COMMUNITY FOOD ASSETS:

Taking an Inventory

Pre- or Post-Triennium Youth Group Activity
from the Presbyterian Hunger Program

This interactive group study is designed to be a fun, informative way for youth to learn about food in your local community, as preparation or follow-up to Triennium themes of hunger and poverty alleviation.

Delve into the challenging issues of hunger and poverty using a positive approach! Studying the assets (people, programs, resources) in your community that help people get access to enough good food is one way to begin to understand food justice. All youth groups are invited to join in this activity!

Note: There are a few possible ways to lead this study. Like a “choose your own adventure” book, consider your group’s preferences to do this study over one or two sessions. Some adaptations are suggested.

Time allotted: 1 hour

Materials/resources needed:
- Internet access and computers (smart phones may suffice) for three groups (Option B: internet access for youth leader, in preparation of the session)
- Copies of Appendix A for each participant
- Markers and newsprint
- Chairs/work areas for three groups of youth
- Map of the city/town/area for one of the groups
- Index cards and pens/pencils for each youth

Leader preparation in advance of the session:
- Read over the session and make any adaptations needed for your group.
- If the small groups will not have internet access during youth group, find and print the internet resources designated.
- Find and have ready web site addresses for your church and your presbytery to give Group Two. (Alternatively, provide a copy of the church annual report, with any mission/justice programs related to hunger.)
• If the pastor or a church member active in hunger ministries is available (or someone in the presbytery who works on these issues), ask them in advance to visit your youth group to give their perspectives on this activity.
• If possible, call your local Food Bank in advance of your meeting, during their business hours, to have a sense of all the deliveries of food resources in different parts of town. Bring this information to Session 1. (One way to find a food bank in your area is to look at: feedingamerica.org).

Option A. With access to the internet for youth during youth group time

Small groups
Divide youth into three groups. 15 minutes in small groups.


• **Group Two:** Using the internet and your church and presbytery web sites, annual reports and/or talking to your pastor or a leader at your church, find out the hunger programs of your church and presbytery. Answer *Inventory Discussion Questions* 3 and 4.

• **Group Three:** Find the healthy food resources in your area (farmers markets, Community Supported Agriculture, etc) at [www.localharvest.org](http://www.localharvest.org). Search “All” and write down as many as you are able, including what it is (co-op, farmers market, CSA, etc) and where in your area it is located. Answer *Inventory Discussion Questions* 5, 6 and 7.

Option B. Without access to the internet during the youth group time

Leader creates hand-outs for the small groups to work from.


• For **Group Two**, print out any relevant hunger information from church and presbytery web site, have annual reports and/or speakers ready to share.

• For **Group Three**, print out applicable resources from [www.localharvest.org](http://www.localharvest.org).
Report back. 10 minutes
Hand around the Inventory Discussion Questions. Give each group 2-3 minutes to share what they learned and have others record the answers. Designate one person to record group answers on a master copy to bring to Triennium!

Mapping and large group discussion. 25 minutes
Using markers and newsprint, draw a rough sketch of your community. Note: this map does not have to “look” exactly like a map… it can be a creative, representative drawing that simply gives visual understanding of the distances and relationships between resources.

- Place your church on this “map” as well as some of your homes, if you wish.
- Place the food desert(s) chosen by Group One.
- Place hunger ministries researched by Group Two.
- Place the food-producing area and the places that sell fresh available foods found by Group Three.
- If you think of other food resources (such as community gardens), include those on the map. Leader: if you were able to call the Food Bank, include that report here.
- Notice and discuss if there is overlap between food deserts and farms; sometimes the people who produce our food are actually hungry, due to poverty and the way our larger food system works.
- Notice and discuss if the places that offer fresh produce are getting to people living in lower-income areas.
- Notice and discuss if hunger ministries are getting food resources to hungry people, and if they tend to be programs that assist with immediate food assistance (food pantries, soup kitchens) or those that assist with people growing their own food or having resources in their own community (community gardens, community kitchens, neighborhood buying clubs, cooperatives, etc.).

Closing 10 minutes
Hand out index cards and invite each person to choose one (or more) of the personal commitments from Appendix A or his/her own way to engage hunger. Invite youth to take these cards home and engage in this activity over the next weeks, and bring their experience to share at Triennium or to a future youth group gathering. 5 minutes.

Close in prayer for those living in food deserts, those who are producing and preparing our food, and people working to get resources to the people who need them the most. And also for our own growth in addressing root causes of hunger and poverty. 5 minutes.
APPENDIX A.
Inventory Discussion Questions

If questions are answered in this activity, Small Group One should take the first two questions, Small Group Two the middle two, and Small Group Three the last two. Write a sentence or two for each answer, including as much detail as possible.

1) What is a “food desert?”
2) Where are the food deserts in relation to where you live and/or go to church?
3) What, if any, hunger programs does your church support (giving money, doing volunteer work, participating in any way)?
4) What hunger work does your presbytery support?
5) Where are the farm-producing parts of your area (farms, gardens)?
6) What parts of the city have fresh food available through these resources?
7) Can you tell if food stamps are possible to use to purchase fresh food at these places?

Personal Commitment Suggestions
For individuals to choose and write on index cards, during the close of the session.

• Buy as much locally-grown food as you can.
• Eat lower on the food chain (more grains, fruit and veggies).
• Go to the Farmers Market on a regular basis.
• Volunteer at one of your church or presbytery hunger ministries.
• Visit one of the food deserts, food producing areas, and/or hunger ministries and learn as much as you can about this part of town, its strengths and its challenges.
• Learn more by reading a suggested resource at Presbyterian Hunger Program’s Food & Faith website www.pcusa.org/food.
• Learn about the Campaign for Food Fair and join in: www.presbyterianmission.org/ministries/fairfood.
• Learn about another country and the way they are fighting root causes of hunger and poverty: www.presbyterianmission.org/ministries/joininghands.
• Support family farmers and help end hunger overseas by doing a local growing project or fundraiser to generate funds to support local food production in Haiti, Liberia or the Sierre Leone through Presbyterian Hunger Program. Or you can donate proceeds to Foods Resource Bank for Presbyterian work in the Democratic Republic of the Congo or Malawi. PHP can help with ideas for your food-related fundraiser.
• Learn about caring for God’s creation: www.pcusa.org/environment.
• Follow public policy decisions regarding food through the Presbyterian Office of Public Witness: capwiz.com/pcusa.
• Get your congregation to do the Just Eating? Practicing Our Faith at the Table curriculum: www.pcusa.org/justeating.