



Fourth Sunday

Lent Passage: Psalm 23:1 YEAR A

Food Insecurity Reflection Passage:
Leviticus 19:9-10 NLT

"When you harvest the crops of your land, do not harvest the grain along the edges of your fields, and do not pick up what the harvesters drop. It is the same with your grape crop—do not strip every last bunch of grapes from the vines, and do not pick up the grapes that fall to the ground. Leave them for the poor and the foreigners living among you. I am the Lord your God."

You cannot pray away food insecurity, systemic injustice, displacement of people nor structural racism. It takes policy changes to begin eradicating these things. Food is political. God's word has something to say about this.

In the Leviticus passage, God set *a policy* in place for how the Israelites should handle harvesting season. God mandated that they engage in the *stewardship* of resources and land. God also gave some specific instructions within this policy on what *not* to do. Imagine if we had policies on *not harming* or denying our neighbors access to basic human rights.

Leaving grain at the margins is intentional; it is not leftovers or expired food that no one wants. It is good food that *you* worked for and would want to eat. This is in God's food policy. God made provision, as our Great Shepherd, for us to have food - with overage - so that no one would be without food.

In this week's Lent passage, Psalm 23:1 is perhaps a familiar verse. *The Lord is my Shepherd. I shall not want.* Jehovah Rohi is how the psalmist refers to God. Rohi is a word that means shepherding, "to feed" or lead to pasture. It is a name given to God to describe

the tenderness of our powerful God. So, when David says *The Lord is my Shepherd*, he is saying God feeds me. It is tied back to Genesis 1:29, God's initial food policy. Shepherds feed their flocks.

Write:

God commands us to feed our neighbors - the poor and the foreigners among us. There are grocery stores and eateries in some communities that are sharing their overage with grassroots organizations responding to food insecurity.

How can you partner with this effort?

Reflect:

If your church has a food pantry or an outdoor blessing box, how might you be able to add fresh produce, eggs and milk to what you are offering? Where will you store it? Does your church have commercial refrigeration?

Do some holy dreaming and imagine what that can look like. Start from a place of being resourceful rather than a place of deficit. Maybe this is the season where God is calling you out of your comfort zone and to become uncomfortable with the food injustice that your neighbors are experiencing.

Pray:

God, we need policy changes in this community. I pray now for those who are in positions of power. I pray that they would make food security a priority. God, regardless of what side of town people live in, regardless of their family background, education, or social status, no one should have to wonder how they will access fresh, healthy, affordable food. God, help me to advocate on behalf of my neighbors. You've already set the food policy biblically. We need the moral courage to enact it and live it out. Help me to truly love my neighbor as myself and to be obedient to Your word. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Act:

In **Chapter Three**, we learn about a *Healthy Food Financing Initiative* that was initiated by El Paso County Commissioner David Stout. Does your city have a Food Policy Council? If so, what are the priorities? Research the initiative in El Paso, Texas, and draft a one-page faith-based policy for your community with some of your neighbors.

Final Thoughts:

In **Chapter Three**, the author discusses faith and policy meeting where people are struggling. At this point in your Lenten journey and in engaging in this reading, how do you understand the statement: **food is political**?

More Resources: SeedingSovereignty.org 

The next pages are an introduction to the Farm Bill, the government's role in agriculture (it involves policies, thereby making it political), and a spotlight on women in agriculture.

Farming on Green Acres

Farm Facts:

In the 1960s and 70s, a popular television situational comedy (sitcom) called *Green Acres* chronicled the lives of Oliver and Lisa Douglas, a New York high-brow couple who moved to the farm life in the fictional country town of Hooterville. For a new generation of viewing audiences (and now those who watch it in syndication), it was one of the first introductions (other than singing *Old MacDonald Had a Farm*) to a day in the life on a farm for some viewers.

Today's reality is that US farmers are overwhelmingly white men. Land ownership is overwhelmingly white men. Less than 5% of farms are owned and operated by Black, Latinx and Indigenous neighbors. In 2021, only 1.3 percent of farmers – 45,000 – were Black. Latinx farmers account for 3%, while Indigenous, Asian and Pacific Islanders make up 1% of US farmers.

Contrastingly, the majority of farm workers – the ones who work the field, pick strawberries in arid temperatures, harvest lettuce, and pull tomatoes from the vine, are farmers of color barely making minimum wage. They are food workers who often cannot afford the food they are *putting on our tables*.

Women farmers account for about 35% of all farmers in the US. It does not, however, mean that they own the land they are farming nor that they have the resources they need to thrive.

Speaking of Agriculture...

The US Department of Agriculture is charged with oversight and management of food, agriculture, natural resources, land, watersheds, forestry and navigating issues through public policy. This means that food, land, farming, and our entire foodways systems intersect with politics.



The USDA estimates that there are about 900 million acres of farmland in the United States. When it comes to the number of Black, Latinx, Indigenous, and women-led farms, there is disenfranchisement. This matters because whether it is a small-scale or large-scale farm, if crops are grown for public consumption, then these farms are included in our foodways system. Yet, these farmers are often unjustly excluded from resources. They are not equitable beneficiaries of the funds and grants that white men farmers receive.

If food is grown, produced, and processed at the farm or if the food goes directly from the farm to local markets, restaurants, and then to your table, it matters what agricultural resources farmers have access to for their livelihood. Many of these farmers cannot afford the food that they are producing for us. They are disproportionately impacted by the inequities in our foodways system.

Farm Bill

Every five years, the US Congress passes the Farm Bill. There is a **Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry**, and a **House Committee on Agriculture**. These committee members are tasked with drafting the bill.

What kinds of things are included?

Broadband (internet access) in rural areas. SNAP or food stamps benefits. Food distribution programs on Indian/Native American/First Peoples reservations. Dairy. Rural economic development. Horticulture. Farmers Markets. Forestry.

There are legislated "policies" that are decided in the Farm Bill. Yes, even internet access in rural areas. Why? Because at one time, rural areas were considered "farmland." These things should arrest our attention, causing us to be invested in the conversations, priorities and policies surrounding the Farm Bill. This is where policy interacts with healthy food access for all of us. 2023 marks the year for the next Farm Bill to be passed. The last one was passed in 2018.

Spotlighting Women in Agriculture

Do you know any women farmers? Since women are underrepresented in farming and often do not gain access to the funds provided by the US Department of Agriculture, it is important to intentionally highlight the work that they are doing.

Here are three women you should know about:

Germaine Jenkins



The past, present, and future of agriculture is alive and well in North Charleston, South Carolina according to **Fresh Future Farm**, the non-profit founded by Germaine Jenkins. In response to food insecurity and the food desert in the Chicora-Cherokee neighborhoods, Germaine leased a vacant lot in 2014 and two years later opened a grocery store. Her vision was to disrupt the food apartheid that was escalating in her neighborhood.

Fresh Future Farm is a justice-based nonprofit farm. Its mission is "to grow the quality of life that our neighbors deserve. By creating greenspaces that feed the mind, body and soul, and building self-determination through grassroots food activism." Learn more at Freshfuturefarm.org

Keisha Cameron



For this Georgia farmer, farming is a family lifestyle. Focusing on agroecology and Indigenous foodways, Keisha, along with her husband Warren and their family, practice sustainable farming at **High Hog Farm**. A modern-day shepherd, Keisha raises livestock, chickens, French Angora rabbits, and sheep. High Hog Farm offers natural fibers, goat milk soaps, sundries and herbal seasonings.

The vision of High Hog Farm is to create a thriving hub for ancestral agrarian arts, land-based education and regenerative growth. Support and learn more at HighHog.Farm.

Sarah Macias



Deep in the heart of North Texas is where you will find Sarah Macias and her husband Rodney, stewarding the land that is known as **Sister Grove Farm**. Informed by her faith, Sarah engages in regenerative agricultural practices, holistic planned grazing, and raising and growing food in a way that promotes and builds up soil health.

As stewards of the land, Sarah and her husband honor and acknowledge the rich ancestral heritage of the Wichita or Kitikiti'sh tribe who were the original inhabitants.

Support and learn more at SisterGroveFarm.com.

Who are the farmers in your community?

Spend a couple of hours learning about their practices, the land and gleaning some nuggets about our foodways system.

As you go into these final two weeks of your Lenten journey, reflect on what you have learned so far. How will you get involved in the Farm Bill conversations? Will your voice be heard? This is one way to be an ecclesial disruptor and to engage in a spirit of *acts-tivism*. The Farm Bill is expected to be passed in the last quarter of 2023. Hearings are happening now. Learn more about the Farm Bill at www.agriculture.senate.gov/farm-bill.

What will you make plans to do? You can start by reading what is included in the bill, and then researching which political leaders serve on the committee.

MORE RESOURCES: [Whetstone Radio Collective](#). Listen to "Taste of Place" Podcast in the Radio Collective and "El Corredor del nectar" Podcast.

Whetstone is founded by Stephen Satterfield, host of the documentary series, *High On the Hog*.

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