

Peace in our world • Peace in our nation • Peace in our neighborhoods • Peace in our homes • Peace in our hearts

Hosting a Hunger Awareness Meal

Out of the Lutheran summer camps and hunger advocacy groups comes another good idea: Hunger Awareness Meals. This is an awesome “experiential meal” that helps teach about the realities of hunger in the world. In this resource, you will find all the ideas and instructions you’ll need to host your own Hunger Awareness Meal.

Supplies Needed

Music:

(Feel free to substitute songs with similar themes.)

Another Day In Paradise – Phil Collins
It’s a Hard Life – Nanci Griffith or Storyhill
Hands – Jewel
Ghost of Tom Joad – Bruce Springsteen
What If Jesus Came Back Like That – Collin Raye
One of Us, The Cross – Prince
Will I Lose My Dignity – ‘Rent’ soundtrack
Agnus Dei – Michael W. Smith (Exodus CD)

Supplies:

- ♦ Food (see below) ♦ Colored cards for groups
- ♦ White face paint ♦ Sound system for music
- ♦ Boxes covered with paper on which to write hunger statistics (at right)
- ♦ Copies of Hunger Statistics, Hunger Stories, materials from Bread for the World, LPF, etc.

Numbers, Layout, and Food:

Use these numbers to determine how many colored cards to give out for each of the four meal groups: 1% rich, 6% middle class, 33% working class, 60% poor. So, if you have 26 participants, 1 will be rich, 2 will be middle class, 8 working class, 15 poor. For 50 participants, the numbers are 1, 3, 16, 30... For groups fewer than 100, explain that less than one person is rich.

Use a large room that has a cross in it.

Rich Table: Set like a fine restaurant with elegant glasses, silverware, tablecloth, etc.; a very nice meal with dessert.

Middle class: At a table; pizza with soda.

Working class: Chairs but no table; food is peanut butter on bread and glasses of water.

Poor: On the floor, crammed into a small space; one bowl of rice and one container of water.

Hunger Statistics

Cover large boxes with paper and display hunger statistics on the sides, large enough to read from 12’ away. *(Sources of these figures are on page 4.)*

- 1) 1.2 billion people worldwide live in extreme poverty, on less than \$1.25 per day.
- 2) 1 in 9 people worldwide (795 million) suffer from hunger.
- 3) Water is scarce for 40% of people worldwide.
- 4) 30% of urban populations (over 880 million people) in developing regions live in slums.
- 5) 156 million children under 5 years of age globally are stunted by chronic malnutrition.
- 6) The world’s richest 1% hold over 50% of the world’s wealth.
- 7) In 2016, top U.S. corporate executives (CEOs) were paid 347 times as much as the average worker.
- 8) In 2013, the top 10% of U.S. families owned 76% of the wealth, the next 40% owned 23%, and the bottom 50% owned 1%.
- 9) 49 million Americans (a total of 15% of U.S. households) are food insecure.
- 10) 1 in 7 U.S. Americans live in poverty, including 15 million children.
- 11) U.S. Poverty rates: Black: 24.1%, Hispanic: 22.4%; Asian, 11.4%. White: 9.1%.

“Peace Points” is Lutheran Peace Fellowship’s leaders’ guide series offering practical ideas and tips to encourage youth and adult groups in their justice seeking and peacemaking.

Lutheran Peace Fellowship (LPF) is a growing community of Lutherans across the U.S. responding to the gospel call for us to be peacemakers and justice seekers. LPF offers a wide range of resources and training, expertise, support and encouragement.

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The Script

Welcome participants in an area outside the dining room, and give each person a colored card. (Give the Group 1 card to a person who can project the self-confidence that often comes with a privileged status.) When most people have arrived, the NARRATOR says: “Welcome to our meal. Thank you for coming. May this be a positive experience that reveals new understandings about hunger today and how followers of Christ can respond. Please be silent during the meal so that everyone can hear the stories and songs. You were each given a colored card when you walked in. When your color is called, the Usher will lead you to your seating area.”

USHER leads the participants to the Meal Area one group at a time. Play music in the dining room to help set the tone (see Page 1 for ideas). Here is the order for seating:

USHER selects Group 1, politely escorting them to the SERVER, who directs them to a table that has a tablecloth on it and full matching silverware. SERVER begins serving them right away. [Of 4.8 billion people worldwide, 33 million millionaires — less than 1% of the adult population — own 46% of total wealth.]

USHER selects Group 2 and politely escorts them to a table. [7.5% of the world’s adults who own between \$100,000 to \$1 million, together own 40% of the world’s wealth.]

USHER selects Group 3, taking them to the dining room, but simply pointing to a group of chairs. [18.5% of the world has wealth of \$10,000 to \$100,000, and together own 11.4% of the world’s wealth.]

USHER selects Group 4, rudely pointing to a section on the floor where they can sit. [73% of adults — 3.5 billion people — with assets below \$10,000 account for 2.4% of global wealth.]

Group 1 is already eating while others are entering the room. Group 2 can choose someone from their table to pick up their food, and then start to eat. Group 3 has to go through a line. Group 4 is told to wait at the end of the line if they want to eat. They receive a single bowl of rice and container of water. Then the NARRATOR speaks.

NARRATOR: “The issue of hunger is often presented in terms of numbers. Yet each number is a person, who has a story, and a struggle. Here are the words of hungry people speaking to their reality and to our hearts.” (READERS alternate reading the stories.)

Hunger Stories, Hunger Struggles

A child who had fallen asleep at school was asked if he had eaten breakfast that morning. He answered, “It wasn’t my turn.” - U.S.A

We poor people are invisible to others — just as blind people cannot see, they cannot see us. - Pakistan

There is nothing to eat. We’re constantly hungry.... My life is just grief. - Ukraine

Every day I am afraid of the next. - Russia

What is poverty? To come home and see your children hungry and not have anything to give them. - Brazil

Being poor is being always tired. - Kenya

Poverty is like living in jail, living under bondage, waiting to be free. - Jamaica

Lack of work worries me. My children were hungry and I told them the rice is cooking, until they fell asleep from hunger. - Egypt

After one poor crop we need three good ones to return to normal. - Vietnam

We are left tied like straw. Our life is empty; we are empty-handed. What is life when there is no friend or food. We are above the dead and below the living. Hunger is a hyena. The poor are falling, the rich are growing. We simply watch those who eat. It is like sitting and dying alive. We have become empty, like a hive. - Ethiopia

(Adapted from the Church World Service report, “Hunger in a World of Plenty”)

MUSIC — Play *Another Day in Paradise* by Phil Collins (or another song) while **BOX CARRIERS** enter with the boxes. Have them walk around to each table slowly so statistics can be read. At the end of the song **BOX CARRIERS** should stack the boxes in front of the RICH table, separating the RICH from the rest. The **CHRIST FIGURE**, dressed in simple clothing with white face paint to set him apart, walks around starting here. He stands in the background, observing solemnly.

READER — “A reading from James 2:15-16. If a brother or sister is in need of clothes and has not enough food to live on, and one of you says to them, ‘I wish you well; keep yourself warm and eat plenty’ without giving them the bare necessities of life, then what good is that?”

MUSIC — *One of Us* by Prince (or another song)

READER — Read “My Name Is Not Those People” by Julia Dinsmore.

My Name Is Not "Those People"

by Julia Dinsmore

My name is not "Those People." I am a loving woman, a mother in pain, giving birth to the future, where my babies have the same chance to thrive as anyone. My name is not "Inadequate." I did not make my husband leave — he chose to, and chooses not to pay child support. Truth is, though, there isn't a job base for all fathers to support their families. While society turns its head, my children pay the price.

My name is not "Problem and Case to Be Managed." I am a capable human being and citizen, not a client. The social service system can never replace the compassion and concern of loving Grandparents, Aunts, Uncles, Fathers, Cousins, Community — all the bonded people who need to be but are not present to bring children forward to their potential.

My name is not "Lazy, Dependent Welfare Mother." If the unwaged work of parenting, homemaking and community building was factored into the Gross National Product, my work would have untold value. And I wonder why my middle-class sisters whose husbands support them to raise their children are glorified — and they don't get called lazy and dependent.

My name is not "Ignorant, Dumb, or Uneducated." I live with an income of \$621 with \$169 in food stamps. Rent is \$585. that leaves \$36 a month to live on. I am such a genius at surviving that I could balance the state budget in an hour.

Never mind that there is a lack of living-wage jobs. Never mind that it is impossible to be the sole emotional, social and economic support to a family. Never mind that parents are losing their children to the gangs, drugs, stealing, prostitution, social workers, kidnapping, the streets, the predator. Forget about putting money into schools — just build more prisons.

My name is not "Lay Down and Die Quietly." My love is powerful and my urge to keep my children alive will never stop. All children need homes and people who love them. They need safety and the chance to be the people they were born to be. The wind will stop before I let my children become a statistic. Before you give in to the urge to blame me, the blame that lets us go blind and unknowing into the isolation that disconnects us, take another look. Don't go away. For I am not the problem, but the solution. And... My name is not "Those People."

MUSIC — *It's a Hard Life* by Nanci Griffith or Storyhill (or another song)

READER — “A reading from the gospel of Matthew, chapter 25:31-46...”

PROCESSING THE EXPERIENCE (see next page) — Move the group to a circle of chairs near the dining area. Post in large print the four class groups and their corresponding wealth figures. Record participant reactions onto a whiteboard or newsprint. Make brief hunger statistics or overviews available for reference. The realities of world inequality can be sobering and shocking. Point the way to hope: tell how global efforts on UN Millennium Goals have led to progress in many areas; and share one or two brief success stories from groups working to end hunger.

Hunger Meal Parts

- Usher: a. help lead each of the four group to their spot.
b. after escorting each group, instruct the middle class to go to the line
c. make sure to treat all four group according to their status

Christ Figure: walk around observing and serving as visual encouragement for participants to see the experience through the eyes of Jesus

Servers at Banquet Table (1 or 2 people):

- help the people at the rich table with their chairs
- serve and wait on people, and provide excellent service

Box Carriers (3 or 4 people):

- carry around boxes that display hunger statistics
- when everyone has seen them, stack the boxes around RICH table

Narrator and Readers (2 or 3 people — work out who will do each part):

- read the quotes and stories, poem, and Bible texts during the meal.
- co-facilitate “Processing the Experience”

For more information

about hunger and poverty, and how to get involved in the latest advocacy campaigns, check out these groups:

Bread for the World
www.bread.org

ELCA Advocacy
www.elca.org/advocacy/

ELCA World Hunger program
www.elca.org/hunger/

Global Exchange
www.globalexchange.org

Lutheran Peace Fellowship
www.LutheranPeace.org

Food First
www.foodfirst.org

Mercy Corps
www.mercycorps.org

Processing the Experience

Processing is done to help people articulate their feelings and thoughts within a group. It is the art of connecting with the person speaking in the group and helping them connect with the group at large. It is a sharing of experience and a pooling of wisdom that may result in an “Ah-ha” — a glimmer of new awareness about an issue or topic. Processing is a dialogue with others to help provide clarity, vision, and a plan for future action.

Questions to Ask:

- What group were you in? What was your experience like? How did you feel about being in your group? (Make sure you hear participants from each group)
- What did you notice or feel about the other groups?
- What was new or surprising about this activity? What moments were particularly challenging or thought-provoking?
- What specific things can you do to address hunger? (Share examples from below after hearing ideas from group. Try to get a group commitment to take a specific action. Most people find it helpful to hear a brief story of a successful development program from Bread for the World or elsewhere.)

Processing is for the participants; they should do most of the talking. The facilitator should help the conversation get started and keep it on track by restating the question every three or four responses. Always conclude with action. Processing is about empowerment — giving people back their power to shape their world. Close with prayer.

Examples of Actions

Agree to volunteer as a group in a soup kitchen or food program in your community. (Find out about examples ahead of time.)

Write letters as a group regarding a current piece of legislation in Congress or your state legislature (see “for more information”).

Show a video or invite a speaker from Bread for the World, LPF, or other resource group (see “for more information” box above).

Explore affiliating on an ongoing basis with Bread for the World, ELCA Advocacy, LPF and other education & advocacy groups.

LPF's **Peace Points** resources include:

What Is Christian Peacemaking? Jesus' Way of Shalom, Conflict Education, Just War, The Path of Hope, Peace Worship, Reclaim the Season, Peace Points Starters... Single copies are free by mail; all are on LPF's website: www.LutheranPeace.org

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Sources of Statistics: Income figures for the four groups are from Global Wealth Report 2016 of the Credit Suisse Research Institute, Zurich, Switzerland. The choice of class thresholds are a compromise: the dividing lines between classes would be higher for industrialized countries and lower for developing countries. You can also find how any income amount compares to world income at: www.globalrichlist.com/index.php

Hunger Statistics: 1. Bread for the World. 2. State of Food Insecurity in the World 2015, Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN. 3. and 4. UN Millennium Development Goals Report 2015. 5. UNICEF Annual Results Report 2016, Nutrition. 6. Oxfam International. 7. Executive Paywatch, AFL-CIO. 8. “Richest 10% hold 76% of wealth,” CNN Money, August 18, 2016. 9. Income and Poverty in the U.S.: 2015. U.S. Census Bureau. 10. Bread for the World and National Center for Children in Poverty. 11. U.S. Poverty Statistics - Federal Safety Net.