Resource 3-8: Optional Meal for Unit 3

Hidden Hunger and the Food We Eat

This meal is a light lunch or supper focusing on the fact that some of the people who provide us with food are hungry themselves. While the group shares a few simple foods, the leader provides information about where these foods come from and who picks and grows them. The meal also includes prayer for farm workers.

Before the Meal

Items you need:

- Three candles
- Push pins/thumbtacks (Use the kind that stick out rather than the flat kind.)
- Bulletin board
- World map
- Yarn
- A few copies of Leader Resource 3-10, page 56, to pass around

Your meal should include the following featured foods:

- Tomatoes
- An item purchased at a grocery chain (rolls or crackers are suggested)
- Bananas
- Coffee (Fair Trade if possible. See www.equalexchange.com)

Suggested menu:

Tomato soup or a tomato-based soup including other vegetables, served with whole wheat bread or crackers, banana slices, and coffee.

Advance preparation:

- Purchase food and prepare the meal or find volunteers to do it.
- Fasten your world map to a bulletin board and find a location for it that everyone can see.
- Arrange the three candles around a chalice and paten.
- Find three readers for the reading below and a fourth person to place thumbtacks.
- The thumbtack person should review geography beforehand in order to find the places mentioned without fumbling.

During the Meal

- Use the reading on the following pages. The information below is arranged as a reading for three voices. If you share this information as a reading, it takes about 10-15 minutes. You will need a fourth person to place thumbtacks.
- If you prefer not to do the whole reading, share selected facts as you eat.
- Also pass around a copy of “The U.S.A.: Where Every Meal is an International Meal,” Leader’s Guide, page 56, to show how many different places touch our lives through the food we eat.

Leader Resource 3-9: Reading for Meal #3

Hidden Hunger and the Food We Eat

(Light first candle.)

Voice 1: As we light this candle, we remember farm workers in the United States who pick many of our fruits and vegetables. Cesar Chavez once said, “The food that overflows our market shelves and fills our tables is harvested by men, women, and children who often cannot satisfy their own hunger.”

Voice 2: This is still true today. Farm workers in the United States earn an average of \$8,000 per year. The federal poverty line is about \$18,000 per year for a family of four. Two-thirds of our nation's migrant households, and seventy percent of our nation's migrant children, live below the federal poverty line.⁵

Voice 3: Farm workers have the lowest annual family incomes of any U.S. wage and salary workers.⁶ Farm worker wages have declined by more than 20 percent in the last twenty years, after accounting for inflation.⁷

Voice 1: Migrant farm workers pick broccoli in the Salinas Valley of California and cherries in Michigan; they cut Christmas trees in North Carolina and process carrots in Oregon. They work in many other states too. Most of our fruits and vegetables are still harvested by hand. *(Place thumbtacks in the places mentioned.)*

Voice 2: The tomatoes in your soup may well have come from Florida, as Florida is the number one tomato producer in the U.S. The largest farm worker community in Florida is located near the town of Immokee. *(Place a thumbtack there.)*

Voice 3: Tomatoes still need to be harvested by hand. This is a hot, dirty job that requires heavy lifting. In the state of Florida, many tomato pickers have not had a pay raise in over 20 years. They still earn between 40-50 cents for each 32-pound bucket they pick.⁸

Voice 1: But what can we do, here in ____ *(your town)* ____? *(Place a thumbtack in the appropriate spot on your map.)*

Voice 2: Here's what some people are doing. Taco Bell, owned by YUM Brands, is a major buyer of Florida tomatoes. In 2000, the Coalition of Immokalee Workers (CIW) made Taco Bell aware of the conditions workers in their suppliers' fields experienced, but they did not respond.

Voice 3: It is not our position to become involved in the affairs of our tomato buyers, they said.

Voice 1: A year later, the CIW launched a national boycott of Taco Bell. They demanded that Taco Bell recognize its role in exploiting farm workers and address the human rights

⁵ Daniel Rothenberg, *With These Hands: The Hidden World of Migrant Farm Workers Today*. New York, San Diego, London: Harcourt Brace and Company, 1998.

⁶ Charles D. Thompson Jr. and Melinda F. Wiggins, *The Human Cost of Food: Farmworkers' Lives, Labor and Advocacy*. University of Texas Press; Austin; 2002.

⁷ National Farm Worker Ministry website, www.nfwm.org

⁸ Coalition of Immokalee Workers (CIW). Immokalee, Florida., www.ciw-online.org. Also see www.pcusa.org/fairfood.

violations in its supply chain. Farm workers were asking for just a penny more per pound, which would significantly improve their annual incomes of about \$7,500. They organized and inspired students, church people and entire denominations to support their righteous cause.

Voice 2: Amazingly, in March 2005, after boycotting for almost four years, Taco Bell and YUM agreed to all of the farm workers' demands plus some! This was an historic agreement that concretely addresses the poverty wages and working conditions of farm workers. Of course, this affects only a small number of farm workers and so much more needs to be done. But it is a great start.

Voice 3: Let's remember the farm workers who pick our tomatoes -- when we pray and when we shop. (*Moment of silence. Light second candle.*)

Voice 2: As we light this second candle, we remember farm workers in the developing world who grow our coffee, our bananas, and many other foods.

Voice 3: One of the root causes of hunger is the deep poverty in rural areas of developing nations. Over 70 percent of the one billion people in the world who are chronically undernourished live in rural areas.

Voice 1: Coffee farmers are one example of farm workers who live in remote areas. There are many steps in the coffee chain from producer to consumer, with traders called "coyotes" in Latin America, to roasters and marketers in the U.S.

Voice 2: About 25 million farmers and coffee workers in over 50 countries are involved in producing coffee. The largest producer and exporter is Brazil, followed by Colombia, Vietnam, Indonesia, and Mexico. (*Add thumbtacks to these countries.*)

Voice 3: Coffee is one of the most valuable traded commodities in the world, second only to oil. The U.S. drinks 1/5th of the world's coffee, making it the world's largest coffee consumer.

Voice 1: The price of coffee on the world market fluctuates wildly and coffee farmers have no control over it. Often they need to sell their beans at a price lower than production costs, sending them into debt.

Voice 2: As of November 2004, coffee prices on the world market were around \$.60-\$.70 per pound. In 2001 they were as low as \$.41 per pound.

Voice 3: But what can we do?

Voice 1: Some people insist on buying only Fair Trade coffee. Fair Trade companies work with small family farmers organized into cooperatives. These cooperatives receive a guaranteed minimum of \$1.26 per pound for their coffee beans. This minimum price provides coffee farmers with desperately needed economic stability.

Voice 2: A small coffee farmer from El Salvador says: "Thanks to fair trade, we will not die of hunger."

Voice 3: There are fair trade bananas, too. Fair Trade bananas were introduced in Europe in the late 1990s. In Switzerland, 25 percent of the bananas sold are fair trade. They came to the U.S. in 2004.

Voice 1: In recent years it has become much harder for banana farmers to earn enough money to support their families. The price of bananas has fallen worldwide. In addition,

changes in world trade rules mean farmers now face increased competition from multinational companies, which can grow bananas much more cheaply. Banana producers are constantly pressured to produce at even lower prices, pushing down wage levels and working conditions on plantations in an attempt to remain competitive.⁹ In Ecuador, some banana farmers make as little as a dollar a day.

Voice 2: Major exporters of bananas include Ecuador, Costa Rica, Colombia, Honduras, the Philippines, Panama, and Guatemala. Fair Trade bananas come from small farms in Ghana, Costa Rica, and the Windward Islands.¹⁰ *(Add tacks to the appropriate places.)*

Voice 3: Let's remember the farm workers around the world who grow our coffee, our bananas, and other crops. Let us remember them when we pray and when we shop. *(Moment of silence; light third candle.)*

Voice 1: As we light this candle, we remember workers in the food service industry who stock our shelves, bag our groceries, and serve us in restaurants. *(Add several thumbtacks to the U.S. at random.)*

Voice 2: According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, the average wage for workers at fast food counters is between \$6-\$7 an hour.

Voice 3: The average wage for restaurant kitchen workers and cashiers is in the \$8 range.

Voice 1: If you work full time at \$6 an hour, you will earn \$12,000 a year. If you work full time at \$8 an hour, you will earn \$16,000 a year.

Voice 2: If you are a single parent earning \$6-\$8 an hour, your children may go hungry.

(Take the yarn and weave it back and forth between the thumbtack on your town and the thumbtacks around the world, showing how all of us are connected.)

Voice 3: Let us pray.

O God who loves us all, we live in a world that does not follow your ways. May your reign on earth come to those who struggle to have enough food to eat. We pray especially for those who grew and prepared the food on our table today. May they receive respect and justice. May they eat well this week. Amen.

⁹ www.oxfam.org.uk/coolplanet/kidsweb/fairtrade

¹⁰ Ibid. The Windward Islands are a group of islands in the southern part of the Caribbean Sea. They consist of Dominica, Martinique, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, and Grenada.

Leader Resource 3-10: for Use with Meal, Units 2, 3, or 4

The U.S.A: Where Every Meal Is an International Meal

Below is the ingredient list from a meal similar to the Wholesome Foods Banquet suggested as an optional meal with Unit 2. The author served this meal in Goshen, Indiana, on April 2, 2004. The distances traveled come from a calculator on the Web and are approximate. Starred locations indicate that the food was not labeled and a “best guess” is listed — either the #1 U.S. producer or the closest top producer of that food. If you want to calculate distances from your location, see www.indo.com/cgi-bin/dist.

Food item	Grown	Distance Traveled (miles)
<i>Main Dish:</i>		
Couscous	France	4,086
Rice	Arkansas	591
Chicken	Georgia*	705
Olive oil	Italy	4,768
Onions	California*	1,900
Tomatoes, canned	Home garden	0
Carrots	Michigan*	50
Cauliflower	New York*	435
Red pepper	Mexico	1,652
Broccoli	California*	1,900
Zucchini	California*	1,900
Parsley, fresh	Home garden	0
Apples	Wenatchee, WA	1,736
Raisins	Caruthers, CA	1,849
Garbanzo beans	Clinton, MI	100
<i>Salad:</i>		
Romaine lettuce	Mexico	1,650
Spinach	Salinas, CA	1,939
Tomatoes, fresh	Florida*	999
Mushrooms	Franklin, CT	708
Cucumbers	Mexico	1,650
Pea Pods	Pescadero, CA	1,963
Beets	Goshen, IN	5
<i>Fruit Salad:</i>		
Grapes	Chile	5,054
Strawberries	Oxnard, CA	1,881
Blueberries	Wakarusa, IN	10
Peaches, canned	Michigan	50
Bananas	Peru	3,736
Cherries	Michigan	50
Mandarin oranges	China	7,000
Cantaloupe	California*	1,900
Coffee	Colombia	2,645

Unit 4

Food and the Environment

This will be your fifth session. Group members should have read Unit 4 in the Participant Guide before attending, but can still fit in and learn even if they have not.

Quick Overview of this Session

- Experience a *lectio divina* exercise focused on Genesis 1: 29-31 and God's gift of food. (10 min.)
- Review environmental issues related to food by focusing on those that could touch our lives through the bread and juice we receive during communion. Share bread and grapes. (15-20 min.)
- Learn about farmers and community organizations that have made land stewardship and healthy relationships between consumers and producers a priority. (25-30 min.)
- Share information about farmers' markets or environmentally healthy food in your own community. (Time included above.)

Key Ideas

- In the Christian faith, food is a gift from God to all living things.
- A sacramental meal not only expresses our relationship with God and each other; it also reminds us of our bond with the earth — the source of all our food.
- Each food we eat has a story behind it. Each has its own unique biology, grew in a particular ecosystem, and was farmed in a particular way. Some of these stories are awe-inspiring; others are tragic.
- Eating is an environmental act. How we grow our food affects the earth, other species, and our own future. Every dollar we spend on food is a vote for how we want our food to be produced.

Important Questions

- Why is stewardship of the earth an important part of eating well?
- What are some of the concerns about conventional agriculture? Will this industrial form of agriculture be sustainable into the future?
- How are hunger and environmental issues interrelated? Can we feed the growing human population and care for the earth at the same time, or are these conflicting goals?
- Is it possible for your family to buy food that is locally grown and/or organically raised? Do you believe this is an important goal? Why or why not?

Advance Preparation

- Prepare a centerpiece for your meeting place that includes a chalice and paten surrounded by items from nature; some of which are eaten by humans and some of which are food for other creatures. Even moss, lichens, soil, and weeds all serve as food for something. If possible, delegate this task to a biologically minded person who can tell your group what eats the things in the centerpiece.
- Bring bread, butter, and grapes or juice to share. You will also need cups, napkins, and knives.
- Make a few copies each of Leader Resources 4-2 to 4-4 for use in small groups.

- Review the ideas for adapting this session on page 59 and decide if you wish to pursue any of them. If you want to replace the “People with a Vision” pages with local organizations, you will need to do your own homework or invite a guest speaker.
- Consider whether your group can share an optional meal this week. See Leader Resource 4-5, page 70.

Leader Resources for this session

- 4-1 An Environmental Look at Communion, page 61
- 4-2 People with a Vision: People with a Vision: Practical Farmers of Iowa, page 64
- 4-3 People with a Vision: Why Our Farm is Organic, page 66
- 4-4 People with a Vision: Community & Congregation Supported Agriculture, page 68
- 4-5 The Ecology of Your Lunch: Optional Meal #5, page 70
- 4-6 Litany for use with the Ecology of Your Lunch, page 75

Suggested Lesson Plan

As people gather

Pass out the slips with Genesis 1:29-31 on them and recruit a reader for the *lectio divina* exercise. Write the titles of the three sketches used in Activity 3 on a board and ask people to think about which one they’d like to look at.

Activity 1: Lectio Divina using Genesis 1:29-31 (Allow 10-15 minutes)

Instead of asking the group to listen for an inviting word or phrase as you usually do during *lectio divina*, try guided imagery. Ask your group to close their eyes and imagine themselves inside this familiar creation story, receiving a gift of food from God.

- What food is God giving you? Think of a specific food. Notice its texture in your hands and its smell. Imagine yourself chewing this gift. Concentrate on the flavor.
- Now imagine another creature beside you in this story, also receiving a gift of food. What species is it and what is it eating?
- Continue with the *lectio divina* questions used in previous weeks:
 - “Where does this passage touch your life today?”
 - “What is Christ inviting you to do or be this week?”
- Sharing: Invite group members to tell what food they imagined God giving them and what creature they shared it with. Some may wish to offer further reflections from the scripture.

Activity 2: Wheat and grapes — an environmental perspective (15-20 min.)

Today’s lesson plan includes sharing bread and grapes or grape juice: the foods used in communion services. As you eat these items, ask:

- What do you know about the elements we use in communion? How and where do these plants grow? What do you know about their biology? Allow your group to brainstorm in response to this question; then share some of the information found on Leader Resource 4-1, page 61.
- Next, ask your group what environmental issues may be represented in these few simple foods and allow them to brainstorm. Share the information on Leader Resource 4-1 as appropriate.

The point here is not to condemn all food producers, or to make claims that may or may not be true. Rather, this is a way to review the environmental issues related to food and to show that they may be present in a meal as simple as communion. Emphasize that a

sacramental meal expresses not only our relationship to God and to each other; but also our bond with the earth.

Activity 3: Meeting people with a vision for earth care (25-30 minutes.)

This discussion uses three sketches about people with a vision for earth stewardship and environmentally friendly food. Describe each sketch briefly and invite participants to decide which one they want to read. Divide into three groups and discuss the following questions, also printed with each sketch:

- Are any of the five faith practices covered in the Participant Guide evident or explicit in this story? Which ones and how are they expressed?
- Is anything like this available in your community? If not, why not?
- Would you buy this group's product if it were convenient or at least possible?
- What obstacles would prevent you from supporting this group's vision?

Have the smaller groups report back to the larger group on their discussions.

What visions for earth care and environmentally sustainable food are present in your own community? Share information.

Closing (5 minutes)

- a) Offer these previews of upcoming classes:
 - The next session will focus on Creating Community with Food. Come prepared to share about a food that evokes feelings of home, warmth or hospitality for you.
 - Two sessions from now is the last session of this curriculum and you will be invited to make a commitment to change a behavior or explore a new area related to food. We will also consider whether we want to respond with a group action of some sort. Think about this in the coming weeks.
- b) Close with a prayer of intercession. Invite group members to name parts of the earth affected by food production during the prayer. Have the group respond to each petition with a response such as "Giver of food, hear our prayer," or "God of all the earth, have mercy."

Suggestions for Adapting Session 4

If you have 45 minutes

- Choose either Activity 1, the *lectio divina* exercise, or Activity 2 on the environmental underside of communion.
- Cut down on the reading time during Activity 3 by using only Leader Resource 4-2; blurbs on a sampling of organic farmers. Make two copies and cut the blurbs apart. Give one to each person, share stories, and discuss.

If you have 90 minutes or more

- Expand Activity 2 into a traditional communion service as well as looking at the environmental issues that touch our lives through this ritual. Or expand Activity 2 into a full meal using additional information provided on Leader Resource 4-5.
- See more ideas below.

If you have more than 12 people

- Seat people in small groups for the *lectio divina* exercise and share within these groups at the end of the exercise.
- Offer more options during Activity 3. In a larger group, more people will be aware of local efforts related to food and the environment. Add a fourth group for those who

wish to discuss local environmental issues and food availability and a fifth group for those who want to share their experiences with Faith in Action Steps and readings.

More ideas for adapting this session

- In advance, ask group members to bring a natural object or photo representing a corner of the earth they are concerned about. During your *lectio divina* time or during your closing prayer, have people place these objects around the bread and cup as they offer intercessory prayers for the earth.
- In advance, ask for volunteers to search the community for locally grown and/or organic foods, farmers' markets, community or congregation-supported agriculture, or other sources of fresh local food grown in earth-friendly ways. Examine these local organizations in place of the sketches suggested in Activity 3.
- During the gathering time, pass out a stack of processed food to contrast with food fresh from the earth. Give each person one item and have them find out where it came from and who made it. How does the fact that 90 percent of the money we spend on food goes toward processed food affect our theology of food?
- Bring in several priced items such as milk, eggs, apples, or fair trade organic coffee. Compare organic or locally grown prices with conventional prices using Resource 4-1 in the Participant Guide. Divide into groups and let each group do the math for one item. How much more would it cost to buy these items from earth-friendly sources for a month or year?
- Farming is a calling. Anyone who is going to live the challenges of earth stewardship in today's economic climate on a day-by-day basis deserves a laying on of hands service and a prayer partner. How are farmers regarded in your setting? If your group has ties to local farmers or includes farmers, discuss how the Church can support farmers and recognize their role as earth stewards.

Leader Resource 4-1

An Environmental Look at Communion

Use this sheet during the Unit on Food and the Environment, Activity 2, page 58. Allow your group to brainstorm in response to the questions below; then share the information provided:

Question: What do you know about the elements we use in communion? How and where do these plants grow? What do you know about their biology?

Grapes

- Grapes are one of the oldest cultivated plants in the world. European grapes were first cultivated in Greece and spread throughout Europe from there, but Native American varieties existed as well.
- France, Italy, Spain, and the U.S. are the largest grape producers in the world today.
- In the U.S., grapes can be grown from zones 4 through 9, which includes most of the country.
- A grapevine takes 3-4 years to bear fruit, but can then live for 30 or more years.
- Wine grapevines have vigorous root systems, reaching 8 feet from the base of the cane and 12 feet deep or more.
- Grapes have small, inconspicuous flowers. This is because they are self-pollinating and do not need to attract insects.

Bread (Wheat)

- Wheat is an annual with a fibrous root system and erect shoots. Winter wheat is sown in the fall and overwinters; spring wheat is sown in the spring. Both types mature and are harvested in mid to late summer.
- Wheat is native to the Near East, where it has been cultivated for over 10,000 years. In Roman times, it became the predominant grain of the Mediterranean world. Today, it is grown in every country in the world and is the world's most widely distributed grain.
- Wheat fields cover 4 percent of the land area of the continental U.S. That's 60-70 million acres. Wheat is the third leading crop in the U.S. behind corn and soybeans.
- A modern combine can harvest and thresh 1,000 bushels of wheat an hour.

Question: What environmental issues touch us when we share communion together in our churches? Below are a few of the issues that may be present at our altars. Some would apply to both wheat and grapes, but are listed with only one of them.

Grapes

Globalization of the food supply: The grapes you are sharing likely came from either California or Chile. California produces 90 percent of the grapes grown in the U.S. Grapes purchased between December and May are likely from Chile. Chile produces about 45 percent of all table grapes eaten in the U.S.¹¹ To calculate how far your grapes traveled, see a Web distance calculator at www.indo.com/cgi-bin/dist.

¹¹ Foreign Agricultural Service, Commodity Fact Sheet, www.fas.usda.gov/info/factsheets/ChileFTA/fruits.html

- **Dependence on fossil fuels:** In addition to the fuel used for shipping and refrigeration, non-organic farming consumes more crude oil in the manufacture and application of chemical fertilizers than any other industry in the U.S.¹²
- **Use of pesticides and herbicides:**
 - Sulphur fungicides and methyl bromide are two of the pesticides used on grapes. The herbicide, simazine, is also used.
 - In California, more pesticides are applied to vineyards than to any other crop in the state.
 - Agriculture is a major source of water pollution, contributing more than 100 different pesticides found in groundwater in 45 states. Many of these pesticides are found in our tissues as well. According to a U.S. Geological Survey, wells in vineyard areas have a greater number of pesticides than any other groundwater samples in agricultural areas.
 - Throughout the 1990s, grapes were California's worst crop in terms of pesticide poisonings of farm workers.¹³

Bread

- **Loss of habitat for wildlife:** Agriculture is the leading cause of habitat destruction on land, and loss of habitat is the primary reason species become endangered or extinct.¹⁴ Today, only 3-4 percent of the United States' original prairie habitats remain. Much of the prairie became farmland.
- **Issues of Scale:** When a single variety of wheat is planted as a monoculture covering thousands of acres, it is a bonanza for the pests that feed on this crop. This requires more pesticides to keep pests at bay and beneficial insects and birds are further displaced.
- **Erosion:** Rich, healthy soil is essential for producing food. When topsoil becomes depleted, due to erosion, it requires more synthetic fertilizer. Wind erosion is a major cause of soil degradation in semi-arid areas like the Great Plains, where wheat is grown. Land is particularly vulnerable to erosion if not enough plant matter has been left on fields over the winter. Rotating crops and including meadow crops can reduce erosion.
- **Genetic engineering:** If your bread contains canola oil or soy flour, you are eating a food that has been genetically modified. Probably you eat something containing GMOs every day, since about 60 percent of processed foods contain some soy. The majority of soybeans planted in the U.S. are "Round-up Ready," meaning they have been genetically engineered to resist this herbicide.
- **Concentrated power:** As farms grow larger and depend more and more on synthetic inputs, fewer companies exert greater control over our food supply. Often the same multinational will sell the seed, produce fertilizer and pesticides, and buy the food. Only 17 percent of all wheat growers in the U.S. produce nearly 2/3 of the U.S. wheat

¹² Andrew Kang Bartlett, "Energy, Food and You: On the Path to Reconciliation," *Church & Society*, Louisville, KY: Presbyterian Church(U.S.A.), March/April 2004, pp. 21-23. Downloadable article at www.pcusa.org/hunger/food

¹³ Andrew Kimbrell, ed. *Fatal Harvest: The Tragedy of Industrial Agriculture*. Sausalito, CA: Island Press, 2002, pp. 181-187.

¹⁴ George Wuerthner, "The Destruction of Wildlife Habitat by Agriculture," in Andrew Kimbrell, ed., *Fatal Harvest: The Tragedy of Industrial Agriculture*. Sausalito, CA: Island Press, 2002, p. 277.

crop. The Cargill company, which operates on four continents, “accounts for roughly 35 percent of corn, soybean, and wheat volume.”¹⁵

Butter

- **Treatment of animals:** Maximum production at minimum prices requires confinement of animals, use of antibiotics to keep stressed cows healthy, and bovine growth hormones to stimulate milk production. Under these circumstances, dairy cows have a lifespan between two and three years and spend little time outdoors.
- **Pollution from animal wastes:** Traditionally, dairy farms were small, diversified operations where animal wastes were a valuable fertilizer for crops. Today, the trend is toward larger and larger farms in order to offset low milk prices. Large, specialized dairy farms with over 1,000 cows produce more manure than the land can absorb — if they grow crops at all.

Other issues related to food and the environment include ground water depletion when it is mined for irrigation, loss of genetic diversity when producers are limited to only a few varieties of a crop that ship and store well, and the patenting of life forms.

¹⁵ Kimbrell, p. 100.

Leader Resource 4-2

People with a Vision: Practical Farmers of Iowa

Practical Farmers of Iowa (PFI) is a non-profit, educational organization that began in 1985 and now has over 700 members in Iowa and neighboring states. Its mission is to research, develop, and promote profitable, ecologically sound, and community-enhancing approaches to agriculture. PFI carries out diverse programs to assist farmers with both production and marketing needs, to raise public awareness of where food comes from and how it is grown, and to educate youth about agriculture and the environment. Below is the PFI vision.

Our Vision:

Food that is celebrated
for its freshness
and flavor
and connection
to local farmers;
to seasons
to hard work
and good stewardship.

Farms that are prized
for their diversity
of crops and livestock,
their wildlife and healthy soils,
their innovations, beauty, and productivity;
their connection to a rich past
and a fulfilling present
where individuals and families
are earning a good living.

Communities that are alive
with diverse connections between farmers and non-farmers;
places where commerce, cooperation, creativity
and spirituality are thriving;
places where the working landscape, the fresh air
and the clear water remind us of all that is good about Iowa.
Healthy Food, Diverse Farms, Vibrant Communities

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“Sustainable farming, as practiced by PFI farmers, involves more than just growing food. It also requires building up the fertility of the soil so that it produces healthy, relatively pest-resistant plants. It requires crop rotation to keep infestations from becoming established. When a crop is under attack, the next line of defense is a form of integrated pest management that uses beneficial insects to fight crop-destroying insects. These beneficial insects already exist in large numbers on those farms that do not use pesticides and also on those who use them only sparingly. Some farmers will purchase beneficial insect species to assist them. It is only when all these methods fail and there is a danger of substantial losses from an infestation that PFI farmers will consider applying a pesticide: either those approved

for organics for those farmers practicing that method of farming or conventional pesticides for those farmers not organic. This frugal approach to spraying pesticides reduces groundwater pollution and limits the pesticide residues on crops.

“We tend to be practical as opposed to dogmatic. In the case of our family, since we are now certified organic farmers, some of each has to be practiced. Whatever we do has to work and maintain productivity, profitability and the environment as well as fall within the organic program guidelines,” Ron Rosmann, a founding member of PFI, explains. To find out what methods really work, PFI sponsors on-farm research trials to figure out how to use fewer pesticides and chemical fertilizers, improve the soil, and keep family farming alive in communities.

Rosmann enhances soil fertility and discourages insect damage by practicing a complicated, long-term crop rotation method. Under his system, a field that is in soybeans this year will be planted in corn next year, then in oats or barley, then alfalfa for two years, and then back to corn. Because the crops keep changing season after season, insects don’t have a chance to become established as easily as in a field that carried the same crop year after year.

“We try to operate kind of a closed system,” explains Rosmann, who composts manure from his pigs and cows. “By using appropriate tillage techniques, rotation methods, and composts, we have built up the soil so we don’t need to rely on chemical inputs. This saves us money.”

Instead of relying on one or two crops such as corn and soybeans, the Rosmanns diversified their farm. In addition to corn and soybeans, they grow oats, barley, rye, flax, cattle and hogs, all organically. The three Rosmann children have all developed the skills associated with this kind of farming over the years so that they can all make informed decisions should they turn out to be interested in farming.

- *Ron Rosmann was featured in the book, Eco-Pioneers: Practical Visionaries Solving Today’s Problems, by Steve Lerner (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1998.) Mr. Rosmann updated this excerpt for use here.*

Discussion Questions

- Are any of the five faith practices covered in the Participant Guide evident or explicit in this reading? Which ones, and how are they expressed?
- Is food grown in this manner available in your community? If not, why not?
- Would you buy this group’s food if it were convenient or at least possible?
- What obstacles would prevent you from supporting this group’s vision?
- What Faith in Action steps from the Participant Guide did you try this week? What struck you as you read?

Resource Page 4-3

People with a Vision: Why We Farm

The farmers and the economist below described how they became proponents of sustainable agriculture at a 2004 conference entitled, "Farming with Values that Last," an annual event held at Laurelville Mennonite Church Center in western Pennsylvania.

- **Roy and Hope Brubaker**, a couple from Mifflintown, PA, say that when they were growing up in a Christian environment, students who did well in school were not encouraged to consider farming as a calling, even if they grew up on farms. The push was to "go to college and learn how to do service," Roy says. Roy and Hope heeded this call and went to Africa as teachers. What they saw there, including degraded land, drought, and hunger influenced their decision to farm when they returned. Today, the Brubakers raise everything from asparagus to zucchini on a 12-acre organic farm.
- **David Johnson**, Liberty, PA, says his former religion was technology. Johnson taught electronics for 20 years before leaving this secure job to become an organic farmer and a steward of the land. After functioning in a world where human cleverness was seen as the cure for everything, Johnson began to question whether technology was solving problems or creating problems.
- **Kim Seeley**, a dairy farmer from Troy, PA, can remember the exact moment his questions about conventional farming methods came to a head. It was the day he found his four-year-old son ready to plunge his hands into a box of insecticide. The boy had found the box behind the corn planter, ready to go on the fields. Seeley says he's sure this "pretty, pink poison" would have gone into his son's mouth if he had arrived a few moments later. At that time, Seeley was a dairy farmer running a conventional confinement operation where cows are kept indoors and managed for maximum milk production. Seeley's first impulse was to build a locked room where he could store the dangerous chemicals his pesticide license enabled him to use. Instead, he shifted his operation to organic farming. Today, his cows graze outdoors all summer and he sells butter, milk, cheese, and ice cream from a store on his farm.
- **Marlin Burkholder**, Singer's Glen, VA, has a succinct way to describe his shift from conventional to organic farming: It is the difference between the view from eight feet up on a tractor to the view down on his knees in the dirt. "Farming on my prayer bones," he calls it, and feels it is a good place for a Christian to be.
- "I have not lived an exemplary life," says **John Ikerd**, an agricultural economist from Columbia, MO. "Some of the things I say with conviction, I say because I have done the opposite." Ikerd says he was once a priest in the national religion of bottom line economics. In earlier years, he filled prestigious positions as a university department head, helped to bring factory hog farming to North Carolina, and taught what he learned in graduate school: 'The greater the greed, the greater the good.' Ikerd's approach to agriculture changed when the farm crisis of the 1980s reoriented his life. Before that time, Ikerd believed that land was dirt, farming had nothing to do with faith or with family, and religion was what we had before we had science. That all changed when his work brought him face to face with Georgia farmers in financial difficulties. "I began to realize that what I had been teaching was wrong and the people who did what we told them were going under," Ikerd said. As he sat with couples who were losing their farms due to crushing debt loads, he also saw the depth of their feeling for the land. Through these experiences, Ikerd began to understand the spiritual dimensions of farming. Today, he describes himself as a recovering workaholic and proponent of sustainable agriculture.

Discussion Questions

- Are any of the five faith practices covered in the participant guide evident or explicit in this reading? Which ones and how are they expressed?
- Is food grown in this manner available in your community? If not, why not?
- Would you buy these farmers' food if it were convenient or at least possible?
- What obstacles would prevent you from supporting this group's vision?
- What Faith in Action steps from the Participant Guide did you try this week? What struck you as you read?

Leader Resource 4-4

People with a Vision: Congregation and Community Supported Agriculture in Eugene, Oregon

The setting

The Willamette Valley in Oregon stretches from Portland to Eugene, a distance of 120 miles. Thanks to outstanding soils and a favorable climate, this area contains some of the most fertile farmland in the U.S., capable of growing at least 50 different crops. Historically, the Willamette Valley has been well supplied with farm stands and markets, supplying a diversity of fresh produce.

The challenges

Despite a climate that can grow everything from blueberries to bok choy, more and more of the food that Oregon consumers eat is shipped from cheaper locales, traveling thousands of miles. Fifty years ago, the Willamette Valley was home to many small food processing plants. Five years ago, the number had dwindled to a handful as the industry became more centralized. Many of the smaller plants simply went out of business. Today, only one food processing plant operates in the Willamette Valley and it survives partly by sourcing fruits and vegetables from Mexico. Many farmers who once raised row crops for the canneries now survive by growing grass seed for suburban lawns and golf courses instead of food for the community.

The Community Supported Agriculture movement

Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) is one response to the challenges of a global food market where the bulk of the money spent on food goes for transportation, processing, and packaging. The CSA movement originated in Japan in the 1970s and has since spread to many places in the United States. Its goals are to reconnect farmers and consumers; to develop a regional food supply and strong local economy; to maintain a sense of community; to encourage land stewardship; and to honor the experience of growers working with small to medium farms.¹⁶

In the CSA model, customers buy shares in a farm or group of farms. In return, they receive a box of fresh produce every week. Customers get farm-fresh produce grown by people they know and trust while farmers have a more stable income. In the Eugene area, a group of 13 farms operate as CSAs. There are variations in the way each farm practices and what it provides, but each uses organic methods and sells products directly to consumers during the growing season for a seasonal fee agreed upon up front. Collectively, the 13 farms raise meat, eggs, goat cheese, strawberries, blueberries, greens, cabbage, beets, cauliflower, potatoes, turnips, and many other foods.

A faith-based response

Part of what makes the Eugene CSA unique is that it is not only *community* supported. A fan club of local *congregations* also supports the CSA. “Some of the most satisfying work I’ve been a part of has involved watching interfaith networks get excited about helping to re-link agriculture and the local community,” says John Pitney, Associate Pastor at First United Methodist in Eugene, Oregon. Pitney has worked with rebuilding local food systems for over 18 years. Through pastoring, networking, and songwriting, Pitney is developing a theology that responds to globalization and helps articulate a vision for a different kind of economy. His entry into these issues came through growing up on a Willamette Valley farm that his family has owned for five generations. Currently, he works with groups such as Interfaith

¹⁶ University of Massachusetts Extension Service, “What is Community Supported Agriculture and how does it work?” See www.umassvegetable.org/food_farming_systems/CSA

Network for Earth Concerns, the Interfaith Global Warming Campaign, and Ecumenical Ministries of Portland.

Pitney's home base, First United Methodist of Eugene, is an 800-member congregation that sees supporting its local CSA as a ministry and as a legitimate work of faith. When Pitney first came five years ago, a handful of members were CSA members. Today, the church encourages its members to join the local CSA and also holds an annual event called, "That's My Farmer!" to recruit new members and build relationships between farmers and the community they serve.

Last spring, between 250 and 300 people came out to the 5th annual "That's My Farmer!" Homemade ice cream and door prizes lend a festive atmosphere to these events, and each farmer sets up a table and offers food samples. Farmers are also asked to introduce themselves by answering a provocative question such as, "How has your attitude toward farming changed since September 11?" or "Where do you experience the sacred on your farm?" Proceeds from "That's My Farmer!" events are distributed through the farms to subsidize CSA boxes for low-income families.

"The intangibles are overwhelming," Pitney says. "The farmers are totally enthusiastic about what we do."

Discussion Questions

- Are any of the five faith practices covered in the participant guide evident or explicit in this reading? Which ones and how are they expressed?
- Is food grown in this manner available in your community? If not, why not?
- Would you buy these farmers' food if it were convenient or at least possible?
- What obstacles would prevent you from supporting this group's vision?
- What Faith in Action steps from the Participant Guide did you try this week? What struck you as you read?

Leader Resource 4-5

The Ecology of Your Lunch

During this meal, the leader shares environmental stories about the foods the group is eating and the ecosystems they come from. Some will be sad stories; others will inspire awe and respect for creation. You will also offer prayers of intercession for the ecosystems the meal puts you in touch with. A table centerpiece includes items that serve as food for other species.

Before the Meal

- Note that this meal includes wheat and grapes. Information on these foods is covered on Leader Resource 4-1 and in Activity 1 of the Unit 4 session plan. If you choose to do this meal outside of class time, revise your session to avoid duplication. See suggestions for adapting the session plan. If you do this meal as part of the session over Unit 4, expand Activity 2 to include your meal.
- If you have not already made a table centerpiece as suggested in Unit 4's lesson plan, page 57, gather a number of natural objects. Arrange them around a chalice and paten as a reminder of God's love extending to all of creation, and of our dependence on the earth for food.
- Also invite others to bring a natural object or photograph representing a part of the world they care about.
- Find volunteers to bring food for this meal.
- Review the information below on the foods you chose.

Featured foods and ecosystems

Wheat*.....prairies
Grapes*.....temperate zones
Potatoes.....temperate highlands
Tuna.....salt water
Cranberries.....wetlands/bogs
Maple syrup.....hardwood forest
Chocolate.....rain forest
Sugar.....the Everglades
Salad greens..... your own windowsill?

*See Leader Resource 4-1, page 61

Suggested Lunch Menu

Potato soup
Tuna sandwiches
Platter of grapes
Salad greens with sweetened dried cranberries, slivered almonds and a maple vinaigrette dressing. (To make this simple dressing, shake 1 part red wine vinegar with 2 parts maple syrup and a dash of cooking oil.)
A dessert containing chocolate and sugar

Breakfast Option

Pancake bar with choice of potato pancakes or whole wheat pancakes with maple syrup
Platter of grapes
Cranberry juice
Hot chocolate

If you want to include tuna in a breakfast, you are left to your own creativity.

During the Meal

- Share some or all of the information below.
- Invite others to add natural objects or photographs to the table centerpiece and tell why they brought the things they did.
- Offer prayers of thanksgiving and intercession for the earth. A litany is provided, with space for bidding prayers where people name their own concerns.

Potatoes

- Potatoes are native to Peru and the Andes Mountains. The Incas were the first to cultivate the potato plant, and they nurtured its tubers into an endless variety of colors, textures, sizes and shapes. This diversity was a necessity for the Incans, because mountains do not lend themselves to monocultures. Each slope, altitude, or orientation to the sun and wind is its own ecological niche. Since the Incas couldn't change their landscape, they developed a potato for each unique microclimate.
- It takes about 100 days to produce a crop of potatoes. Most potatoes grown for sale in the U.S. today are from Idaho, where a combination of factors produce ideal growing conditions. The best potato-growing country has an altitude above sea level, warm days, cool nights, and a light, volcanic soil. Potatoes also require a lot of moisture, which farmers control with irrigation.
- Today, the fast food industry asserts a great deal of control over potato farmers, determining what kind of potatoes they grow and how much they are paid. Russet burbanks dominate the fields because this long potato makes ideal frozen french fries.
- The Colorado potato beetle and varieties of fungus are the potato's most dreaded enemies. Organic farmers respond by growing different varieties of potatoes in the same area, shifting the location of the crop from year to year, interspersing other crops, and taking care to use proper timing when planting and hilling the crop. Industrial farmers resort to soil fumigants and multiple applications of fungicides, herbicides, and pesticides. Monsanto, one of the largest agricultural corporations, has responded with the New Leaf, a potato genetically engineered to include Bt, a natural pesticide found in the soil. The New Leafs themselves are classified as pesticides.¹⁷

Tuna

- Water covers nearly 75 percent of the earth's surface, and oceans are the earth's largest ecosystems. Oceans not only provide us with food; the marine algae they contain also supply much of the world's oxygen and take in a huge amount of atmospheric carbon dioxide.
- Tuna is a saltwater fish that lives in the open sea and stays in the warm upper layers of the water. Within these parameters, tuna range throughout the world's oceans. Individual tuna sometimes travel over 5,000 miles.

¹⁷ Michael Pollan, *The Botany of Desire*, New York: Random House, 2001, pp. 183-238.

- Tuna are handsome, streamlined fish. Their backs are a metallic dark blue to hide them from fish looking downward and their bellies are pale to hide them from fish below. The three varieties are: albacore (10-50 lbs.), skipjack (6-12 lbs.), and yellowfin (30-400 lbs.)
- Tuna never rest. Because they breathe by funneling water over their gills as they swim, they need to move at least a body length per second. This constant movement requires enormous amounts of food, and a typical tuna might eat a quarter of its weight per day. They are predators, feeding on other fish, crustaceans, and mollusks.
- A large female tuna can lay as many as 6 million one-millimeter eggs in a single spawning. From hatching to full growth, some tuna species increase their size by a billion times.¹⁸
- Yellowfin tuna and dolphins prefer similar habitats and are frequently found together, with schools of spotted and spinner dolphins swimming above the tuna. In fact, the presence of dolphins often leads tuna fishermen to know where to place their nets. In the past, many dolphins were caught in the nets along with the tuna and drowned. Recent laws, improved fishing methods, and dolphin-safe labeling have greatly reduced the number of dolphins killed, but it remains an issue for some environmental groups.

Cranberries

- Cranberries cannot grow just anywhere. This is because cranberries are bog plants, dependent on a rare and fragile combination of soils and geology. Unlike most plants, they favor acid soils and low fertility. They also need the right climate and plenty of water. Commercial production takes place primarily in five U.S. states: Oregon, Washington, Wisconsin, New Jersey, and Massachusetts, with the latter being the largest producer.
- Because of their unusual requirements, cranberries grow in remote areas that provide habitat for eagles, osprey, hawks, elk, mink, porcupines, otters, bear, and other animals. According to the Oregon Cranberry Network, cranberry farmers preserve two acres of surrounding land for every acre in cranberry cultivation.¹⁹
- Cranberry plants are perennials, not annuals like most food crops. Vines can bear fruit for as long as 75 to 100 years.
- Pollination is sometimes a challenge for cranberry farmers. Originally, wild bees did the job, but as a variety of environmental factors have caused these bee populations to decline, growers have put colonies of honeybees to work. Unfortunately, honeybees find other flowers more attractive than cranberry flowers and do not always cooperate with human goals.
- Cranberries have a cavity inside them that causes them to float. Farmers pick the fruits by flooding the fields. This causes the berries to float to the surface where machines can skim them from the water.

¹⁸ For more information on tuna, see the Bumblebee Tuna website, www.bumblebee.com/tuna_life.jsp

¹⁹ www.oregoncranberry.net/growing_cranberry.htm

Maple syrup

- Maple syrup is unique to our part of the world because sugar maples grow only in North America. This sweetener is a gift to us from temperate hardwood forests. Sugar maples prefer moist lowlands and are found growing with beech trees, which have similar requirements. Oaks and hickory trees, in contrast, prefer drier soils.
- The sugar maple range extends as far south as Kentucky and north into New England and Canada. Quebec is the world's heaviest producer of maple syrup.
- Sugar maples are tapped for their sap in late winter and early spring: typically February. Harvests vary from year to year, depending on the weather. The trees run best when nights are below freezing and days are warm and sunny with thawing weather.
- It takes at least fifty years to grow a sugar maple large enough to tap. It takes 40 gallons of tree sap, boiled and boiled down, to make one gallon of maple syrup. Native Americans developed this art and shared it with later immigrants.

Salad Greens

- You may not be able to raise your own tuna or cranberries, but almost anyone can grow salad greens. Salad greens are a spring crop, planted as soon as temperatures remain above 45 degrees. All it takes is a few feet of earth or a few flats of potting soil, and you can begin harvesting within a month.
- Some people use a cold frame to extend their gardening season. A cold frame is simply a wooden box with a glass lid that protects plants from frost. In moderate climates, a cold frame can provide you with salad greens straight through the winter. Greens can also grow indoors on a sunny windowsill. A gro-light will speed maturation during the shortest days of the year.
- In hot weather, lettuce bolts, or goes to seed and becomes bitter, but you can grow it throughout the summer if you repeat plantings every few weeks and harvest it as baby greens, rather than letting it mature.

Chocolate

- Rain forests are found throughout the world within 20 degrees north or south of the equator. Originally, they covered about 14 percent of the earth's surface; today they cover only 7 percent. The cacao trees that give us our chocolate are natives of the South American rain forest—the largest expanse of rain forest in the world. Cacao probably originated in Venezuela or Brazil, but today it is grown around the world, usually within 10 degrees of the equator. The West African countries of Cote D'Ivoire, Ghana, and Nigeria are top producers of this cash crop, even though Africans have no cultural connection to chocolate.
- Cacao trees require moist soil, an even temperature, and humidity. They grow best in their natural habitat, under the rain forest canopy. Farmers have tried to grow cacao on plantations, but yields are lower and trees are short-lived and susceptible to disease. Sometimes farmers plant cacao with other crops such as castor oil, bananas, and rubber to create a canopy for the cacao plants.
- A cacao tree is an unusual sight, with foot-long, football-shaped pods growing directly out of its trunk and branches rather than growing from the tips of branches the way apples or cherries do. These pods turn brilliant shades of red, orange, or yellow as they mature. In

1892, Richard Cadbury, an English chocolate manufacturer, described a cacao plantation ready for harvest as “a miniature forest hung with thousands of golden lamps.” He claimed that “anything more lovely cannot be imagined.”²⁰

- Chocolate production depends on one or two species of midges. Only these tiny insects are able to penetrate the cacao tree’s small, convoluted flower in order to pollinate it.

Sugar

- Sugar cane is a member of the grass family that grows up to 11 feet tall. It originated in Southeast Asia, and China and India were already growing sugar cane 2,500 years ago. By the 8th century A.D., sugar cane reached Mediterranean countries, and it came to the Americas in early colonial times. Although yields are heavier in tropical countries, sugar cane can grow in the southern United States.
- Today, fields of sugar cane have displaced much of the Everglades in Florida. This unique wetland ecosystem, sometimes described as a river of grass, originally stretched from Lake Okeechobee to the tip of Florida. During the wet season, this area became a shallow river, 50 miles wide and 6 inches to 3 feet deep. During the dry season, the water receded to pools and offered wading birds and other wildlife abundant food and nesting sites.
- Throughout the first half of the 20th century, Florida swampland was drained for farmland, with canals diverting water into the Atlantic Ocean. Today’s Everglades National Park is only a remnant of the original ecosystem and its survival is not guaranteed because the water cycle of surrounding land has been disrupted. “National parks are not islands of land. Outside events shape their fates,” says a National Park Service website.²¹
- In addition to water management issues, fertilizer run-off from sugar cane fields threatens the Everglades. Cattails love the nitrogen and potassium that runs off into surrounding wetlands, and they crowd out native plants and wildlife.

²⁰ Cited in Ruth Lopez, *Chocolate: The Nature of Indulgence*. New York: Harry N. Abrams, n.d., p. 18. This book also contains information on the role of the slave trade in the history of chocolate and current conditions for cacao workers.

²¹ www.nps.gov/ever/eco/habitats.htm

Leader Resource 4-6

Litany for use with Meal #5, The Ecology of Your Lunch

Voice 1: O God, we give thanks for mountains and ridges, slopes, and valleys.

Voice 2: For saltwater and bogs;

Voice 3: For rainforests and prairies.

Voice 4: For maple trees and sleek, blue fish.

Voice 1: For rich, red cranberries and lush beds of spring greens.

Voice 2: For all that is sweet, tart, crisp, earthy,

Voice 3: All that is good to eat.

Voice 4: For the wind that pollinates wheat;

Voice 1: And the raptors that protect it from rodents.

Voice 2: For the midges that pollinate cacao flowers,

Voice 3: And the canopy trees that shelter them.

Voice 4: For the water seeping south through the Everglades,

Voice 1: And the wading birds feasting on its fish.

Voice 2: These are our neighbors and our neighborhoods.

Voice 3: Their beauty renews us and gives us hope.

Voice 4: Holy One and Maker of all, we ask your mercy especially on these creatures and these places:

[Open for prayers from the group]

All: Teach us to protect and preserve;
 Teach us to love our neighbors as ourselves;
 Teach us humility in the face of all you have created.
 Teach us to treat our food with reverence.

Unit 5

Creating Community with Food

This will be your sixth session. Group members should have read Unit 5 in the Participant Guide before attending, but can still fit in and learn even if they have not.

Quick Overview of this Session

- Prepare for next week's commitment to a change by discussing possible ideas with a partner. (5-8 minutes)
- Name foods that evoke a sense of home, belonging, and community; name experiences of loneliness related to meals. (15 minutes)
- Work in groups to reshape a communal meal in response to ideas encountered in this curriculum. (15 minutes)
- Reflect on hospitality to outsiders through either a *lectio divina* exercise from Matthew 25 or a discussion of the Participant Guide, page 37. (15-20 minutes)

Key Ideas

- Eating together creates community in a unique way.
- Communal eating experiences are an opportunity for us to express what we believe about nurturing the body, hunger, our relationships with the earth, and with each other.
- Hospitality to strangers, outsiders, and the sick is part of what it means to follow Jesus Christ and part of how others recognize who we are.

Important Questions

- What foods evoke a sense of home, belonging, and community for you? Why?
- What kinds of eating experiences make you feel lonely? Is it possible to reshape these experiences?
- How can our communal eating experiences reflect what we've learned from this study on *Just Eating*?
- What strangers or outsiders does your church do a good job of welcoming? What strangers are more challenging?
- Have you ever felt as if God came to you in the form of a stranger?

Advance Preparation

- Read and reflect on Unit 5 in the Participant Guide.
- See the questions listed under "As People Gather" and write them on a white board or flip chart.
- Make several copies of the instructions in Activity 2; one for each group to use. The first two ideas under More Ideas also require copies or paper.
- Consider whether your group is able to schedule a Tastes of Home Potluck as described on Leader Resource I-5.

Leader Resources for this Session

- 5-1 Congregational Survey on Eating Together, page 80
- I-5 Taste of Home Potluck, page 19. You do not need any additional handouts or a script.

Suggested Lesson Plan

As people gather (5-8 minutes)

a) Write the following questions on the board and invite people to think about them as they gather. Ask them to brainstorm in twos or threes with those sitting nearby and help each other refine possible directions. “What ideas do you have for a possible change or direction you would like to commit to next week during Session 7?”

- Why this choice?
- Is your idea realistic and doable?
- Is it too vague or too legalistic?
- What will the challenges be?

b) Advise people to “field test” their commitment during the next week to see if it is something that will work.

Activity 1: Examining our circles of community (15 minutes)

This week’s *lectio divina* exercise will take place at the end of the session. Instead, begin by reflecting on eating experiences that evoked belonging for your group members and eating experiences that were lonely.

- Ask each person to share a food they associate with warmth, community, family, and home.
- Invite those who wish to name meal settings where they have experienced loneliness.

Activity 2: Enriching our circles of community (15 minutes)

Have your group break into twos or threes for the following discussion. Ask each group to reflect on a familiar eating experience and reshape it based on ideas from a unit in this curriculum. Make copies of the instructions below if that is easier than explaining them. Allow 10 minutes for groups to talk and 5 minutes to hear back from each group.

a) Agree on a communal meal of some sort: a holiday feast, a church potluck, a workday lunch, or other setting at least one group member has experienced.

b) Now choose one of the units you have covered in this curriculum:

- Food as Sacramental
- Nurturing the Body
- Hunger
- Food and the Environment
- Creating Community with Food

c) How might the event you chose be reshaped to incorporate ideas from the unit of this curriculum that you chose? For example, is there a way the hungry can be acknowledged or remembered at a communal meal? Can a family feast remind us of our ties to the earth? Could a few healthy foods become a welcome tradition at a Christmas banquet? Could a lonely mealtime become a co-op arrangement where a band of singles share a meal once a week? Brainstorm and be prepared to share the meal idea you came up with.

Activity 3: Pushing beyond our comfort zone (15 minutes)

“Although we often think of hospitality as a tame and pleasant practice, Christian hospitality has always had a subversive, counter cultural dimension,” says Christine Pohl in her book, *Making Room: Recovering Hospitality as a Christian Tradition*. Christians have traditionally been willing to welcome the poor, the sick, and the outsider in ways that society at large does not. Explore this side of Christian hospitality with your group. Possible discussion questions include:

- Would your church’s enemies grudgingly acknowledge your hospitality, as Emperor Julian did in the quote on page 37 of the Participant Book?

- What strangers or outsiders does your church do a good job of welcoming? What strangers are more challenging?
- Have you ever felt as if God came to you in the form of a stranger?
- Has anyone eaten with an enemy, as the Faith in Action step on page 39 suggests?

Return to the meal scenarios people worked on earlier in twos and threes. How could you modify these events to include outsiders or those in need?

Closing: Lectio divina using Matthew 25:31-40 (Allow 10 minutes)

See that everyone has a sheet with the Matthew 25 passage on it. Remind participants to listen for a word or phrase that attracts them as you read the passage; then reflect on this word or phrase during the silence that follows. You might note that this passage is a description of “nations,” not just individuals. How would our nation fare at such a judgment?

Ask:

- “Where does the content of this reading touch your life today?”
- “What is Christ inviting you to do or be this week?”

As you close, challenge group members to carry the word or phrase they received from this exercise with them throughout the week.

Suggestions for Adapting Session 5

If you have 45 minutes

- Choose to emphasize either Activity 2 on enriching our own circles of community, or Activity 3 on more radical forms of hospitality. You won’t have time for both.
- Or, omit the gathering time exercise looking ahead to next week. Remind people to think about what behavior change they might like to commit to.

If you have 90 minutes or more

- Instead of just talking about foods that evoke a sense of belonging, host a potluck and ask each person to bring such a food; possibly a food from his or her family of origin.
- Share about the foods while you eat.
- Include some of these additional discussion questions during Activity 1:
 - How does eating together create community?
 - Would you vote with the teenager (mentioned in the introduction to this unit) who maintained that sharing food was special, or with the other youth who could not understand him?
 - What are your family’s favorite feasting traditions?
 - What experiences have you had of false community around food, or of food used as a way to avoid genuine interaction?
 - Describe what it feels like to be welcome in a home or other setting.
 - Do you enjoy preparing food? When is it a joy and when is it a burden?

If you have more than 12 people

- Do Activity 1 in small groups so that everyone can share.
- For Activity 2, work in groups of four to six instead of twos and threes and allow 20 minutes. Continue in these small groups for the *lectio divina* exercise and any sharing that follows.

More ideas for adapting your session

- Provide stationery or note cards and ask each person to write a dinner invitation to someone they consider an outsider, a stranger, or an enemy. Discuss what it felt like to write these notes. Is this an invitation you would dare to send?
- Take the survey on eating together on Leader Resource 5-1, page 80 and discuss. Is this a tool your church as a whole would find useful?
- Instead of Activity 1, introduce this week's readings on Creating Community with Food by listing the five faith practices on the board and introducing them with a sentence or two. Ask:
 - Which of these faith practices do you feel most drawn to explore or believe you need to work on? Go around the circle and have each person share an answer.
 - If one answer predominates, take time to look together at that day's readings and the suggested Faith in Action step.
- Consider whether your congregation would like to sponsor a refugee or other immigrant in need of hospitality. For more information, see www.churchworldservice.org/Immigration/index.html

Resource Page 5-1

Survey on Sharing Food Together

Name optional _____ Age _____ Gender _____

1. Do you typically participate in opportunities to share food with people from our congregation? Which ones?

_____ coffee hours

_____ potlucks

_____ small group dinners

_____ other: _____

2. Do you require or prefer a special diet?

_____ diabetic

_____ low fat

_____ low salt

_____ food allergies: what are you allergic to? _____

_____ heart healthy

_____ low calorie

_____ vegetarian

_____ food from another culture (which one?) _____

_____ other: please explain _____

3. Do you choose **not** to attend some food-related events for health issues? _____

Why not? _____ cannot eat the food provided

_____ too tempting; watching weight

_____ other: _____

4. Would it be helpful to you if foods served were labeled to identify ingredients that might cause problems? If so, what kind of labeling would be helpful?

5. Which of the options below describes you? Check all that apply:

_____ I enjoy eating together the way it is currently done.

_____ Fewer choices would help me.

_____ I would like our group to share food in ways that are healthier.

_____ I would miss our current practices if they changed to a healthier diet.

6. If you could make one or two changes in the kind of food we eat together, what would they be?

7. Do you feel welcome and included in our group eating experiences? _____

What suggestions do you have for ways we can enhance fellowship when we share food?

Unit 6

Discerning God's Call

This will be your seventh session. Group members should have read Unit 6 in the Participant Guide before attending, but can still fit in and learn even if they have not.

Quick Overview of this Session

- *Lectio divina* using Galatians 5:22-6-5. (10 min.)
- Review of the previous weeks, noting highlights or special interests. (15 min.)
- Offering of individual commitments. (15-25 minutes)
- Considering a group direction for the future. (15-25min.)

Key Ideas

- God is calling us to *continue* eating justly, with respect for other human beings, the earth, and our own bodies. God is calling us to a place at a warm and welcoming table.
- The hallmarks of a community guided by the Holy Spirit are mutual accountability and mutual support.
- God is patient with our faltering attempts to make changes in ourselves or in our world. God loves us even when we fail and continues to draw us toward what is good.

Important Questions

- Which of the areas we've covered intrigued or energized you most: food as sacramental, nurturing our bodies, hunger, food and the environment, or creating community with food?
- What change or direction do you sense God nudging you to undertake in the coming months?
- How can we support each other in the changes we are choosing to make?
- Do you sense energy in this group for a joint action or ministry?

Advance Preparation

- Read and reflect on the Unit 6 Participant Guide; review the main ideas from previous sessions.
- Spend time in prayer for each individual in your group and also the group as a whole. Do you sense a direction emerging or a common concern? How do you read this group's energy and commitment?
- Acquire some interesting cards or note paper for people to use to write down their commitments. Also have pencils or pens and scotch tape on hand. Assess your meeting space and spy out the most suitable doorframe for Activity 3.
- Consider whether your group is able to schedule a First Fruits Potluck to celebrate completing this curriculum. See Leader Resource I-5.

Leader Resources for this session

I-4 *Lectio divina* text for this unit

I-5 First Fruits Potluck: You do not need any additional resources to share this meal.

Suggested Lesson Plan

As people gather

If participants do not yet have each other's contact information, collect phone numbers or emails at this time. Recruit a reader for the *lectio divina* exercise. Soft music may help set a meditative mood.

Activity 1: Lectio divina using Galatians 5:22-6:5 (Allow 10 min.)

See that everyone has a sheet with the Galatians text on it. Listen to this passage and savor it using the *lectio divina* method used previously.

- Listen for a word or phrase that attract you.
- Watch for places where the content touches your life today.
- Ask what Christ is inviting you to do or be this week.
- Invite anyone who wishes to share their thoughts to do so.

Activity 2: Review of the Just Eating Curriculum (15 min.)

Refer to the diagram you made for Session 1 showing the four areas this curriculum covers and the bread and cup centered in the middle.

- Move through Units 1-5 asking group members what they recall from each session. This review will also help those who missed a session to catch up.
- Ask: Are you still using some of the Faith in Action Steps? Which ones?
- Which unit in this curriculum gives you the most energy?

Activity 3: Offering Individual Commitments (Allow 15-25 min.)

When you review Unit 6, remind group members of the reading from Revelation in which the risen Christ says, "Look, I have set before you an open door." Also recall John 10, where Jesus says I AM the door. Transition to a time of reflection about what kinds of commitments your group members might like to make as they work at their own lives.

- What "door" do you see before you?
- Are there behavior changes or directions you would like to commit to for the next six months or a longer period?
- Give everyone a note card or piece of stationery and invite group members to write out their commitments and sign the paper. Studies show that people who write a commitment down are more likely to fulfill it than those who don't.
- Pass the scotch tape and take turns taping cards and commitments around the doorframe of one of the doors in your setting. Have people come up one at a time to read their cards and tape them to the doorframe. Some may wish to pass.
- After each person takes a turn, have the group repeat one of the brief blessings below:
 - "May God bless your offering with a rich harvest."
 - "May God open doors for you."
 - "May God give you wisdom, a future and a hope."

Activity 4: Considering a Group Direction (15-25 min.)

When all the commitments are hanging on the doorframe, take a moment to survey your door. Ask for ideas on how the group can best support each other.

- Are people interested in continuing to meet? In having a "reunion" at some point to encourage each other?
- What does the Spirit of Christ look like in your congregation? Who are you called to be? What change related to *Just Eating*? would you like to see happen? Is there energy for a group action or project? Turn to the Participant Guide, page 62 and review the group action ideas suggested there.

- Share your own observations on where the group as a whole seemed energized or motivated by common interests.
- Plan what to do next if a direction emerges.
- Affirm what people have accomplished this quarter rather than forcing interest if it doesn't exist.

Closing (3-5 min.)

Gather in a circle and close with a prayer that mentions each group member by name. Give thanks for the many contributions and the learning that has taken place. If your group knows each other well and is comfortable praying together, allow an open space in the prayer for individuals to pray for each other.

Suggestions for Adapting Session 6

If you have 45 minutes

It will be difficult to do both individual commitments and exploring a group direction in this amount of time. Omit Activity 4. If the group seems interested in continuing or has a project in mind, schedule another time to meet.

If you have 90 minutes or more

- Share a “First Fruits Potluck” together as suggested on Leader Resource I-5.
- Take time to hear how people fared with this week’s readings and Faith in Action steps.
- Spend time with the reading on confession on page 41 of the Participant Guide. How do your group members feel about the word, *sin*? Do they agree with the definition of sin in the Participant Guide? Does it apply to how we eat?

If you have more than 12 people

- Seat people in small groups for the *lectio divina* exercise. Share within these groups at the end of the exercise.
- Allow more time for the door exercise involving individual commitments as you have more people making offerings. As above, schedule another time to meet if you sense a group direction emerging.
- A large group may not know each other as well and may not be comfortable sharing their commitments or standing in front of a large group. Have people share their commitments in smaller groups organized by areas of interest (nutrition, hunger, environment, etc.)

More ideas for adapting your session

- Include time for a course evaluation. If you plan to teach this curriculum again, get feedback on what your group found most worthwhile or would change.
- Do any members of your group have a vocation related to one of the topics discussed? Is someone interested in pursuing such a vocation? Have a special time of prayer or a laying on of hands service for this person.
- You are more likely to find a few people interested in pursuing a particular idea than to agree on a direction for everyone. As ideas float out during Activity 4, write them down on separate pieces of chart paper and tape them around the room. When you have a number of ideas, get people out of their seats and have them form clusters around any possibility that interests them. Then break into several clusters to continue discussion.

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