



The Food Experience

Module **1**: Opening

Activity Level: Low

Goal: To think about the food we eat and reflect on the incredible gift and privilege it represents.

MATERIALS

- One piece of food for every participant to explore and enjoy. We recommend fresh food that people enjoy, but really anything will do. If you use fresh food, be sure to wash it beforehand (or, if you wish, take time to let each participant wash it as a part of the experience). You may want to use a seasonal and/or local food for added reflection. Finally, be sure to keep in mind food allergies.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR PRESENTER

Welcome the participants to the session on food and hunger. To prepare the people's hearts and minds for the time together, choose one of the following prayers and/or hymns listed below or choose your own.

PRAYERS

1. God our creator, you have ordered seedtime and harvest, sunshine and rain. Give to all who work the land fair compensation for the work of their hands. Grant that the people of this and every nation may give thanks to you for food, drink, and all that sustains life; may use with care the land and water from which these good things come; and may honor the laborers who produce them; through your son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.
—*The gifts of agriculture, Evangelical Lutheran Worship*
2. Gracious God, we thank you for making the earth fruitful, so that it might produce what is needed for life: Bless those who work in the fields; give us seasonable weather; and grant that we may all share the fruits for the earth, rejoicing in your goodness; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.
—*Prayer for Agriculture* (adapted from the Episcopal Book of Common Prayer)

3. Say a prayer yourself or invite a member from the group gathered to offer one.

SONG SUGGESTIONS

(from *Evangelical Lutheran Worship [ELW]* or *With One Voice [WOV]*)

- ELW 461
All Who Hunger, Gather Gladly
- ELW 465
As the Grains of Wheat
- ELW 512
Lord, Let My Heart Be Good Soil
- WOV 766
We Come to the Hungry Feast

READ ALOUD

Read the following aloud to prepare participants for the content in this activity:

When was the last time you marveled at the gift of food? How often do you think about the miracle—of seeds, earth, sunshine, and water? How often do you remember all the labor that went into your food? Food is an amazing gift! This exercise will help us remember this.

We are going to pass out a piece of food. Don't eat it just yet. Sit with it and listen to the instructions. Be with your food for just a moment.



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INSTRUCTIONS

Activity Part One: Encountering the Food

1. Pass the food out. You may want to explain that this activity may feel a bit odd, spending so much time reflecting on something you see everyday. But that's the point—we rarely take time to think about our food, to marvel at it, to remember all that it takes (and all the people involved) to bring food from field to plate.
2. Ask: “When was the last time you really thought about what you were eating? How often do you marvel at the gift of food and all the ways it can tickle your senses?” Allow time for silent reflection then invite people to respond.
3. Invite the participants to look at the food, to examine it with their eyes. What is the shape of the food? What colors do they see? Are there any surprises? Allow a few moments for silent reflection.
4. Invite the participants to feel the food (if you are using fresh food and choosing to wash the food as a group this would be a good time to do that activity). What does it feel like? Is it hard or is it squishy? What is the texture? Do some parts feel different than other parts? Allow a few moments for silent reflection.
5. Invite the participants to hear the food. Shake it. Does it make a noise? What kind of noise? Pat it. What does it sound like? Allow a few moments for silent reflection.
6. Invite the participants to smell the food. What does it smell like? Sweet? Sour? Something you want to eat? Allow time for silent reflection then invite people to respond.
7. Invite the participants to taste the food. (This may involve peeling or opening the food first. If so, you may want to do the steps one more time with the food unpeeled/opened, noticing differences in the experience.) What does it taste like? Did it taste how you expected? Invite participants to share.
8. Marvel together at the gift of food. Not only does it sustain us, but we can enjoy it in so many ways. It's not just a matter of inputs and outputs, but we are built with the capacity to enjoy and experience this act of sustenance. What a gift!

Activity Part Two: Thinking about Food

READ ALOUD: So we have this amazing gift of food and all the pleasure and sustenance it gives us. But what did it take to get this to us?

1. Think first about the natural processes: What was necessary for the food to get from field to plate? What natural processes were involved? Depending on the type of food you use in the activity, watch for seeds, soil, sun, water (at the right time!), etc. For each of the answers, linger for a bit. Consider the miracle of it all.
2. Think now about other processes involved.
 - a. Think about the people (farmers, laborers, drivers, stockers, store clerks, etc.). How much work was put into getting this food to you? (If you want to delve deeper, you can also think about the type of work required, the conditions of the workplace, etc.). It's a lot of work!
 - b. Think also about the processes needed for planting, growing, harvesting, packaging and shipping. We use a lot of resources!
3. Think about how valuable our food is—the miracle, the work, the resources.

CLOSING TEXT AND PRAYER

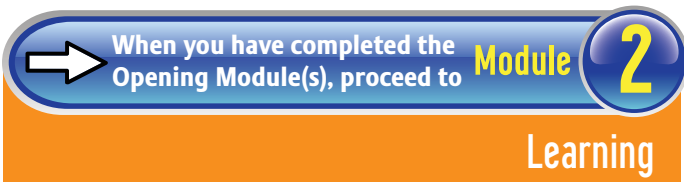
To transition into the next module, read the following passage from Genesis and allow a brief moment for quiet reflection. Conclude with a short prayer.

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. God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good.” (NRSV)



SUGGESTED PRAYERS

1. Abundant God, we give you thanks for the fruitful earth, which produces what is needed for life. Bless those who work in the fields; grant favorable weather to all engaged in agriculture; and us to ensure that all people share the fruits of the earth, rejoicing in your goodness; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.
—Prayer for agriculture from *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*
2. Blessed are you, O Lord God, for you give us food to sustain our lives and make our hearts glad; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.
—*Grace at Meals* (adapted from the *Episcopal Book of Common Prayer*)
3. Say a prayer yourself or invite a member from the group gathered to offer one.





21 STEPS to a Burger on a Bun with Lettuce, Tomato, and a Pickle, Please

Module **1**: Opening

Activity Level: **Medium**

Goal: This activity will help participants become more aware and appreciative of the food we eat. Together they will consider the many steps and workers involved in the production of a hamburger.

MATERIALS

- 21 Cards describing various steps required to make a hamburger. The cards are provided below; print and cut them out prior to the lesson. Depending on the number of participants you may wish to prepare duplicate sets.
- Tape or pins (if using options 2 or 3 described below)

INSTRUCTIONS FOR PRESENTER

In this activity participants will consider some of the processes required to produce a hamburger. They will place in order 21 cards describing various moments in the production of a pretty common (and often relatively cheap) food. The time of this exercise is flexible—the food production and distribution system is quite complex with several interesting points for consideration. You should gauge the interest of the group to determine how long to linger on a given question.

As you begin, welcome the participants to the session on food and hunger. To prepare their hearts and minds for the time together, choose one of the prayers and/or hymns listed below or choose your own.

PRAYERS

1. God our creator, you have ordered seedtime and harvest, sunshine and rain. Give to all who work the land fair compensation for the work of their hands. Grant that the people of this and every nation may give thanks to you for food, drink, and all that sustains life; may use with care the land and water from which these good things come; and may honor the laborers who produce them; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.
—*The gifts of agriculture, Evangelical Lutheran Worship*

2. Gracious God, we thank you for making the earth fruitful, so that it might produce what is needed for life: Bless those who work in the fields; give us seasonable weather; and grant that we may all share the fruits for the earth, rejoicing in your goodness; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.
—*Prayer for Agriculture* (adapted from the Episcopal *Book of Common Prayer*)
3. Pray an original prayer or invite a member from the group gathered to offer one.

SONG SUGGESTIONS

(from *Evangelical Lutheran Worship [ELW]* or *With One Voice [WOV]*)

- ELW 461
All Who Hunger, Gather Gladly
- ELW 465
As the Grains of Wheat
- ELW 512
Lord, Let My Heart Be Good Soil
- WOV 766
We Come to the Hungry Feast



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21 STEPS to a Burger on a Bun with Lettuce, Tomato, and a Pickle, Please

Module 1: Opening

Activity Level: Medium

READ ALOUD

Read the following aloud to prepare participants for the content in this activity:

Typically when we eat a hamburger at a restaurant, fast food place or at home we may say a quick prayer of thanks for our food (or not!) but we probably don't stop to think about all the steps and people and impacts involved in getting that hamburger to our plate. We are going to do an activity: "21 Steps to a Burger on a Bun with Lettuce, Tomato, and a Pickle, Please" to help us think about those steps, those people, and those impacts.

INSTRUCTIONS

OPTION 1

Pass out one card to each participant (or, if it is a larger group, to 21 of the participants), and ask them to arrange themselves in the order in which they think the steps occur. Have them share the order in which they arranged themselves and guide the discussion with the questions below.

OPTION 2

Provide card sets to one or more small groups and ask them to arrange them in the order that they think the food production occurs. You can display the cards in order on a table or taped to a wall or any other way you see fit. Have participants share the order in which they placed the cards and guide a discussion using the questions below.

OPTION 3

If you have a larger group and you want to be a bit more active, assign the steps as roles to participants. Use tape or a pin to fasten their role (e.g., Seeds and Soil, Wheat, Calf, etc.) to their shirt. The other participants must now organize them in the order they believe most closely matches the order of the steps. They can do this by calling out orders or by physically moving the labeled participants into the proper order. Whenever a person makes a move, ask them why and use the questions below to guide the discussion.

NOTE TO PRESENTER

Instruct participants not to worry about deciding on an exact order. For all three options, some steps in the food production system may occur at the same time or close in time or multiple times. For example, a scientist who engineers seeds will be involved in the food process prior to seeds and soil. A scientist who studies "mouth feel" will be involved in the processing of meat. Similarly, farm workers are likely to be involved in the planting, tending, and harvesting of a plant. Cards may be clustered and/or moved. Use those moments of confusion to reflect on the process of food production and distribution. The precise order of the steps is less important than the participants' thoughts about the steps.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- Why was a particular order chosen?
- Were there any surprising or unexpected steps?
- Which steps were hardest to place in order? Why?
- Do they think there might be more steps that were not represented? What might those be? (The 20 steps are a generalization, particularly when it comes to more processed food like pickles, ketchup, buns, or meat.)
- Had they thought it took that many steps to "make" a hamburger?
- Where might water be used in the production? How much? (Interesting tidbit: according to *E—The Environmental Magazine*, you'd save more water by refraining from eating a pound of beef than you would by not showering for an entire year!)
- How far might some parts of the burger have traveled?
- Think a bit about the laborers. Which steps require human labor? What do we imagine or know about those workers' jobs and experience (Are they paid a fair wage? How are they treated? Where are they from?)
- Has this exercise changed how you think about your food, food choices, or food production? In what way(s)?



POINTS TO EMPHASIZE

1. God has provided us with an amazing bounty of food to sustain us. In addition to the miracle of life and food, many people work hard to bring the food from field to plate. It is good to enjoy our food, giving God thanks and praise while fully appreciating all those who labor to bring us our food.
2. In our broken world what God has provided us is not always equally available to everyone. The system and policies we have in place to grow, harvest, produce, and distribute our food can have both positive and negative impacts on our health, the environment, and local communities. The negative impacts are often harshest upon those who are poor and hungry.
3. Too often those who produce our food do not have enough food and resources to feed and care for their own families and communities.
4. We can become aware of these negative impacts and ask God to help and guide us to make choices and take actions that bring about more just systems and policies.

CLOSING TEXT AND PRAYER

To transition into the next module, read the following passage from Genesis and allow a brief moment for quiet reflection. Conclude with a short prayer.

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. God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good.” (NRSV)

SUGGESTED PRAYERS

1. Abundant God, we give you thanks for the fruitful earth, which produces what is needed for life. Bless those who work in the fields; grant favorable weather to all engaged in agriculture; and help us to ensure that all people share the fruits of the earth, rejoicing in your goodness; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.
–Prayer for agriculture from *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*
2. Blessed are you, O Lord God, for you give us food to sustain our lives and make our hearts glad; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.
–*Grace at Meals* (adapted from the *Episcopal Book of Common Prayer*)
3. Pray an original prayer or invite a member from the group gathered to offer one.



When you have completed the Opening Module(s), proceed to

Module

2

Learning



**Seeds
and Soil**

**Farm
Workers**

Sun

Harvest

Water

Lettuce



Wheat

Jars

Mill

Pickles

Flour Bag

Calf



**Processing
Plant**

Feedlot

**Fertilizer
and Pesticide**

Tomatoes

**Meat
Packing
Plant**

Scientist



**Truck/Train/
Airplane**

Hamburger

Cook



Make a Meal!

Module **1**: Opening

Activity Level: High

Goal: In this activity, participants will share a meal and celebrate the blessing of food. They will also consider all the work and sacrifice that goes into food production and distribution.

MATERIALS

- Ingredients for the Meal

INSTRUCTIONS FOR PRESENTER

There are three variations on the exercise. The first, and probably ideal, option would be to prepare a meal from scratch together. For this option, two simple recipes are provided below (or you can use your own!). This option will work best with a smaller group. The second option would be to host a potluck (complete with Jell-O®!). The third option would be to order a meal and/or have it catered.

Participants can share in the cost of the meal or perhaps have it subsidized by the congregation. If funding will be a problem, organizers can explore grant opportunities for covering meal costs. ELCA World Hunger Education grants may be available. Please send an e-mail to HungerGrants@elca.org to inquire about the timing and availability of ELCA World Hunger Education grants.

BEFORE THE MEAL

1. Determine if participants will be working together to prepare the meal, if it will be potluck style, or if it will be pre-prepared/catered. If you will be making a main dish, the event organizer might consider asking participants to bring additional dishes to complement it. A simple salad, loaf of bread, and/or cookies would complement either of the soup recipes below.
2. Either through donations or store purchases, make sure adequate quantities of the ingredients will be available for the session.

3. Make sure kitchen space has the necessary equipment and serving items. To reduce the amount of garbage headed to the landfill, the organizer might request that participants bring their own reusable bowl, spoon, cup, etc. from home. Have extras on hand for participants who forget to bring their own.
4. Prepare drinks, or ask participants to bring their own drinks. Unless tap water is unacceptable to drink in your area, consider serving pitchers of ice water rather than bottled water to reduce the environmental impact of your event. Have a plan for recycling cans, bottles, etc. that are used in the preparation of your meal or otherwise brought by participants.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR PRESENTER

Once the meal is ready to be served, gather the group for the session on food and hunger. To prepare the people's hearts and minds for the time together, choose one of the prayers and/or hymns listed below or choose your own.

PRAYERS

1. God our creator, you have ordered seedtime and harvest, sunshine and rain. Give to all who work the land fair compensation for the work of their hands. Grant that the people of this and every nation may give thanks to you for food, drink, and all that sustains life; may use with care the land and water from which these good things come; and may honor the laborers who produce them; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.
—*The gifts of agriculture, Evangelical Lutheran Worship*



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2. Gracious God, we thank you for making the earth fruitful, so that it might produce what is needed for life: Bless those who work in the fields; give us seasonable weather; and grant that we may all share the fruits for the earth, rejoicing in your goodness; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.
–*Prayer for Agriculture* (adapted from the Episcopal Book of Common Prayer)
3. Pray an original prayer or invite a member from the group gathered to offer one.

SONG SUGGESTIONS

(from *Evangelical Lutheran Worship [ELW]* or *With One Voice [WOV]*)

- ELW 461
All Who Hunger, Gather Gladly
- ELW 465
As the Grains of Wheat
- ELW 512
Lord, Let My Heart Be Good Soil
- WOV 766
We Come to the Hungry Feast

READ ALOUD

Read the following aloud to prepare participants for the content in this activity:

When was the last time you marveled at the gift of food? How often do you think about the miracle—of seeds, earth, sunshine, and water? How often do you remember all the labor that went into your food? Food is an amazing gift! This exercise will help us remember this.

We are going to serve the meal. Don't eat it just yet. Sit with it and listen to the instructions. Be with your food for just a moment.

INSTRUCTIONS

ACTIVITY PART ONE: ENCOUNTERING THE MEAL

1. Pass the meal out. You may want to explain that this activity may feel a bit odd, spending so much time reflecting on something you see every day. But that's the point—we rarely take time to think about our food,

to marvel at it, to remember all that it takes (and all the people involved) to bring food from field to plate.

2. Ask: "When was the last time you really thought about what you were eating? How often do you marvel at the gift of food and all the ways it can tickle your senses?" Allow time for silent reflection then invite people to share their thoughts with others around the table.
3. Invite the participants to look at the meal, to examine it with their eyes. What does it look like? What colors do they see? Are there any surprises? Allow a few moments for silent reflection.
4. Invite the participants to feel the food. Since the meal is likely to be hot, participants can simply hold their hands over the food and feel the warmth. If there are other side dishes, you can also invite the participants to explore those dishes. What does the food feel like? Is it hard or is it squishy? What is the texture? Do some parts feel different than other parts? Allow a few moments for silent reflection.
5. Invite the participants to hear the food. Shake it. Gently splash it with a spoon. Does it make a noise? What kind of noise? Pat it. What does it sound like? Allow a few moments for silent reflection.
6. Invite the participants to smell the food. What does it smell like? Sweet? Sour? Something you want to eat? Allow time for silent reflection then invite people to respond around their table.
7. Invite the participants to taste the food. What does it taste like? Did it taste how you expected? Invite participants to share.
8. Marvel together at the gift of food. Not only does it sustain us, but we can enjoy it in so many ways. It's not just a matter of inputs and outputs, but we are built with the capacity to enjoy and experience this act of sustenance. What a gift!
9. Invite the people to enjoy the meal and to continue reflecting on the amazing gift. Encourage them to orient their conversations around the gift and miracle of food and our ability to experience it.

**ACTIVITY PART TWO:****THINKING ABOUT THE GIFT OF FOOD**

1. After the meal, invite further reflection on food.
2. **READ ALOUD:** So we have this amazing gift of food and all the pleasure and sustenance it gives us. But what did it take to get this to us?
3. Think first about the natural processes: What was necessary for the food to get from field to plate? What natural processes were involved? Depending on the type of food you use in the activity, answers might include seeds, soil, sun, water (at the right time!), etc. For each of the answers, linger for a bit. Consider the miracle of it all.
4. Think now about other processes involved.
 - a. Think about the people (farmers, laborers, drivers, stockers, store clerks, etc.). How much work was put into getting this food to you? (If you want to delve deeper, you can also think about the type of work required, the conditions of the workplace, etc.). It's a lot of work!
 - b. Think also about the processes needed for planting, growing, harvesting, packaging and shipping. We use a lot of resources!
5. Think about how valuable our food is—the miracle, the work, the resources.

TEXT AND PRAYER

To transition into the next module, read the following passage from Genesis and allow a brief moment for quiet reflection. Conclude with a short prayer.

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. God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good." (NRSV)

SUGGESTED PRAYERS:

1. Abundant God, we give you thanks for the fruitful earth, which produces what is needed for life. Bless those who work in the fields; grant favorable weather to all engaged in agriculture; and help us to ensure that all people share the fruits of the earth, rejoicing in your goodness; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.
—Prayer for agriculture from *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*
2. Blessed are you, O Lord God, for you give us food to sustain our lives and make our hearts glad; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.
—*Grace at Meals* (adapted from the *Episcopal Book of Common Prayer*)
3. Pray an original prayer or invite a member from the group gathered to offer one.

After the prayer, depending on your group, select from either the Low Learning (case studies) or Medium Learning (make a match) modules the activity that will best suit your group.



When you have completed the Opening Module(s), proceed to

Module

2

Learning



RECIPES

FALL OR WINTER SEASON: SQUASH OR PUMPKIN SOUP

This is a simple, flexible, and delicious soup that can be made vegetarian or vegan (or not). If you need to feed a large crowd, use the entire pumpkin/squash. If a smaller group, use just one half. The following recipe uses only half the pumpkin/squash, so double the additional ingredients if you will be using the whole pumpkin or squash. You can also adjust the amount of soup by adding more stock or heavy cream. This is a very flexible recipe.

Ingredients:

- 1 pie pumpkin or hard winter squash
- 1 onion
- 1 Tbsp olive oil (or less)
- 3–4 C chicken or vegetable stock (use vegetable stock for vegetarian or vegan soup)
- 1–2 C heavy cream (for vegan recipe substitute rice, oat, nut, or soy milk)
- Salt and pepper to taste

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1. Halve the pie pumpkin or hard winter squash and remove seeds. (Seeds can be toasted in the oven for a snack, composted, or dried and saved for planting in the spring). Place both halves on a cookie sheet with raised edges, add a little water, and bake at 350 degrees until the pumpkin/squash is tender (about an hour). Scoop out the flesh, and compost the shell. This step can be done several days in advance if needed.
 2. Chop the onion and sauté in olive oil in a large soup pot. Continue to sauté until the onion begins to turn light brown and caramelize, stirring occasionally.
 3. Add the pumpkin/squash flesh and the stock to the onions and cook until soft and blended, stirring occasionally. If the stock you are using already has salt (most already has plenty), you probably won't need to add more. If you are using salt-free or homemade stock, add salt to the soup to taste.

4. Add heavy cream to taste—about 1-2 C.
5. Using a stick blender or food processor, puree the soup until smooth and creamy. If you need to serve more people than you have soup, thin it with additional stock and heavy cream to the desired consistency and amount—it will still be delicious! Serve soup.

SPRING OR SUMMER SEASON: LENTIL SOUP

Another simple, flexible recipe that can be adapted to feed as many as you like! This recipe needs to cook for about an hour so you may want to prepare it beforehand.

Ingredients:

- 1 large onion (chopped)
- 1 clove garlic (minced)
- 1 green pepper (chopped)
- 1 red pepper (chopped)
- 4 Tbsp olive oil
- 2 Tbsp flour
- 3 C fresh tomatoes (or one 16 ounce can)
- 3 carrots (peeled and chopped)
- 2 C dry lentils (do not presoak)
- 1 Tbsp salt
- 8 C water

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1. Sauté onion, garlic, green pepper, and red pepper in the olive oil until softened.
 2. Add flour and continue to sauté to make a roux, stirring constantly until flour is browned (but not burned).
 3. Add tomatoes, carrots, lentils, salt and water. Cover and simmer over low heat until lentils are cooked—about 1 hour.

Case Studies: A Tale of Two Farmers



Module 2: Learning

Activity Level: Low

Goal: Participants will consider the impact of our food system on farmers by reading and discussing two case studies.

MATERIALS

- Case Studies and Discussion Questions (provided below)

INSTRUCTIONS TO PRESENTER

In the opening module attention was given to the fundamental goodness of food. In this learning module we will think about how people's lives (particularly farmers) are impacted by the current food system. Prior to leading this module we recommend you read both case studies carefully and prepare your own answers to the questions below. Doing so will ensure that the conversation around these issues flows. Also, you will notice that the direction of the case studies may be uncomfortable for some. Acknowledge that our food system is complex with smart people on all sides advocating for conflicting policies. Allow for discomfort and disagreement.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. You can either print out the case studies and provide each participant with a copy to read silently before you begin the discussion or you can read them aloud to the group (or choose a volunteer to read them for everyone).
2. After reading the case studies, engage the group in discussion using the questions below. Allow about thirty minutes for this activity.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR PRESENTER

After reading the stories and allowing some quiet time for digestion and reflection, guide the discussion using the following questions.

1. What surprised you from the case studies?
2. What similarities do you notice between the two stories?
3. The title of these case studies is "A Tale (singular) of Two Farmers." How are these two stories really a single tale?
4. The stories remind us of some of the negative impacts of a globalized and industrialized farm system. Which impacts were most startling?
5. Do the case studies only tell half of the story? How so? What might be some of the good that comes from our current system of food production and distribution?
6. The case studies are left somewhat open-ended. How do you imagine the stories end?
7. Who else in our current food production and distribution system needs their story to be told? How might it be told?



When you have completed the Learning Module(s), proceed to

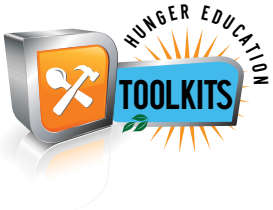
Module

3

Closing and ACTION



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THE STORY OF A MIDWESTERN AMERICAN FARM

A Fictional Case Study Written by Pastor Curt Rohland, Former Wisconsin Dairy Farmer

He came to America from an Eastern European country at the beginning of the twentieth century. He came first to Chicago, where he met a young woman who had also come to America from the same European country. They married and moved to northern Wisconsin to purchase cheap land. They started what would become a large family on what would become a small diversified dairy farm. Besides six cows, they raised pigs, chickens, ducks, and a few geese. As sons and daughters were born, grew, and became useful in farm work, the herd also grew, as did the flocks of chickens, ducks, geese, and numbers of pigs. They were known and respected (and by some envied) as hard-working and prosperous farmers. The family always ate well; there was never a lack of food or people to eat it. During the hard years of the Depression and afterward, others, both neighbors and strangers, often came to the farm for a meal and hospitality.

By the end of the 1950s, all the sons had returned home from military service in WWII and various jobs in the city to buy their own farms and raise their own families. They, too, became modestly successful and prosperous, as did their sisters who married farmers as well. By now, however, pigs, chickens, geese and ducks were no longer part of the farm operation, being raised only as 4-H projects by the next generation of children. Heeding the advice of experts from the university, county farm agents, their dairy cooperatives, and following their own inclinations, this generation of farmers concentrated on dairy farming. They became part of the great continuing expansion of dairy that made Wisconsin the nation's dairy land. The state even said so on its license plates. These farmers were part of the greatest sustained growth in food production in world history.

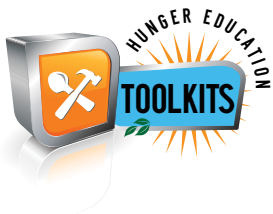
When the post-war generation of farmers reached retirement age in the 1970s, the value of their farms had

grown a great deal. And when the time came to sell, the buyers, whether one of their own children or other young aspiring farmers, had to take out large loans. In spite of their relative success, there had rarely if ever been enough income from year to year for the older generation of farmers to create a pension or other retirement fund for themselves. Their retirement had to come almost entirely from the sale of the farm, and the only way to buy the farm was with borrowed money.

Once a loan was secured to buy the farmland and buildings, the beginning farmer needed to borrow more money for the cattle and machinery. This new generation continued learning how to improve their farming practices by using better crop seed, more fertilizer, new ways of increasing crop yields with chemical control of weeds and insects, and other more modern and efficient management practices. This made it possible, and in fact necessary in many cases, to enlarge the farm by buying more land, which usually meant buying out a neighbor's farm.

While these Wisconsin farmers were getting bigger and better in producing crops and cows and milk, other dairy farmers all over the nation were doing the same, as were most farmers of all kinds throughout the country. For several decades farming was exciting. It was one of those rare times when farmers appeared to be making money and enjoying the prospect of a secure and prosperous future. Government programs, university research, bankers, and all the private businesses making money selling farmers their inputs and buying what they produced, were all involved as farm size and productivity grew and farm numbers and families declined.

The good times lasted until the 1980s. Farmers began getting less and less for what they produced, paying more and more for what they needed to operate, and struggling under the huge loans they had been advised to take (and had often taken all too eagerly) during the good years. That, the experts advised them, is what they had to do to succeed in business. But now thousands of them were going out of business, losing their farms, and many losing their lives by suicide, even while the



nation's food production continued growing. Rural towns began declining, along with schools and churches and the entire fabric of farm-based rural life. Some farmers came together to organize for change; some dairy farmers dumped milk on the ground, in a protest taken from the depression years; traditional, old-line farm organizations were often at a loss about what to do; nonprofit foundations and churches joined in the struggle to get the government to step in to restore an economic fairness for family farmers. But the move toward ever greater concentration of food production under the control of major agribusiness interests was relentless and, it seemed, inevitable.

By the first decade of the 21st century, farmers realized they had become part of the global economic system. This system had been promised to them as the way out of their financial problems. Through international trade agreements known by terms such as "General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs" (GATT) and the "North American Free Trade Agreement" (NAFTA), they could and would be able to sell more and more milk, grains, meat, and other farm goods, to more and more people around the world. Twenty or more years of globalized food production, processing and marketing, however, had not helped family farmers all that much. In fact, for the most part it made things worse.

The young man who immigrated to Wisconsin with his wife to start a family and a farm had worked hard many years, as had his children, to make a living producing milk for a growing American population. They succeeded. A century later, however, none of the third generation remained in farming: some by choice, others by necessity, had quit. In 30 years, Wisconsin lost two thirds of its family dairy farmers, from about 55,000 in 1976 to 15,000 in 2006. And while this was happening to American farmers as the result of agribusiness practices and government farm and trade policies, other farmers around the world were experiencing very similar developments.

In Mexico, one of the United States' major trading partners, farmers were suffering even worse than their American counterparts, and for much the same reasons...

Miguel Diaz was a Campesino born and raised in Oaxaca, Mexico. He was the 10th generation of corn farmers and land owners in his region. The year was 1992, and he was once again celebrating with his family another bountiful harvest. At the same time, in the U.S., the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) had recently been signed by President Bush (Sr.), Mexican President Salinas, and Canadian Prime Minister Mulroney. Miguel had heard about this agreement and hoped it would help him to earn a living in trading his corn. The primary structure of the agreement would eliminate restrictions on the flow of goods, services and investment in North America. In 1993, the signed agreement passed in both the House of Representatives and the U.S. Senate for approval. Mexico was the world's second largest importer of U.S. manufactured goods and the third largest importer of U.S. agricultural products. After this agreement was signed, half of tariffs on trade between Mexico and the U.S. were eliminated. The remaining would be eliminated over the next 15 years. NAFTA was signed by President Clinton on December 8, 1993 and took effect on January 1, 1994.

Fast forward five years to 1999—Miguel and his family are experiencing great hardship, as the imported price of corn is well below the export market price. The supposed benefits that came from eliminating Mexican tariffs have now been lost in 30 months due to pressure from Mexican cattle growers who wanted cheap feed. In addition, subsidies for crops from industrialized countries, including the United States, have made it extremely hard for corn farmers in Mexico to sell at a price above their production costs. The market price is just too low. Miguel and many other corn farmers are literally cut out of the market and corn is now being imported into Mexico at a greater rate. This global trade agreement has closed down the local farmer. Miguel is suffering greatly and is now forced off of his land. He is no longer able to maintain his family and pay for his children's education.

It is now 2005—Miguel has no land or home and is trying to earn a living at odd jobs in farming. More than one million other Mexican farmers have been forced off their



land as well. Miguel has sent his wife and children to live with a relative and is packing his bags to cross the U.S. border for an opportunity to make money to send it back to his family. The journey is dangerous and he has managed to save enough to pay fees to “Coyotes” for this journey. He does not want to leave his family but he must make money to live. He is concerned about walking across the long desert lands without enough water. He fears encountering the drug cartels that charge fees to cross their territory and that prey upon vulnerable people to sell drugs. Miguel is not interested in any of this activity. He wants to work with his hands and earn an honest living. With the United States exporting over 10 million tons of corn into Mexico annually, Miguel does not have a chance as a corn farmer. His choice now is to become an undocumented worker in the United States. He prays for a safe journey.



Goal: Participants will think about our modern food production system and some of the problems it can present through a matching activity that correlates components of food production and distribution to some contemporary food problems.

MATERIALS

- Matching cards provided below. Print and cut the cards out prior to the lesson. You may wish to print the Production/Distribution cards on one color of paper and the Problem cards on another. Depending on the number of participants, you may wish to prepare duplicate sets.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR PRESENTER

In the opening module we were given a taste (perhaps literally!) of the wonderful gift of food—both the miracle of nature and the hard work it takes to get our food to us. In this learning module we will reflect further on the gift of food with a particular focus on some of the costs associated with getting food from field to plate.

READ ALOUD

Read the following aloud to prepare participants for the content in this activity:

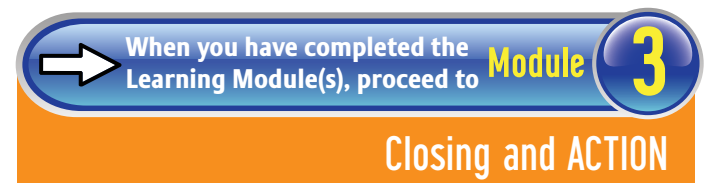
In the opening activity we thought about the wonderful gift of food. In this activity we will reflect together on some ways in which that gift is threatened in our modern food production and distribution systems.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Distribute the activity cards among participants. People can have more than one card, but probably shouldn't have more than two Production/Distribution cards and two Problem cards. It's okay if you don't use all of the cards. Be sure to give participants time to read and absorb content printed on the cards.
2. READ ALOUD: "Some of you have production and distribution facts on your cards. Some of you have problems printed on your cards. Some of you may have both. You'll have a few moments to find someone who has a production or distribution fact on their card that correlates to the problem printed on your card... or vice versa. Try to make at least one match. Remember, there could be more than one way that the various cards correlate.¹ Go find a match!"
3. When the time is up, invite several pairs of people to explain why they think their cards are a match. If a fact or problem is surprising or troubling, allow for conversation.² Repeat several times. Allow about 15 minutes for this activity.

¹ Note to presenter: we use the word "correlate" intentionally—there is not a one-to-one correspondence or cause to any of the production/distribution facts and the problems presented. The production and distribution of food is a very complex system. Our goal here is to spur critical thinking about something we often take for granted.

² All the facts in this activity can be found in Bread for the World Institute's 2007 hunger report: *Healthy Food, Farms, and Families*. Available online at www.bread.org.





FOOD PRODUCTION AND DISTRIBUTION CARDS

FOOD PRODUCTION AND DISTRIBUTION

The earth is able to produce enough food for everyone to have their nutritional needs met.

FOOD PRODUCTION AND DISTRIBUTION

High Fructose Corn Syrup (HFCS), a sweetener made from corn, was invented in the late '60s and in the late '70s began to be widely used in food production. By the mid '80s it could be found in nearly every processed food. The vast majority of our consumption of HFCS is from sodas.

FOOD PRODUCTION AND DISTRIBUTION

Food production and distribution accounts for one-fifth of the oil consumption in the United States. Oil is used to produce fertilizer, pesticides, and packaging; it is also used for planting, harvesting, shipping, and cooling. Food travels on average 1,500 miles from field to plate.

FOOD PRODUCTION AND DISTRIBUTION

According to the USDA, in general, only farms that have net sales of more than \$250,000 are profitable. In other words, a smaller farm that has net sales under \$250,000 is generally not financially sustainable. Farms with net sales greater than \$500,000 are the most profitable. The larger farms also receive the largest subsidies from the government.

FOOD PRODUCTION AND DISTRIBUTION

Poorer areas of the United States, both rural and urban, are less likely to have access to affordable and nutritious food. Those who are poor are more likely to live in a "food desert" where their only option for food is a convenience store or fast food restaurant.

FOOD PRODUCTION AND DISTRIBUTION

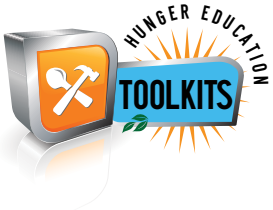
In the United States, we spend only about 10 percent of our income on food, the lowest percentage in the world. Those who are poorest and most vulnerable around the world may spend as much as 80 or 90 percent of their income on food.

FOOD PRODUCTION AND DISTRIBUTION

The United States is the largest exporter of corn in the world. Due to U.S. subsidies to its farmers, many countries (such as Mexico) find it cheaper to import corn from the United States than to purchase it from a local farmer.

FOOD PRODUCTION AND DISTRIBUTION

In the United States, food is often centrally processed and then shipped across the country and across the world.



PROBLEM CARDS

PROBLEM

1.02 billion people are hungry in the world.

PROBLEM

Since the early '80s obesity, Type II Diabetes, and other chronic food-related illnesses have been steadily increasing in the United States. Type II Diabetes was formerly called “adult onset diabetes” because it was only found in adults, but now it is common in children.

PROBLEM

Human activity, specifically through the burning of fossil fuels, exacerbates climate change. Climate change affects rainfall patterns, which in turn limits the abilities of farmers, especially subsistence farmers, to grow food.

PROBLEM

According to Bread for the World Institute, more and more small farms are being consolidated into larger farms. All the evidence suggests that counties that receive the most farm supports from the government (that is, counties with the largest farms) are stagnating economically and losing population.

PROBLEM

Obesity and other health problems related to diet (such as Type II Diabetes) are more likely in poorer communities.

PROBLEM

Too many people all along the food production and distribution chain (such as farm workers, meat packers, cooks, clerks, and others) are barely paid a livable wage.

PROBLEM

Farmers in many countries around the world cannot sell their crops for a profit. They end up without a livable income. Many lose their land. Displaced, they often migrate looking for work so that they can feed themselves and their families.

PROBLEM

If one batch of food is contaminated with bacteria like Salmonella or E. coli. 0157:H7 it is quickly and widely distributed across the United States and into the rest of the world. This can lead to massive outbreaks of illness and even death. Large quantities of contaminated food must be recalled and disposed of.



Closing and ACTION

Module **3**: Closing and ACTION

Activity Level: All

Goal: The goal of this module is to summarize the key learning points and to give concrete actions your congregation or group can use to live and eat more intentionally. Our food choices matter. Let's do something about it!

MATERIALS

- As described in the activities below

INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE PRESENTER

Before the gathering go through the list of activities in this module. Pick one or two that you can use to close your time together. Some of the activities require significant planning and preparation, so you may want to use this closing and action time to create a committee or delegate various responsibilities. After you are finished with the activity (or activities), conclude with a song and/or prayer from the opening module.

READ ALOUD

Read the following aloud to prepare people for the activity:

In our time together we have reflected on the wonderful gift of food and the delight it brings. We have also thought about the ways in which this gift can be corrupted. We have only begun to scratch the surface of this complex and wide-reaching topic (with lots of differing opinions on the best way forward). We hope you will leave with the following main ideas:

- Food is a gift—slow down and enjoy it! Use your mealtimes to reflect on the abundant goodness that comes from God.
- Our current food production and distribution system is not without flaws. The most obvious evidence of this is that although the farmers of the world have the capacity to produce more than enough food for everyone to eat, more than 1 billion people in the world still go hungry.

- How we produce and distribute food raises numerous justice issues from food deserts to labor rights to environmental stewardship, to name a few.
- How we eat matters. The point of this closing and action module is to give you some ideas about how you can help change the system through your food and lifestyle choices.

INSTRUCTIONS

Below is a list of takeaways—actions—related to today's gathering that you can incorporate into your life right away to help end hunger and poverty in our world.

After doing the activity (or activities), take some time to talk as a group about the other ideas listed here. What might you do together? What might you do individually? Who else might you invite to join you? This is certainly not a comprehensive list, and your group may create a list of its own—GREAT!

Please share with us what you and your group are doing in your community to end hunger around the corner and the globe. We would love to hear about your good work! Share your story at hunger@elca.org or on the ELCA World Hunger Facebook page at www.facebook.com/ELCAworldhunger.



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
God's work. Our hands.



PRAYER AND WORSHIP

- **Prayer Circle**

Invite each person in the group to write a short prayer for those who are hungry and suffering from injustice. Compile the prayers onto one sheet and copy for each person. Ask participants to pray this week for those who are hungry using the prayers created by your group. You can also give them to your pastor and/or worship team leader and encourage them to be incorporated into next Sunday's worship prayers.

- **Feast Together**

The high activity module in this toolkit offers guidance on hosting a community meal that is reflective and transformative. Consider hosting a meal for your congregation or community to reflect on the gift of food and the responsibility it brings. Make it a monthly event!

GIVE, VOLUNTEER, GROW

- **Feed the Hungry**

Challenge your campus and/or congregation to raise funds to support the anti-hunger ministries of ELCA World Hunger. You can help feed people and address the root causes of poverty in the United States and around the world. To learn more visit: www.elca.org/goodgifts.

If you are ambitious, plan an alternative gift fair for your congregation, campus, or community. A step-by-step guide to planning one is available at www.elca.org/hunger.

- **Super Size That Please**

Gather a group from your congregation or campus and volunteer with a local agency that provides healthy meals for those who are hungry in your community. Many volunteers are needed to collect donations, prepare and deliver food, and visit with those who are unable to care for themselves.

- **Plant a Garden**

It doesn't get more local than your backyard! Investigate growing some of your own food, and get some of it into the hands of those who may not otherwise have access to fresh fruits and vegetables.

Grow a garden at home. Whether you have an expansive back yard, a patio, or just a windowsill, you can grow food. www.squarefootgardening.com can show you how to construct a raised bed that allows you to grow food with minimal time and effort. Even if you live in a small apartment you can grow a small garden in your windowsill. To learn more, visit www.sproutpeople.com.

Join together with your community to create a community garden. If your city/town doesn't offer a space for community gardens, approach your city leadership to request one. To learn how to start your own community garden, download ELCA World Hunger's "Community Gardens How-To Guide" at www.elca.org/hunger/resources. Click on the "Hunger Ed" tab.

If your church has some available space, you can work together to transform a small corner into a church garden. The square foot garden method can easily be adapted from a backyard to church property. Depending on the needs of your congregation, you can distribute free produce from the church on certain days or after certain events, establish a free market in a nearby neighborhood or town, or partner with a church or food pantry to distribute the wholesome, local food to those who need it.

ADVOCATE

- **Stay Connected**

Sign up for the ELCA e-Advocacy network and receive action alerts on timely legislative issues that help to end hunger in the world. Visit www.elca.org/advocacy.

Connect with your ELCA State Public Policy Office and learn about opportunities to act in your state on behalf of those who are most vulnerable. To see if your state has an ELCA Public Policy Office visit www.elca.org/advocacy.

- **Power of the Pen**

Write a letter to your elected officials about a topic you received from an e-Advocacy alert. Find out who your officials are by visiting www.elca.org/advocacy. For directions on how to write an advocacy letter or prepare a phone call to an elected official, see the



Climate Change and Hunger Toolkit's "Closing and Action" module at www.elca.org/hunger/resources.

Write a letter to the editor of your local newspaper to express concern for those most in need and to encourage others to support public policies that help end poverty.

- **Coffee Talk**

Meeting with your members of Congress is one of the best ways to advocate for the issues you care about. They are interested in knowing about the concerns of their constituents. By visiting their offices or inviting them to attend a public event or meeting, you are building a personal relationship while asking them to take leadership in working for those most in need. A step-by-step guide on how to make this happen is available at www.elca.org/advocacy.

labor and/or production practices. Inform your grocer of your decision.

- Even better still, shop at your local farmers' market, consumer co-op, or locally owned grocery store.

- **Join a CSA**

Purchase a "share" in a Community Supported Agriculture farm. Doing so will help this local farm meet their planting, growing, harvesting, and delivery costs and you get weekly supplies of fresh healthy local produce and the opportunity to develop a relationship with the farmers. To learn more or to find a CSA near you, visit www.localharvest.org.

- **Eat a Home-Cooked Meal**

Limit purchases from fast food restaurants and restaurant chains in general. Purchase fresh whole foods and cook them rather than eating out.

ASSERT YOUR POWER AS A CONSUMER

- **Advocate with Your Wallet**

Make informed purchasing decisions when you buy groceries:

- Ask for and purchase local fruits, vegetables, eggs, meat, poultry, and dairy at your local grocer. Transporting foods over long distances depletes fuel and energy resources, has a potentially high environmental cost, and harms local producers and farmers.
- Ask for and purchase fair trade and organic options at your local grocer.
- Ask your local grocer not to sell items that contain high fructose corn syrup.
- Read your nutrition labels. Learn what those very long words on the food label mean. Decide what you are willing to consume. Consider not purchasing foods with more than 5-10 ingredients.
- Get to know the main "players" in food production. Which brands are owned by which corporation? What are the values and actions of those corporations? (See the Education section below for some places to start.) When possible, do not buy items from those corporations that have suspect

EDUCATE YOURSELF AND OTHERS

- **Host a Film Series**

In the last few years many films have been released that explore our modern food production and distribution system. Some of the better ones include *Food Inc*, *King Corn*, *Mississippi Chicken*, and *Supersize Me*. Most of these are available to you from your local library. A list of food and hunger related films (along with accompanying discussion guides!) are available at www.elca.org/hunger/education. Screen the films then discuss the implications.

- **Curl up with a Book!**

Some of the more influential books in the formation of this toolkit include:

Bread for the World Institute, *Healthy Foods, Farms, and Families* (2007)

L. Shannon Jung, *Food for Life* (2004)

L. Shannon Jung, *Hunger and Happiness* (2009)

Michael Pollan, *Omnivore's Dilemma* (2006)

Michael Pollan, *In Defense of Food* (2008)

Paul Roberts, *The End of Food* (2008)

Eric Schlosser, *Fast Food Nation* (2001)



- **Take the Food Stamp Challenge**

Can \$1 curb your hunger? Find out for yourself! Live for one week on the national average Food Stamp benefit of \$1 per-person, per-meal. Try serving a Food Stamp Challenge meal for your congregation or community. What could you eat? How does it make you feel? Is it healthy? Are you hungry?

- **Connect with Others Who Care**

Like and follow ELCA World Hunger on Facebook at www.facebook.com/ELCAworldhunger. Follow @ELCAworldhunger on Twitter.

Connect with your synod's hunger team and learn what others in your area are doing... and join them. To learn more, contact your synod office or ELCA World Hunger at hunger@elca.org.

- **Read All About It**

Visit www.elca.org/hunger and learn all about the exciting and life-giving work of ELCA World Hunger. Then tell someone about it.

Subscribe to and read the ELCA World Hunger blog at blogs.elca.org/worldhunger.