

Traditionally, Christians "give up" or "fast" from their favorite food as a sign of a sacrifice. A common practice is to give to the needy - usually the amount of money that you would spend on the food from which you are fasting - as an act of justice. For the purposes of this journey, when there is an urge to indulge in the specific food that you have given up for 40 days, this is a time to focus on what it means for your neighbor to be food insecure - a neighbor who does not have the luxury of fasting.

This Lenten Resource follows the book, ***Scrimpin' and Scrapin': The Hardship and Hustle of Women and Food Insecurity in Texas Through a Womanist Lens***. This guide is expanded with lectionary passages, Farm Bill insight, spotlighting women in agriculture, and activities for readers to engage in and complete during this fasting season.



Reverend Yvette R. Blair-Lavallais is an elder in The Methodist Church. She is a food justice strategist, social justice advocate and public theologian. An international speaker on food justice issues through a theological framework, she has been a featured panelist for Bread For the World's Global Advocacy Summit, Conversation with the White House and the

Pan African Women of Faith Ecumenical Empowerment Network. She is a 2021 Engle Preaching fellow and 2017 Black Theology and Leadership Institute fellow at Princeton Theological Seminary, and a 2018-2020 inaugural cohort member of the Public Theology Racial Justice Collaborative at Vanderbilt Divinity School. Reverend Yvette earned her Doctor of Ministry from Memphis Theological Seminary and holds degrees from Southern Methodist University and The University of North Texas.



Lenten Resource Guide for

Scrimpin' and Scrapin':

*The Hardships
and Hustle of Women
and Food Insecurity
in Texas*

**Through a Womanist
Theological Lens**

Rev. Dr. Yvette R. Blair-Lavallais

Scrimpin' and Scrapin': The Hardships and Hustle of Women and Food Insecurity in Texas: A Lenten Resource Guide

©2023

Published by Arpege Circle Books, Dallas, Texas, in partnership with Transform Network.

ISBN: 13: 979-8-9860528-1-6

Except for where used in the case of reviews, and limited in these cases to brief samples, no part of this publication may be reproduced or used in any form without written permission from Yvette R. Blair-Lavallais.

Any reference within this piece to Internet addresses of websites not under the administration of Yvette R. Blair-Lavallais is not to be taken as an endorsement of these websites by Yvette R. Blair-Lavallais. Yvette R. Blair-Lavallais does not vouch for their content nor does Yvette R. Blair-Lavallais make any statement to their functionality.

Scripture taken from the New Revised Standard Version Bible, copyright © 1989 National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide. Scripture quotations are taken from the Holy Bible, New Living Translation, copyright ©1996, 2004, 2015 by Tyndale House Foundation. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Carol Stream, Illinois 60188. All rights reserved.



Lenten Resource Guide for

Scrimpin' and Scrapin': *The Hardships and Hustle of Women and Food Insecurity in Texas*

**Through a Womanist
Theological Lens**

Rev. Dr. Yvette R. Blair-Lavallais



Lent, also referred to as the Lenten Season, is a time of penitence in the Christian Church in preparation for Easter. It begins with Ash Wednesday and continues for six weeks (to Holy Saturday, the eve of Easter) and is marked by an intentional time of fasting and prayer. During Lent, Christians imitate the 40 days that Jesus spent in the wilderness.

These 40 days (excluding Sundays) are a faith journey for Christians to spend reflective time on their own "wilderness experience" of grieving the times that they have not done God's will, responded to the needy or loved their neighbors as themselves.

Traditionally, Christians "*give up*" or "*fast*" from their favorite food as a sign of a sacrifice. A common practice is to give to the needy – usually the amount of money that you would spend on the food from which you are fasting – as an act of justice. For the purposes of this journey, when there is an urge to indulge the specific food that you have given up for 40 days, this is a time to focus on what it means for your neighbor to be food insecure – a neighbor who does not have the luxury of fasting.

For persons who are giving up activities (social media, shopping, spending frivolously) rather than fasting from a specific food, this resource guide is still a good way for you

to engage your faith at the intersection of food insecurity and to do some holy listening for how God is calling you to respond to food injustice.

As we think about the meaning of neighbor, the context is significant. Neighbor is not just the person who lives on your street. *Who is my neighbor?* It is a question that was asked of Jesus in Luke 10:29 after Jesus said two verses earlier, "Love your neighbor as yourself." Biblically, a neighbor is anyone who lives in your community and city. Your neighbor lives in the same zip code as you and also in a different zip code. Your neighbor is the same nationality or ethnicity as you and also a different one than you. You might know the name or something about your neighbor, or you might not.

As you journey through this time, be intentional about understanding who your food-insecure neighbor is. How will you know who is food insecure in your community or city? By engaging in a mapping exercise. This resource guide will help you to do that.

Your Lenten experience should look and feel different this year. As you journey for these 40 days, you are journeying the path that your food-insecure neighbor journeys. You are looking through the lens of their real-lived experience without judgment.

For these 40 days and 40 nights, you are doing some holy listening and committing to make at least one meaningful action that will help to end food insecurity for *your* neighbor – whoever she is, however old he is, regardless to the reason for the hardship.

In the Introduction of *Scrimpin' and Scrapin': The Hardships and Hustle of Women and Food Insecurity in Texas – Through a Womanist Theological Lens*, foodways is described as the eating habits and culinary practices of people. It is also the cultural, social, and economic practices related to the production, purchase, and consumption of food. In other words, it is the cumulative set of factors that are used in determining how you access the food that you eat.

As you enter into a time of fasting, be curious about our foodways. Particularly as you adjust your own eating choices for faith or personal reasons, be mindful of the people in your community who are food insecure. The ones who do not have the financial means to access healthy food. The ones who are not sure where their next meal is coming from – not by choice – but by circumstance. Hunger is a moral issue.


The ones who have to travel more than three miles outside of their community just to shop at a full-scale grocery store because they live in a so-called food desert. The ones who don't have a car and must rely on public transportation to get there.

The ones who work two jobs just to make ends meet and still cannot afford to eat healthy and have to compromise on eating diet-specific and culturally specific foods.

As you choose to abstain from specific foods during these days of fasting, along with reading aloud and meditating on these Lent passages, spend some intentional time reading the "food insecurity reflection passages" and praying about how God is calling you to activate your faith at the intersection of food insecurity. How will you respond to your neighbor?


An important point to keep in mind is this: while you are choosing to engage in fasting, there are millions of people who are food insecure. Some of them are your neighbors. For them it is not a choice; it is their real-lived experience.

This resource guide is designed for you to **write, reflect, pray, and act**. If you are engaging this book with a friend or small group, I hope you have rich, robust, and transparent conversations that help you see how God is calling you to be an ecclesial disruptor of food insecurity. There is space for final thoughts and notes. This resource guide also offers **more resources** for you to consider so that you can hear the narratives of others.

To ground yourself in how faith shapes the work of eradicating food insecurity, I invite you to listen to the  [Food Talk Podcast with Dani Nierenberg](#) (by Food Tank). In episode 363, she talks with Rev. Eugene Cho, the CEO of Bread For the World.

I look forward to journeying with you and meeting you at the intersection of faith and food insecurity where God is calling us.

Rev. Yvette

 [hyperlink to podcast](#)



**Let's Begin
Our Lent
Journey...**



Ash Wednesday

Lent Passage: Joel 2:1-2, 12-17 NRSV

Food Insecurity Reflection Passage:

Genesis 1:29, 2:15 NRSV

1:29 Then God said, "See, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is upon the face of all the earth and every tree with seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food."

2:15 The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it.

Read these passages aloud.

In the Lent passage, the prophet Joel blows the trumpet, sounds the alarm, and shouts from God's holy mountain with a specific declaration. For our food-insecure neighbors, they are waiting for someone to sound the alarm on their economic hardship and real-lived experience. The alarm needs to be heard by grocers, city leaders, and elected officials, especially those who

hold decision-making power and authority. Unfortunately, as we enter into the 2025 season of Lent, the current presidential administration's proposed budget would cut billions of dollars from Medicaid and billions more from SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, formerly known as food stamps). This is alarming. You can still use your influence – the power of your voice – to speak up for your neighbor. *Your voice is the alarm.* When God made provisions in Genesis 1:29 (the reflection passage), those provisions were not a one-time static declaration; they were for generations to come. They included you and your neighbors, yet because of decisions made by someone who holds power, there are children, youth, young adults, and the elderly who are going hungry. And by all projections of where things are headed, many more people will experience food insecurity in 2025.

Food insecurity is antithetical to the gospel. It is not about someone being "down on their luck." People are *scrimpin' and scrapin'* to make ends meet. Thus begins the holy wrestling in this season of Lent.

Write:

How does the author explain the term "*scrimpin' and scrapin'*?" How is God calling you to sound the alarm on food insecurity in your community? How has the "you" (in plural form) in Genesis 1:29 been misappropriated by the powers that be?

If you are preaching this text, how would you frame and hold "you" in today's context in tension with food insecurity?

Reflect:

God made a provision at the beginning of creation that we would always have food. God declared that the earth would always be replenished with fruit-bearing trees.

As you read this Genesis 1:29 passage through the lens of those who are food insecure, what would you say are the reasons that you have access to food, yet your food insecure neighbors do not?

In Genesis 2:15, God placed the human in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it. Here, *keep* means to "steward it." What does stewarding God's resources mean to you?

Pray:

God, during creation you made a declaration and provision for food security. No one was ever meant to go hungry yet through our selfishness and disregard for humanity, we have not honored your provision. God, help me to hear and respond to the ways that you are calling me to be an ecclesial disruptor of food insecurity and to understand that this is a moral issue that can be changed with a change of heart that leads to a change in our actions and policies. No one deserves to go hungry. May the ones who hold power in their hands – myself included – use their power to eradicate food insecurity. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Act:

Name one action that you are willing to take today (visit a food pantry and learn about the real need in your area, sign up to volunteer with a grassroots organization that is responding to food insecurity, visit a farm in your community that provides locally sourced food and find out how the workers are tending the land).

Final Thoughts:

From the **Introduction** of the book:

What is womanism?

Who coined the term food apartheid? How does this inform your understanding of the layers and complexities of food insecurity?

What are you giving up during this fasting season and what do you hope to gain?

More Resources: Listen to the *Food and Faith* Podcast available at foodandfaith.org



hyperlink to podcast