

Daily Bread



A DISCUSSION GUIDE *for* MEAL PACKING EVENTS



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

An introduction to this guide

[Right now more than 870 million people in the world are hungry.](#) That's one in every nine people. The good news is that number is down from one in eight, but one in nine is still too many. Thank you for committing to help people in need right now through the important work of preparing and distributing crucial nutrition. Jesus said to his disciples, "for I was hungry and you gave me food 'Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me'" (Matthew 25:35, 40).

While relief efforts are essential in meeting people's needs right now, as Christians we also look forward to the day when "the Lord of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of rich food" (Isaiah 25:6) and the world "will hunger no more and thirst no more" (Revelation 7:16). This guide will help you make the most out of your meal-packing project by helping your group look forward into such a world. Reasons for hunger and poverty are widespread and complex – everything from political unrest to environmental crises to lack of access to mismanagement of resources – and so much more, but we know that a world without hunger is possible. Through conversation, study of Scripture, and prayer, this guide will look at ways that we can take a stand against hunger not just today but forever. The issues are complicated, but the goals are clear.

As we think about these goals and how we will get there, we need to have some challenging conversations. How do we know our service is helping our community? Are there forms of anti-hunger work that are more appropriate than others? These are some of the questions asked about all kinds of service, including meal-packing.

This guide begins from the perspective that, when done with preparation and care, many forms of service can be helpful. But the discussions this resource can help guide will also help your group ask challenging questions about service and mission. In here, you will find activities,

discussion questions, prayers, Bible reflections and a handy tip sheet for guiding discussions to help you and your group dig deeper into the service project you will do.

Thank you for helping to share in God's work in the world.

Blessings to you in your work, in your study, and in your prayer.

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Background information

What is meal packing?

Meal packing is a way of relieving hunger by providing prepackaged meals or food to people who are hungry. This can take many forms: food delivered to people in the local community who cannot provide enough food for themselves or their families; nutritional supplements or packaged food shipped to communities in other countries during times of crisis; or regular shipments of packaged food to communities facing chronic hunger.

Packing meals can be a tangible way for individuals and groups to help fight hunger, especially when meals are packaged in huge quantities. This can help everyone, from children to adults, feel like they are part of the solution. However, shipments of food – especially to communities outside the United States – can also create more harm than good unless done carefully and thoughtfully.

What is relief?

Relief is assistance to help meet immediate needs. This can involve meeting urgent needs due to a personal crisis (like loss of a job) or social crisis (like a natural disaster or conflict). Relief is an important way to fill gaps in services or to provide immediate help to people in need. Your gifts to ELCA World Hunger support a wide variety of relief ministries. These include food pantries, meal programs, backpack programs for children and clothing shelves. When life situations make it nearly impossible for people to feed themselves, relief efforts like this can make a huge difference.

What is sustainable development?

While relief meets immediate needs, **sustainable development** focuses on long-term goals. Development efforts help improve access to education, employment, housing and health care and preserve the earth's basic life support systems. The goal of these efforts is to create sustainable change that equips people to feed themselves and their families for years to come.

Many programs supported by ELCA World Hunger focus on development efforts that help build local capacity for

people to steer their own development, equip our companions to make their own choices about projects, and enhance the ability of communities to use social and technical networks to make their ideas a reality. Some of these projects include: tutoring and learning centers, job centers, training in a trade or employable skill, improved access to health care and sanitation that prevents loss of income or high costs due to injury or illness, leadership training workshops, and improved access to clean, safe water. From digging a well to helping recent immigrants develop resumes and search for jobs, development efforts have one thing in common: a long-term focus on ending hunger – for good.

Relief and development efforts meet different needs and have different goals. As Steve Corbett and Brian Fikkert point out in their book, “When Helping Hurts: How to Alleviate Poverty without Hurting the Poor...and Yourself,” “One of the biggest mistakes [we] make ... is in applying relief in situations in which ... development is the appropriate intervention” (pg. 101). There are some real risks in this:

1. A focus on relief alone can undermine support for long-term, sustainable change.
2. Relief efforts like meal-packing – especially when they last too long – can leave people feeling as if they are always the “receivers” and never the “givers.” This can significantly affect their sense of self-worth and dignity.
3. Providing food relief through meals or packages can sometimes take energy away from other responses to hunger, for example, a community garden that provides nutritional education, fresh food to eat and produce to sell.

Despite these risks, relief and development should be seen as two sides of one coin. **Both play a role in responding to hunger, and both bring risks and opportunities.** When combined with other methods, like advocacy and education, they are essential parts of a comprehensive approach to ending hunger in the world.

Planning your event

When planning a meal-packing event, the first questions are “Who?” and “How?” Who needs the food? And how do they need it? Does your group want to focus on a local need, like people struggling with homelessness, homebound seniors or low-income families? Or is there a global concern that is most pressing for your group, like refugees or victims of a natural disaster? Any and all of these needs are important, but the “how” is different for each. For example, a homeless person with no access to a kitchen has different food needs than a low-income family or than someone in a refugee camp. Cans of soup, requiring can openers, pots to heat it in, dishes, etc. are of little use to someone living on the street but are a great solution for a family struggling to make ends meet in the days between paychecks. Rice, a staple in many parts of the world, would be a puzzle to a community whose mainstay is corn. In order to make sure your work has the greatest impact, it is important to take into account the specific needs and resources of the group you are trying to help.

A great option to answer these questions is to partner with another organization that is already addressing issues of hunger and poverty on either a local or a global scale. Such organizations can be excellent guides in making sure the food is distributed to the people who need it the most in the ways that are the most helpful.

Not all organizations pay attention to some of the things noted above. Below are some questions to ask as you are considering whom to partner with. In addition to making sure your efforts have the greatest impact, the answers to these questions will also help you in leading your group to envision a world where there is no more hunger.

Questions to ask agency receiving meals

1. Where will the food we pack be sent?
2. How and to whom is it distributed?
3. How are recipients determined? Do communities ask for this aid, or are they selected by the agency?
4. How much does it cost to ship this food (if going overseas)?
5. Do you use local producers (farmers, local processing plants, etc.) when possible?
6. Is the food distributed by the agency tied to other development efforts to end hunger in the long-term?
7. How closely do the meals match local diets?
8. Is the meal well-balanced to prevent nutritional deficiencies, especially for children?
9. Does the agency provide ways to build relationships between people who prepare and package meals and people who receive the meals?

AGENCIES TO EXPLORE

Looking for a good organization to partner with? Here are some places to start.

BACKPACK PROGRAM

Feeding America partners with local food banks to provide backpacks full of food for kids over the weekends. Check with your local food bank or visit www.feedingamerica.org.

MEALS ON WHEELS

Meals on Wheels programs provide nutritious meals to seniors in the United States in a variety of ways to best support their needs. To find a program near you, visit www.mowaa.org.

LUTHERAN WORLD RELIEF

Kits don't always take the form of food. Lutheran World Relief ships kits of a variety of items to support relief and development in the nations they serve. Visit www.lwr.org/getinvolved/kits for more information.

CHURCH WORLD SERVICE

Hygiene kits with toothbrushes, bandages and soap can mean the difference between sickness and health in areas affected by disaster. Church World Service collects easy-to-make kits that can be assembled for people in need. Learn more at www.cwsglobal.org/get-involved.

Tips for guiding discussions

Lutherans are passionate people – we are passionate about our faith, passionate about our community, and passionate about the ways we serve the God we love. Because of this passion, digging deeper into questions of effectiveness and asking challenging questions about our work in communities can stir up powerful emotions.

Before you get started, it's important to know that most people serve because they want to help people. They want to do something that matters, that makes a difference, and that shares the transformative love of Christ with others in a tangible way. This is a wonderful thing.

But learning that even our best works still have shortcomings might cause your participants to become unsettled, frustrated or angry, even. Looking closely at our work in the world and being honest about what should be celebrated and what needs to change can be challenging.

Here are some tips:

- 1. Set the stage.** Be sure to set some ground rules for open and respectful conversation. Encourage people to be active listeners to each other, and encourage people to speak in "I" statements rather than making generalizations. People are not used to sharing openly about subjects that make them emotional. Remind them that the body of Christ is a safe space to share with honesty.
- 2. Pray.** Do not underestimate the importance of coming together in prayer to bring your frustrations, concerns, hopes, fears, anger and pain to God. In prayer, we trust that God hears the cries of those in need and responds in mercy. We also trust that God sends the Spirit to inspire us with wisdom, patience and the will to love and serve in meaningful ways. At the end of your activity, or your discussion, close with prayer.
- 3. Dig deeper.** Ask clarifying questions to help people think critically about what they're feeling and why. What about this upsets you? Why do you think you're reacting so strongly? What truth or hope has been disappointed for you?
- 4. Name and connect.** Help your participants to name what they're feeling. Is it disappointment? Frustration? Deep sadness? Fear? Anger? These emotions can be painted in a negative light in church, but there are good examples in the Bible where each of those powerful emotions was lifted up as appropriate, useful or virtuous. Invite your participants to draw connections between what they're feeling, and try to think of places in the Bible where that emotion was used in a positive way.
- 5. Defuse.** You can be the best example for the participants. By calmly responding to people's comments and allowing them the space to share their thoughts without judgment, you can set the tone for a good conversation. If someone is becoming very heated, try to direct the conversation toward other participants. And remember, silence can be a great conversation partner! Give space for quiet reflection during the discussion.
- 6. Share resources.** Be ready to share further resources to help participants learn more about the issues that have come up in your discussions. Help give them suggestions of where they can go to do something constructive with that frustration, fear or anger.

EMOTIONS IN THE BIBLE

Exodus 32 – Moses' "burning hot" anger

2 Samuel 12 – Nathan's righteous anger at David

Nehemiah 1:1-9 – The prophet mourns

Psalms 7:11 – God's "indignation"

Matthew 12:34 – "You brood of vipers!"

Mark 3:1-6 – Jesus "looks around" with anger

Luke 9:41 – Jesus gets frustrated

John 2:13-17 – Jesus cleanses the temple

As Lutherans, we believe it is important to think critically about our faith and about the ways we live out our faith. It's not always easy. Sometimes we learn things about the world around us that don't fit or aren't right. Things that make us mad! A congregation that can channel powerful emotions has the ability to make change, to do what matters.

STAGE 1: Preparation

During Stage 1, you'll use Bible studies, activities and stories to reinforce the biblical call to respond to hunger, to learn more about the food the group will be packing, and to learn more about relief and development.

Gather and greet

Begin your time together with a simple "getting to know you" activity. Even if your group is already acquainted, there may be some faces that are less familiar than others. Share names and a food related fact. For example:

What's your favorite breakfast cereal?

What was one special meal that you remember?

What made it special?

If you could eat only one food for the rest of your life, what would it be?



"I Like FOOD": For a group with more energy, you may want to play this more active "get-to-know-you" game. Have the group sit in a circle of chairs, with one less chair than there are people. One person stands in the middle and says their name and a food they like. Anyone else who likes that food must stand up and move to another chair at least one seat away from where they currently are. Whoever does not have a chair is in the middle and must introduce themselves and say a food they like. The person in the middle can also introduce themselves and say "I like food!" which means EVERYONE must stand up and find a new seat. Continue until everyone has had a chance to stand in the middle.

Opening prayer

God of abundance, out of the dust you brought forth plants and animals of every shape and kind and you call your abundance good. You created humanity in your image as stewards of your good creation. Guide us today as we learn to share this abundance with the whole of humanity so that in your world of richness everyone may have enough. God of abundance, teach us to pray:

Our Father in heaven,

hallowed be your name,

your kingdom come,

your will be done,

on earth as in heaven.

Give us today our daily bread.

Forgive us our sins

as we forgive those who sin against us.

Save us from the time of trial

and deliver us from evil.

For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and for ever. Amen.

Bible study

We opened our time together with the Lord's Prayer, the prayer Jesus taught his disciples to pray. What are some of the things included in the prayer? Daily bread, forgiveness, deliverance, etc.

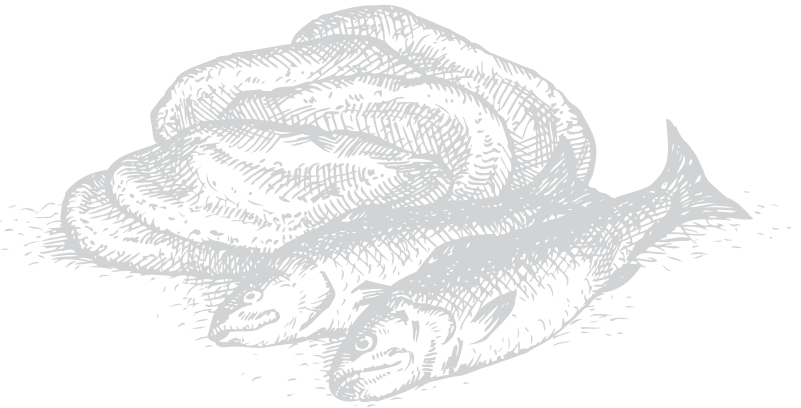
One of the petitions in the prayer is asking God for "daily bread." What might be included in daily bread? Since Jesus taught his disciples this prayer, what might this petition tell us about how Jesus feels about our physical needs? Jesus cares about our physical as well as our spiritual needs.

In the Bible we read about all kinds of examples of Jesus caring about people's physical as well as spiritual needs. Not just food but healing, comforting, even raising from the dead. What are some Bible stories that you remember about Jesus' concern for our physical lives?

Since we're focusing specifically on food today, let's take a closer look at one such story. Read **Matthew 15:29-39**. What do you notice about the story? What makes you wonder? What words/phrases stuck out to you? What memories or images did it evoke?

What did Jesus do for the crowd besides feed them? Taught, healed the sick.

Caring for a person's physical needs is more than just giving them the immediate need for food. Relief meets the immediate need while development helps communities get to a place where they no longer need outside support. In this story, Jesus did both. He met the immediate need for food while also healing and teaching the people so that when they left him they would be more able to provide for their own needs. Spend some time here talking about the differences between relief and development.



ACTIVITY: RELIEF VS. DEVELOPMENT

If you have something large to write on, try this activity: Write "Relief" on one side, and "Development" on the other. Read the descriptions of each from the section on page 3. Then ask the group to think of words or phrases that come to their mind for each category. Write these down under the appropriate category. Then ask:

1. In what ways did Jesus show concern for immediate needs? In what ways did he show concern for long-term needs?
2. In what ways does our congregation do relief? In what ways do we do development? Share how the organization you are partnering with for food packing or your congregation helps with both relief and development.

How much food did Jesus start with? Seven loaves and a few fish. Jesus took a small amount of food and made it enough to feed thousands of people with food to spare. It was truly a miracle. We cannot reproduce food in the same way that Jesus did, but by partnering with others we too can make a little go a long way. How does relief and development multiply the gifts that we have? Giving people the support and tools to rebuild their markets, offering education, etc.

When Jesus took the bread and fish he blessed it, broke it, and gave it to his disciples to distribute. In that way, the disciples got to participate in the miracle that Jesus had done. How does today's activity help us participate in the miracle of God at work in the world?

Activities

1. COUNTRY QUIZ BOWL:

If you are packing food for another country, play Country Quiz Bowl to learn more about where the meals you pack are going. Using information on the country, create a gameboard with several categories and a few levels of "value." For example, you could use categories like "Geography," "History," "Economics," and "Culture" and values of one, two, three, and four points. Make sure that some of the questions deal with rates of poverty, hunger and malnutrition and other challenges to health. You can find this information on the website of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (www.fao.org; click on the "Countries" tab.) (You may want to provide multiple choices for some of the questions.) Divide the participants into teams, and let one team start by choosing a category and value. If they are the first to answer the question and get it correct, they get the points and control of the board. Control of the board changes hands whenever another team correctly answers a question first. Offer prizes to the team that comes in first place.

2. ORGANIZATION QUIZ BOWL

Either as the second round of Country Quiz Bowl, or all on its own, learn more about the organization that is coordinating the packing and delivering of the meals. Categories could include "History" (How did the organization get started? "When?" Who were the founders? What need did they initially address? Is it a faith-based organization?), "Outreach" (Where does the food go? How do they determine where to send the food or who gets it?), "Nuts and Bolts" (What are the costs involved in shipping the food? Where does the food come from? Who distributes the food?), "Effects" (How often can a person in a community expect to receive food? What other support is offered beyond food distribution?), "Potpourri" (other interesting facts and figures about the organization). Provide answers based on the website or other materials from the organization.



3. STORIES

As has been discussed in the section on relief and development, not all food distribution is helpful or produces the expected results. Careful time and planning has to go into making sure the relief offered provides a way forward for the community instead of making it harder for them to end hunger in their community. Below are stories of two food-packing efforts, one domestic and one international. Both efforts carefully examined the problem at hand and created helpful and supportive responses. Read the stories with the group and reflect on them using the discussion questions below.

STORY 1

CITYVILLE IS A CITY IN THE MIDWEST with around 100,000 inhabitants. As in many other towns, a large population of elderly people live in Cityville, and many are homebound, meaning they have no simple way to leave their house or apartment.

Small Social Security checks and the lack of mobility mean that food is hard to come by for them, so a group of citizens decided it was time to act. They organized a weekly meal-packing event that used local foods to create re-heatable meals for homebound citizens.

Community organizations and local church groups take turns packing the weekly meals. Hunger among homebound people has been reduced significantly in the first six months of the program and valuable relationships have been created between those who pack and those who receive the meals. People of all ages in the community are developing a better understanding of the needs of others in the community and there is a greater awareness about local hunger. The people who are homebound also feel like they are a bigger part of the community, and some give small handicrafts or cards to the churches to give to other people.



Discussion questions:

1. What was the issue the people of Cityville were facing? *Hunger among homebound seniors.*
2. What were some of the secondary problems that complicated the issue? *Low funds, lack of mobility*
3. How did the group face this issue? *Reheatable meals delivered to seniors so they didn't have to leave their homes. Utilizing local foods helped match traditional diets and kept money in the area, benefitting the local economy.*
4. All activities have some secondary consequences. What were the secondary consequences of this project? Were they positive or negative? *Valuable relationships developed – homebound seniors also received companionship and food deliverers received friendship and wisdom from people they might not normally have met. People of all ages are learning more about the diverse needs of their community. Greater awareness of localized hunger and value of relationships could spill over to have a positive impact on other local hunger initiatives.*

STORY 2

RAIN VALLEY, A PRIMARILY AGRICULTURAL community in the country of Cameroon in Africa, experienced severe flooding due to record rainfall. The flooding peaked right at the end of growing season and the start of harvest time, so farmers lost almost all of their crops.

The whole community was affected because the local economy relied so much on farming. The people of Rain Valley typically ate their own food and sold the surplus for extra income to cover their living expenses. Revenue was essentially nonexistent during the year after the flood and there were severe food shortages.

Disaster agencies responded to the situation and sent in food and meal-packs for families. The food was very different from what they were used to and some families struggled with changing their diet and their cooking styles, but the food did help with the immediate nutritional need. The deliveries of food continued into the next year and were gradually scaled back as farmers planted and harvested their own crops. No overall change in taste occurred since the food was provided for such a short period of time, and Rain Valley is now well on its way to a complete recovery.



Discussion questions:

1. What was the issue the people of Rain Valley were facing? *Flooding causing the destruction of crops*
2. What were some of the secondary problems that complicated the issue? *Heavy agriculture component of economy meant a loss not just of food but of livelihoods*
3. How did the group face the issue? *Meal-packs and food to address immediate nutritional need. Food distribution was scaled back as farms recovered, assisting in recovery of local economy*
4. What were the secondary consequences of this project? *Were they positive or negative? Food sent was different from what would have been customary and residents struggled to adjust. Change could have been negative if long recovery had resulted in changed tastes. But because of the short term and focus on rebuild of the local market, no long-term negative consequences resulted.*



Discussion questions on both stories:

1. How were the issues of the two stories the same? How were they different? *Both involved lack of food/access to food. One national, one international. One needed a long-term solution (low income seniors), while one needed short-term relief to move to long-term recovery.*
2. What might have been the result if the approaches had been different? What if they had started a pantry in Cityville? Or, provided long-term food delivery in Cameroon? *Seniors unable to drive to food, people from Rain Valley becoming dependent and not able to recover their economy.*
3. Which story is more like the organization you're partnering with? What is the issue faced? The secondary problems? Are there any potential secondary consequences? How are they being either mitigated or supported?



Tarik Tinazay/ACT Alliance

4. ACCOMPANIMENT: A WAY TO UNDERSTAND SERVICE AND MISSION

The ELCA follows a strategy for relief and development called accompaniment. Accompaniment is both a way of seeing the world and a way of doing service. It means walking together with each other, building relationships with people who are different from us and believing that every person is created in the image of God with gifts and talents to offer the community (Romans 12:3-8).

A story might help: When the Israelites lived in Egypt, they were slaves, and Pharaoh treated them in awful ways. God heard their cries for help (Exodus 3:7) and sent Moses to lead the people out of Egypt. They journeyed through the wilderness for years trying to reach the land God had promised to them, a land where they could live freely and where there would be enough food for everyone. It was not an easy trip, but God was with them every step of the way. When they were hungry, God provided manna, or bread from heaven (Exodus 16:4). When they were thirsty, God gave them clean water to drink (Exodus 15:22-25; 17:1-6). At night, when it was dark, God led the people with a pillar of fire so they would not get lost (Exodus 13:21-22). After many years, the people finally reached the Promised Land.

The story can teach us a lot about what accompaniment means for relief and development and mission. God accompanied the Israelites in a lot of ways. When they told God their needs, God provided relief. God also had a plan for their future, and God used the gifts and talents of the Israelites to bring that plan to life. God helped Moses use his talents as a leader. God helped Miriam use her musical talents and prophecy to lead worship (Exodus 15:19-21). And when there was a need for judges, wise and competent leaders were chosen from among the people (Exodus 18:25-26). God led the people by giving them what they needed to use their talents to help one another. All along the way, God and the Israelites were building a relationship with each other that would become a covenant between Israel and God.

We can look to God for lessons about how to work together and how to help each other. First, relationships between and within communities are important. God knew what the Israelites needed because God had listened to them and loved them. The people could trust God because they had a relationship with God. Second, God didn't just rescue the people; God had given them gifts of leadership, prophecy and wisdom to be part of God's plan. Third, God had a plan for their future. They wouldn't have to rely on manna or water from rocks forever; soon, they would be in the Promised Land, where they could settle down, farm and use God's gifts to provide for their families for generations to come.

The ELCA has **five values** that capture what accompaniment means for our work as a church:

Mutuality – Everyone has gifts to offer. Service means working together – not “working for” but “working with” our neighbors.

Inclusivity – Everyone should be included. Through Jesus' death and resurrection, we are set free to be in relationships that are open, honest and loving with each other and with our neighbors.

Vulnerability – Sometimes, listening to each other and being open to one another means we have to change our opinions, our assumptions, or even how we do things as a church. It can also mean letting other people take the lead.

Empowerment – God could have done everything for the Israelites. But instead, God sometimes let them make their own decisions. God gave them the power to be partners in the covenant and to help shape the community they were becoming.

Sustainability – Relationships are complex, and they take time to develop. Working to build relationships, though, can help service meet real needs and draw on the gifts in a community. It can also ensure that the work goes on long after the original leaders are gone.



Discussion questions

1. What do each of these values mean to you? What are some examples of each? (ex. mutuality – listening to one another; vulnerability – being willing to change our project if the community needs something else)
2. Think about the stories in Activity 3. How do you see the five values of accompaniment in each of the stories?
3. Think about the story of the Exodus. How do you see the values of accompaniment lived out in that story? (ex. God listens to the Israelites; God has a sustainable plan for their future – they won't wander forever)
4. How do you see the values of accompaniment in the project you are participating in today? How can your group keep these values in mind? (ex. signing a covenant together; getting to know the people you are working with, etc.)
5. What gifts do you bring to your service project? What gifts might the community receiving the meals have to share with you?

5. LISTING EXPECTATIONS FOR THE EVENT

Having now learned more about relief and development in general and in relation to your specific project, take some time to brainstorm a list of expectations for the event. Write them on pieces of chart paper or on a white board, and if possible have them visible for the entire project. Questions to consider:

- What do we hope to accomplish with this event?
- What impact do we hope to have on the people we are serving?
- What impact do we hope the experience will have on us?
- What do we hope to learn from our event?
- How can we help keep our expectations in mind during the event?

STAGE 2: Action

During Stage 2, you'll take the conversations you had in the first stage and put them into practice preparing meals for people in need.

Transitional prayer:

God, you have created us in your image and empowered us to be your hands and feet in this world. As we prepare meals for our neighbors, help us to be open to all human need, including our own. Lead us to see the world through each other's eyes, as your Son Jesus saw the world through ours when he came to live among us, and to be open to your revelation in our neighbors. Amen.

Get to work!

At this point the group should break up to begin the meal packing. Make sure to give clear instructions so everyone knows what their job is and how to do it. Encourage people to mix up and work with people they do not know as well. As they are working, invite people to continue conversations around the topics covered earlier. Read the questions to the right ahead of time and encourage them to think and talk about them during the activity.

Questions for conversation

1. Have you done a project like this before? What was the project? How did it make you feel?
2. What were some ideas from the opening section you found interesting? Challenging?
3. Can you think of a time you needed help? Not necessarily physical help, but perhaps help understanding a difficult concept or help finishing a project? Who helped you? How did you feel? What did you learn from them?
4. What was a time when you helped someone? (Again, not necessarily in a service project setting). Who did you help? What did you learn? How did you feel?
5. How do you see God in this project?
6. Does this project remind you of a Bible story? What story and why?



STAGE 3: Reflection

During Stage 3, you'll invite the group to reflect on the completed project and to wonder about the ways in which God is moving in this project and calling us to further action.

Prayer for reflection

Gracious God, we learned earlier about how Jesus used his disciples' hands to feed a huge crowd with the bread and fish he provided. Thank you for using our hands today to prepare food for people in need. Bless this food that it may nourish and sustain them. Thank you for our neighbors, with whom and through whom we learn more about you. Continue to open our minds and our hearts to new ways to be your hands in the world as we work toward the day when hunger is no more. Amen.

Opening conversation

Review the list of expectations made before the event.

- Did the project meet those expectations? Why or why not?
- What did you learn or experience that was the most surprising?
- How did the conversations before affect how you thought about the project?
- How did your conversations and the questions we asked shape your experience during the activity?
- What additional thoughts/questions do you have now?

Bible study

What were some of the different jobs involved in preparing the food? What skills did you need to accomplish them? Was anyone particularly good (or bad) at any particular job? Invite the group to share stories about what happened during the project.

Read **Romans 12:3-8**. What were some of the gifts Paul lifted up? What are some other gifts that might be included on such a list?

Invite the participants to reflect quietly on which of their own gifts they used during the activity. Break into pairs and share for two minutes. After they've had a chance to share, bring the group together and invite people to share highlights from their conversation. Ask what gifts they received from each other during the activity. How did their various gifts complement each other?

Once again, invite participants to reflect quietly on what gifts the people receiving the food might be able to give to us? How might we receive those gifts? After time for reflection, invite them to join back with their partner and discuss for two minutes.

Paul encourages the Roman Christians to use sober judgment when considering how their gifts are used. He is careful to celebrate the gifts God has given each person while reminding his readers that no single person – or single set of gifts – is enough on its own. How can we work together, with each other and with other communities, to use all our gifts to combat hunger? What gifts might people receiving the meals be able to share with us?

Reflection on stories

Read the two stories below as a group, then have the group break into pairs to discuss the stories using the questions below.

STORY 1

MOSAIC AND SHRIVER ARE TWO CITIES located in the same state. Mosaic is located alongside a major river which draws visitors for tourism and is used for transportation and shipping. This, along with well-developed roads, large parks and good public utilities, has helped the city to thrive. In contrast, Shriver is located about two hours west of Mosaic in a primarily agricultural area. There is little to draw visitors, and the city is struggling with a dwindling economy and a shrinking population.

Years ago, a church group from Mosaic was headed to a camping retreat on the western side of the state and stopped in Shriver for lunch. The sight of homeless individuals and abandoned buildings shocked them. They were startled by the condition of a city so close to their own and decided they needed to act. Part of their camping retreat was spent planning a food assistance project for Shriver.

The Mosaic group decided to regularly collect food for Shriver and deliver it twice a month. Just like that, Mosaic Mobile Food Pantry (MMFP) was born. Now, five years after the start of the program, MMFP is still bringing a truck full of food to Shriver to hand out every week. A year ago, a few MMFP volunteers were surprised to see that one of the two main grocery stores in Shriver had closed down due to lack of business. They took this as a sign that their help was needed more than ever. In reality, the free food of MMFP was causing Shriver's economy to further suffer as food producers and sellers lost the business of residents who received food for free. Some of the farmers and sellers are now abandoning their struggling businesses and joining the ranks to receive the free food from MMFP. Others have moved their businesses out of the area.



Discussion questions:

1. What issue did the people of Mosaic think the people of Shriver were facing?
2. What were the secondary issues that complicated the situation?
3. How did the people of Mosaic respond to the issue?
4. What were the consequences?

STORY 2

ROCK BAY IS A DIVERSE COMMUNITY with a large population of working-class people. A recent slump in the economy led to higher unemployment and caused many businesses to leave the community. One of the businesses that packed up shop was the only major grocery store in the area. Community members, many of whom were recently unemployed, lost access to a healthy variety of food and were forced to spend the little money they had at corner and convenience stores that had very few options. Rock Bay had become what is known as a "food desert."

A neighboring community recognized the need in Rock Bay and talked to local leaders about how to help. They listened to Rock Bay residents and together came up with a plan to help purchase fresh foods from local farmers. The cooperation of the two communities helped Rock Bay and the economy began to recover within the next couple years. Some of the farmers started a cooperative grocery store that now employs people in Rock Bay. They also hired local people to work on the growing farms. The Rock Bay community is now thriving and no longer needs the help of the neighboring community.



Discussion questions:

1. What issue did the neighboring community think the people of Rock Bay were facing?
2. What were the secondary issues that complicated the situation?
3. How did the response differ from the response of the people of Mosaic in the above story?
4. What were the consequences?

After giving time to discuss in pairs, bring the group back together. Ask them to share highlights from their discussion. Then, thinking about all four stories, the project we just participated in, and everything we've learned about relief and development, discuss the following questions:

1. How do meals help in the fight against hunger?
Delivering necessary nutrition quickly and efficiently
2. When are meals particularly helpful? *When unexpected crises like a natural disaster have cut off or destroyed access to regular food sources, when food is not available by other means (ex. people who are homebound and without access)*
3. How might the food we packed be helpful?
4. What other gifts – besides food – might be needed to end hunger once and for all? *Access to fresh water, economic stability, education on farming techniques, political stability, means to distribute food*
5. When can our gifts do more harm than good?
 - a. Consider gifts besides food – for example the gifts listed in Romans. Are there times when preaching can do harm? Exhortations? Cheerfulness?
6. How can we learn to balance our gifts with the gifts of others? (ex. when one person's gifts of determination might be balanced with another person's gift for careful planning, or when one person's gift of singing joins with another's gift of piano playing)
7. In the stories we read, how did one group's gifts help another community? How could this sharing be maintained? *In Cityville, the congregations gave food and companionship to seniors, the seniors offered wisdom, friendship and crafts to the congregations. In Rain Valley, the meal packs from the development agency offered nutrition until the economy and agriculture improved. The agency learned from Rain Valley how to improve their meal packs to better match cultural norms. In Shriver, Mosaic's food gave temporary support. In Rock Bay, conversations with community leaders helped provide food and economic support to rebuild the economy.*

8. In the stories we read, how did one group's gift harm another community? How could this sharing have been improved? *In Rain Valley, the meals did not match the traditional food sources and the residents struggled with how to use the food. In Shriver, the gifts from Mosaic were not coupled with economic development and further crippled the community's economy.*
9. What can we do to make sure our sharing does the most good, for us and for our neighbors? *Talk to community leaders to understand what the real need is, partner with organizations that support development as well as relief.*

Accompaniment

5 values of accompaniment

- **Mutuality.** Work together
- **Inclusivity.** Include everyone.
- **Vulnerability.** Be open and willing to learn.
- **Empowerment.** Balance power by giving it up, standing up to it, or claiming it.
- **Sustainability.** Spread the work around so the project will last.

Invite the group to remember the five values of accompaniment.

1. How were the values expressed during our event?
2. In what ways do we accompany our neighbors? How might we continue to accompany them?
3. How would deeper engagement with the community who received the food we packed change us or our church?
4. What is God calling us to do next? How can we build on our experiences here to continue responding to hunger in sustainable ways?

Look ahead

Spend some time brainstorming how to continue involvement. Answers to this will depend on the project you participated in. Did you partner with a local agency, like a food bank or meal distribution for an at-risk community like seniors or refugees? Could you help to distribute the food to build relationship with the people who received it? Could you write to the mayor or city council to talk about access to food? Start a community garden? Support your local farmers market? How could your congregation learn more from the community about its needs? What solutions are people facing hunger already working on that you could support? Are there projects in your area supported by ELCA World Hunger?

If you partnered with an international group, how could you learn more about the needs of the community where your food traveled? What other needs face the community? Is the community part of your synod's companion synod? Could you write your member of Congress to talk about international development? Start a fundraiser to support our church's work through ELCA World Hunger? Educate your community about the struggles faced by the community you served today?

Closing prayer

Creator God, with a word you formed the heavens into being, separating earth from sky, calling from the earth plants and trees, birds that fly, fish that swim and everything that creeps upon the earth. With your hands you made humanity in your image, forming us from clay, filling our lungs with your own breath. Thank you for the work you did with our hands this day, for the things we learned, and for the questions we still have. Teach us also to use our hands, our lungs, our breath, our voices in the work of your people. Show us how to share your abundance with all your creation, and teach us to look for you in our community and in our neighbors.

We close today in the same way we opened. With the words your Son taught us to pray:

Our Father in heaven,

hallowed be your name,

your kingdom come,

your will be done,

on earth as in heaven.

Give us today our daily bread.

Forgive us our sins

as we forgive those who sin against us.

Save us from the time of trial

and deliver us from evil.

For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours

now and for ever. Amen.

LEARN MORE

Visit www.ELCA.org/hunger to learn more about the work of ELCA World Hunger and how you can join with the wider church in working against hunger.

Visit www.ELCA.org/advocacy to learn more about how to use our voices to make a difference in the world.

STAGE 4: Celebration

During Stage 4, it's time to celebrate!

Pick some or all of these activities or create your own to thank all the people who contributed to your successful project.

Pray!

Give thanks to God for the gifts that you shared and that you received. Pray for God's guidance in determining next steps.

- If your family does not traditionally pray before you eat, try it. Try saying the Lord's Prayer or a simple table prayer. If your family already prays before meals, try specifically praying for the people you sent food to and/or all people who do not have enough to eat or anyone to share their food with.

MARTIN LUTHER'S TABLE PRAYER

"Lord God, heavenly Father, bless us and these your gifts which of your bountiful goodness you have bestowed upon us, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen."

Worship!

Host a worship service to give thanks, to pray together, and – if possible – to welcome those who received the food you packed.

For help on planning a hunger-themed worship service, visit www.ELCA.org/hunger/resources for litanies, bulletin inserts and ideas.

Tell!

Tell others about your project, what you did and what you learned. Spreading the word helps others learn from your experience and share your enthusiasm.

- Post pictures to your congregation's website, share them on social media or send them to ELCA World Hunger (hunger@ELCA.org)

- Include pictures and stories about your event in a newsletter or bulletin insert for your congregation
- Share pictures and stories with a local newspaper or other media

Eat!

What better way to celebrate packing meals than fellowship! Host a community dinner with participants, partners and recipients from the community.

- If your project was local, use the meal to reflect on the work you did together and plan the next steps that can be taken.
- If your project traveled overseas, try serving a meal from the culture your food traveled to.

Thank!

Remember to thank the people who helped put the event together.

- Was there a congregation food drive to gather the resources that were packed? Thank the congregation for their support.
- Thank the participants for their work, their questions and the work they will do.
- Send a letter of thanks to the local service agency that received the food you packed. Thank them for the work they do in your community every day and for inviting you into their work.

Additional resources

Bible passages

The Bible has a lot to say about justice, abundance and community. In addition to the Scriptures studied in this packet, here are some more verses to ponder.

MISSION, SERVICE AND JUSTICE

- Amos 5:21-34 – Let justice roll down like waters
- Micah 6:8 – Do justice, love kindness
- Matthew 28:17-20 – Jesus gives the Great Commission
- Matthew 5:13-16 – You are salt and light
- Mark 10:35-45 – The greatest must be a servant
- Luke 10:25-37 – Parable of the good Samaritan
- John 4:5-30 – Jesus meets the woman at the well
- John 13:3-9, 12-16 – Jesus washes the disciples' feet
- Acts 1:6-8 – Jesus sends his followers to be witnesses
- Matthew 22:37-39 – Love your neighbor as yourself
- James 2:14-26 – Faith without works is dead

GIFTS AND CALL

- 1 Corinthians 12:1-31 – The body is made of many parts
- Ephesians 4:1-13 – God gives a variety of gifts
- Romans 12:3-13 – All have been given gifts to share
- 1 Timothy 4:12 – Youth can be an example
- 1 Peter 4:8-11 – Serve each other as stewards of God's grace

FOOD, HUNGER AND POVERTY

- Exodus 16:1-35 – God provides manna from heaven
- Deuteronomy 10:17-19 – God's justice for orphans and widows
- 1 Kings 17:7-16 – Elijah and the widow of Zarephath
- Psalms 130:1-8 – Pleading and waiting for the Lord
- Isaiah 58:9-11 – Offer food to the hungry
- Matthew 5:1-12 – The Beatitudes
- Matthew 25:31-46 – Serving "the least of these"
- Mark 6:30-44 – Jesus feeds the 5,000
- Mark 10:23-25 – Difficult for a rich man to enter the kingdom
- Luke 4:16-19 – Jesus anointed to bring good news to the poor
- Luke 22:7-30 – Jesus shares the Passover meal
- John 6:35 – Jesus is the bread of life
- Acts 4:32-35 – All things were held in common



ELCA World Hunger resources

Want to learn more about hunger or find other ways to get involved? Check out these great resources from ELCA World Hunger. All of these are available for download or order for free from www.ELCA.org/hunger/resources, unless otherwise noted.

ELCA World Hunger Resource Packet. Collection of resources designed to raise funds and awareness for ELCA World Hunger is made available in a packet twice per year.

ELCA World Hunger Video Series. Stories of individuals and communities impacted by the work of ELCA World Hunger. Watch online at www.YouTube.com/ELCA or order the video series from www.ELCA.org/hunger/video.

Digging In: A Leader's Guide to Service Learning. Comprehensive guide to getting the most out of your service experience, whether it is short-term or long-term. Developed in partnership with leading experts in service learning.

Road Map to Food Drives: A By-Youth, For-Youth Guide to Feeding Communities. Step-by-step guide to effective, meaningful food drives written by youth with input from community agencies. Contains easy-to-use sections for youth to lead the drive themselves.

Taking Root. Comprehensive curriculum available in four age-level courses, designed to teach the root causes and solutions to world hunger. Includes curriculum, leader's guide, handouts and videos.

Hunger Education Toolkits. Activities, prayers, lessons and songs to create local education experiences on many themes related to hunger and poverty.

ELCA Good Gifts Catalog. A catalog of global gift-giving opportunities that represent projects and programs supported by your gifts to ELCA churchwide ministries. View online at www.ELCA.org/goodgifts.

For Lenten activities, try:

Into the Wild: A Lenten Liturgy and Intergenerational Study on Hunger. Set of five sessions with liturgies, prayers and activities to help congregational groups from children to adults learn more about hunger and faith. Perfect for a weekly Lenten series!

40 Days of Wonderings: A Family Discussion Guide for Lent. Forty-day calendar of discussion starters, prayers and activities for parents and caregivers to use with children and youth.

Lenten Meals. Series of activities, stories, recipes and prayers suitable for all ages and perfect for a Lenten series or a single session. Each meal focuses on one country or region with ministries supported by ELCA World Hunger.



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

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