

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 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:

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)
Feel free to substitute songs with similar themes.

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, and materials from Bread for the World, 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

During the Hunger Meal you will need boxes large enough to cover with paper and write statistics about hunger to help convey the Meal’s message. Here are some statistics you can use (*sources are on page 4*):

- 1) In developing countries, 11 million children under the age of 5 die every year (30,137 every day), more than half from hunger-related causes.
- 2) 2.6 billion human beings—over 40 percent of the planet’s inhabitants—lack basic sanitation, and more than one billion people still drink unsafe water.
- 3) In the developing world, more than 1.2 billion people currently live below the international poverty line, earning less than \$1 per day.
- 4) 16% of all people in the developing world are undernourished.
- 5) In 2001, the wealthiest 1% of Americans owned 33% of the wealth, and the wealthiest 10% owned 70%, while the bottom 50% of Americans owned just 2.8% of wealth.
- 6) In 2003 the top U.S. corporate executives (CEOs) were paid 301 times as much as the average worker.
- 7) 12.5% of the U.S. population lives below the poverty line.
- 8) 12.9 million U.S. children live below the poverty line.
- 9) Poverty rate: White: 10.3%; American Indian/Alaska Native: 19.1%; Hispanic: 22.1%; Black: 24.3%.
- 10) 36.3 million people in the United States (11.2 percent) live in households that experience hunger or the risk of hunger.
- 11) 13 million children in the U.S. live in households that experience hunger or the risk of hunger.

“Peace Points” is a resource series from Lutheran Peace Fellowship that offers practical ideas and tips to encourage youth groups and families in their peacemaking and justice seeking.

Lutheran Peace Fellowship (LPF) is a growing community of Lutherans across the U.S. and around the globe, responding to the gospel call to be peacemakers and justice seekers. Founded in 1941, LPF offers a wide variety of resources, training, expertise, support, and encouragement.

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The Script

As people come in, welcome them in an area apart from the eating room and give each person a colored card. {Make it a point to select someone with self-confidence to give the colored card representing the Rich person.} When it seems most people have arrived, the **NARRATOR** explains to the group: “Welcome to our meal. We want to thank you for coming, and we hope that this experience will be a positive one, one that challenges you to think about the realities we face as those who seek to follow Christ. As a part of our program, there will be some stories and songs. We ask that there please be silence during the meal so that everyone can hear. You were each given a colored card when you walked in. Your color will be called shortly. The Usher will lead you to the meal area for your group.”

USHER leads the participants to the Meal Area one group at a time. Music is playing in the dining area as participants enter to help set a tone for the meal (see page one for suggestions). Here is the order for seating each group:

USHER selects the RICH, politely escorting them to the **SERVER**. **SERVER** direct the RICH to table with table cloths and full matching silverware. **SERVER** should begin serving them right away. [1% of the world’s population is considered RICH, those with incomes of over \$50,000 per year. All figures here are from World Bank data.]

USHER selects the MIDDLE CLASS and politely escorts them to a table. [6% of the world can be considered MIDDLE CLASS, those with incomes between \$30,000 and \$50,000 per year.]

USHER selects the WORKING CLASS, taking them to the dining room and simply pointing to a grouping of chairs. [33% of the world is considered WORKING CLASS, those with incomes between \$1,100 and \$30,000 per year.]

USHER selects the POOR. Rudely point to a section on the floor for them to sit. [60% of the world is POOR, earning under \$1100. Many are chronically hungry or starving, 1/3 live on less than \$1 a day. See page 4 for source of data.]

When everyone is situated, the RICH are already eating. The MIDDLE CLASS can select someone from their table to pick up their food and can begin eating. The WORKING CLASS has to go through a line. The POOR are told to wait at the end of the line if they want to eat and receive a single bowl of rice and a container of water. After everybody has something, the **NARRATOR** begins...

NARRATOR: “The issue of hunger is often presented as only numbers — numbers of undernourished, numbers facing famine, numbers of refugees. It is important to remember that each number is a person, a story, a struggle. Here are the words of hungry people speaking to their reality and to our challenge.” (READERS alternate reading these 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) If possible, move the group to a separate circle of chairs close to the eating area. Print in large letters and post the definitions of the four groups from “The Script.” A whiteboard or newsprint on an easel can help record comments by participants. Have copies of the hunger statistics, hunger stories, and materials from one or more resource groups available to share during the discussion with participants. Since the realities of world inequality can be sobering (or shocking) you may wish to point the way to hope by sharing 1 or 2 brief success stories of advocacy efforts from groups working to end hunger like Bread for the World or the ELCA World Hunger Program.

Hunger Meal Parts

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

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 (“for more information” box above).

Explore affiliating on an ongoing basis with Bread for the World, LPF, and/or other education and advocacy groups.

LPF's **Peace Points** resources include

Peace Points Starters, What Is Christian Peacemaking? Conflict Education, Peace Worship, 24 Ways for Students to Work for Peace, The Wall of Hope, Just War, and Reclaim the Season.

Single copies free, by mail, or on the web at:
www.LutheranPeace.org

This resource was drafted by Jenny Dragseth, Youth Director, West Fargo, ND, and developed further by Patrick Edrey, LPF youth trainer, and Glen Gersmehl, LPF national coordinator.

Sources of Statistics: Income figures for the four groups are based on *True World Income Distribution*, World Bank Development Research Group, 2000. 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 find how any income amount compares to world income, and other useful information at: www.globalrichlist.com/index.php

Hunger Statistics box: **1.** *State of Food Insecurity in the World 2002*, Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN. **2.** *Meeting the Millennium Development Goals*, UNICEF and World Health Organization. **3.** *Human Development Report 2003*, Millennium Development Goals. **4.** *The State of Food Insecurity in the World, 2003*, Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN. **5.** Levy Economics Institute, November, 2003. **6.** *Business Week* annual CEO pay surveys; and *Average Weekly Earnings of Production Workers, Total Private Sector*, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. **7.** *Income, Poverty, and Health Insurance Coverage in the United States: 2003*, U.S. Census Bureau. **8.** *People and Families in Poverty by Selected Characteristics: 2002-2003*, Census Bureau. **9.** Number in Poverty and Poverty Rates by Race and Hispanic Origin Using 2 and 3 Year Averages: '01-03. **10.** and **11.** *Household Food Security in the United States, 2003*, ERS Research Briefs.