

What you can do

52

ways
toward a just
and joy-filled food system



The global food crisis seems overwhelming. But there are things each of us can do to help bring about change in ourselves and for hungry people around the world. Here are 52 ideas—enough to keep you and your congregation busy all 52 weeks of this year! Highlighted items on the list (🌸) are particularly useful for involving children and young people. Download the list in pdf format at www.pcusa.org.

Eating and reflecting

1 Think about how to bring meaning and thankfulness to your table. When do you find it easiest to be thankful? Most difficult? Together with others in your household write a prayer; dare to say grace in a restaurant or other setting that does not lend itself to prayer; try out a new family ritual. 🌸

2 Is there a broken relationship in your life that could be healed by sharing food? With whom would you find it hard to

eat? Respond to these questions and act on your insights.

3 Watch five other species eat: birds, bees, bugs, lizards, whatever. Give thanks for these creatures and reflect on the web of life that connects you to them. 🌸

4 In a journal: (a) identify what you want to change in your eating habits; (b) explain why it is important; (c) name specific actions you can take to make the change;

(d) name people who might be able to support you in this change; and (e) talk to one of these people and see what you can work out.

5 Buy five foods with just one ingredient on the label—a reminder that food is a gift from God. Eat these foods with relish and respect.

Healthy eating

6 Bake a loaf of whole-grain bread, or substitute whole-grain flour for up to 1/3 of the flour in any

bread recipe. Use your kneading time to pray and reflect.

7 Make a list of all the settings where you eat. Which ones encourage you to eat well? Which ones do not? Make eating a social experience as often as possible.

8 Eat one less meal with factory-farmed beef each week for the sake of your health and the environment. High consumption of factory-farmed red and processed meat (anything not labeled

organic or grass-finished) increases your risk of colon cancer. One cow can pass 75 to 100 pounds of manure and 26 to 54 gallons of methane (a greenhouse gas) a day. Find out more at www.ibuydifferent.com.

9 Plan your life so that you make as few trips to the grocery store as possible. The more time you spend in a store, the more unnecessary food you will buy.

10 Go one day (or one week) without consuming junk food, fast food, soft drinks or sugar. How did you feel? Eating healthy may be more expensive in the short run, but if you include diet-related health costs, it is a bargain. 🌱

11 Farmers' markets frequently offer offbeat local foods you can't find in grocery stores. Shop at a farmers' market and experiment with one new fruit or vegetable.

12 Involve children in a fruits and vegetables contest. Give prizes for the greatest number of servings of fruits and vegetables in a day's or week's time; the greatest variety of plants consumed; the bravest attempt to try something new. 🌱

With your congregation

13 Organize an "Adventure Potluck" for your church. Learn how at www.pcusa.org/food/eating.

14 Develop a hunger simulation game for your youth group or congregation. See examples at www.pcusa.org/hunger/hungergames. 🌱

15 Assess your congregation's eating habits. Does coffee hour always feature sugary sweets? Are options available for diabetics at potlucks? Are ingredients labeled for people with allergies?

16 Plan a vacation Bible school or other group activity for children centering on hunger, or organize a study for youth or adults. Order or download resources for various age groups at www.pcusa.org/hunger. 🌱

17 Find a copy of your church budget and review your congregation's financial commitments. What percentage of your budget affects hungry people?

18 Suggest that your congregation switch to fair-trade coffee through the Presbyterian Coffee Project (www.pcusa.org/coffee), which has fabulous chocolate too!

19 Consider selling fair-trade, organic Palestinian olive oil to church members through www.importpeace.org.

20 Have your congregation participate in Bread for the World's Offering of Letters, collecting letters from

members and mailing them to Congress. The 2009 Offering focuses on making U.S. foreign aid more effective in fighting poverty and hunger. Bread for the World is a Christian citizens' movement seeking justice for the world's hungry people. For more information visit www.bread.org.

21 Give to the Global Food Crisis Fund (#H333333) at www.pcusa.org/foodcrisis to support hunger relief and poverty reduction initiatives.

Learn more

22 Read about how agricultural practices affect your food and the environment in the "Issues in Focus" section at www.pcusa.org/food.

23 Go to www.localharvest.org to learn where to go to visit farmers' markets, community-supported agriculture (CSA) or organizations in your community that work to build a healthy, local food economy.

24 Interview local farmers or a person who grew up on a farm. What are their experiences running a farm? What are the biggest challenges?

25 Ask your grocery store manager or the owner of your favorite restaurant about their food sources. Do they use local or organic foods? Do they consider workers' rights when selecting their food suppliers?

26 Read more about the causes of hunger and poverty in the November/December 2008 issue of *Horizons* magazine. Visit www.pcusa.org/horizons.

Where you live

27 Grow vegetables and fruits in your yard or in a community garden. Some churches dedicate a small plot of land for a garden. Enlist children to help. Share the harvest with neighbors and community feeding programs. 🌱

28 Many people say they can't afford the cost of organic and/or locally grown food. Do comparison shopping in your community and figure out the cost per month. What compromises or lifestyle changes could you make in order to buy one or more organic/locally grown foods?

29 Send a note of appreciation to someone who works to help hungry people.

30 Find a way to weave together food preparation and prayer. Is there a poem or Scripture passage you would like to memorize? Post it over your sink. Is there someone who needs your prayers? Hold this person in your heart as you prepare food each day.

31 Shift to the right on the food shopping continuum: megastore > supermarket > "natural" marketplace > buying club/co-op > non-chain

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grocery store > local co-op
> farmers' market >
community-supported
agriculture (CSA) >
community or home
garden.

With your community

32 Involve children and young people in investigating how food companies are involved in their local schools. Are soda machines and fast food available? Organize to bring fresh, local and organic foods into the schools. ❁

33 Visit a soup kitchen, homeless shelter or other service to hungry people. If you have children, take them with you. Talk with and get to know the people you meet there. ❁

34 Support local farmers and strengthen the local economy by purchasing meat and produce through farmers' markets, community supported agriculture (CSA) and independent grocery stores.

35 Help new farmers find nearby land on which to grow food. Maybe your church or its members have available land.

36 Support fair and open community participation in land use and growth management discussions and decisions.

37 Help develop public policies to protect against environmentally unsound growth, in particular destruction of land that is

ecologically valuable or well-suited for food production.

With your household

38 As an antidote to the many ads you see each day selling junk food, prepare an "advertisement" for Communion—a symbol that reminds you of what it means to eat thankfully and well. You and a child might make a chalice and a small plate for bread out of clay, or find and frame a picture of the Lord's Supper. ❁

39 Invite someone of a different race or social class to eat a meal with you. Notice what issues come up as you attempt to bridge divisions. Did you succeed?

40 Ask a child to set an extra place at the table at mealtimes as a reminder of Christ's presence. If unexpected guests drop in, treat them as if you were entertaining Jesus Christ. ❁

41 Do you sometimes give food as a gift? Instead of rich snacks, consider giving healthy whole foods, homemade breads or ingredients for a home-cooked meal.

42 Research how food gets from the field to your plate. Do you notice any problems in the way resources are shared in the world? In your family's approach to meals?

National and global advocacy

43 Sign up to receive updates and alerts on public policy issues related to hunger, poverty and the food crisis from the PC(USA)'s Washington Office at www.pcusa.org/washington.

44 Call your presbytery Hunger Action Enabler or national hunger program staff to learn about ways to get involved in the cause of ending hunger. The Presbyterian Hunger Program has developed innovative approaches to addressing the underlying causes of hunger and the food crisis. Learn more at www.pcusa.org/hunger.

45 Visit Bread for the World's Web site at www.bread.org to find out about pending legislation, and write a letter to Congress.

46 Support politicians who will reevaluate trade agreements like NAFTA and reverse the damaging impact they have had on small farmers and local food economies.

47 Advocate for local, state and federal legislation that provides adequate and timely emergency food assistance.

48 Grain reserves in the United States and around the world are at their lowest levels in recent history. Advocate for a grain reserves system that

provides a fair and stable price for farmers and greater food security for everyone.

49 Push for food aid programs that when appropriate provide cash to purchase food in or near the country suffering from shortages or famine.

50 Support trade agreements and multilateral policies (of the World Bank, International Monetary Fund, United Nations) that increase small-farm production and crop storage and reduce poverty.

51 Write to Congress to advocate stricter regulations on speculative investing in commodity funds, which pushes food prices higher.

52 Advocate for sustainable energy solutions, such as increased conservation and alternative energy sources. Support biofuels production only if it is sustainable and profits are retained locally. □

This list was developed by Andrew Kang Bartlett, associate for national hunger concerns for the Presbyterian Hunger Program. Many of the ideas are from *Just Eating? Practicing Our Faith at the Table*, by Jennifer Halteman Schrock (Presbyterian Hunger Program, Church World Service and Advocate Health Care, 2005). Order or download this resource at www.pcusa.org/food/resources.htm.