

Second Sunday

Lent Passage: Psalm 121:2 YEAR A

Food Insecurity Reflection Passage:

Leviticus 27:30 ESV

"Every tithe of the land, whether of the seed of the land or of the fruit of the trees, is the Lord's; it is holy to the Lord."

Tithe. Stewardship. Generosity. Giving. Capital Campaign. Money has many names in the language of the church. That's because how we view money - why we are giving, where does it go, and why does the church ask for money - is a matter that is still unsettled for some people, including those who are church members.

The interchangeable words are meant to help people understand and relate to how this same terminology of giving is used in other settings like non-profit organizations, schools, and even buying cookies and candy to support the work of youth organizations. The concept is the same. Church giving supports the activated mission and vision of the ministry and what God is doing through the congregation. It makes sense then that if our help comes from the Lord (Psalm 121:2), then we understand those resources belong *to the Lord*. We demonstrate good stewardship when we "resource" (*active verb of providing, allocating*) our neighbors who are in need.

Effective ministry costs money. Operating a church (i.e. utilities, supplies, staffing, programming, benevolence) comes with expenses. The resources (money) that we tithe, give, and offer come from the Lord. All of it is holy to the Lord. Think about that for a moment. What you intentionally give *is holy to the Lord* and supports God's movement through your congregation. Remember, Jesus's ministry was financially supported, too.

Write:

In Chapter Two of the book, we learn that the origin of food banks in the US is in the church. The church

gave an offering for the formation of the first food bank as a communal response to food insecurity. Some churches have food pantries, outdoor blessing boxes or community gardens.

How do you see providing fresh, healthy food for your neighbors as a form of tithing or practicing stewardship?

If you have given to a canned food drive, food pantry or food bank, did you give expired food? Did you give food you did not want? Did you give newly purchased food?

Who do you envision as the recipients of donated food?

Reflect:

Also in Chapter Two, we are introduced to the term "acts-tivism." What does it mean? We learn about generosity versus being tight-fisted. In what ways have you exhibited a spirit of generosity? When have you been tight-fisted in your giving back to God?

Pray:

God of abundance, sometimes I struggle to give, to offer a tithe or make an offer to You. Help me to remember that what I give is holy. I pray for direction on where I can "tithe" or "give" as a form of stewardship to help my neighbors who are food insecure. Lead me and guide me to whom I should help. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Act:

This week, drive a five-mile radius of your community and count the number of churches that you see. Do you notice any underutilized land on the campus of the churches? If you are a member of a congregation, is there underutilized land on your campus?

Pray and have conversations with others in your congregation about how God is calling your church to "tithe" part of the land to respond to food insecurity. Maybe it looks like hosting a farmers market on the land that you are stewarding. Engage in holy listening and moral imagination, and be open to what God is showing you.

Final Thoughts:

The gospel is filled with stories of community engagement where Jesus and the disciples went directly to where the people were, and they always ended up meeting a need.

What organization(s) is meeting the need of food insecurity in a five-mile radius of your community? Identify grassroots, BIPOC-led or women-led organizations. *BIPOC is Black Indigenous Person of Color.*

How is God calling your ministry to "go out" and meet people where they are and respond to their real-lived experiences of food insecurity (i.e. serve at community food distribution days, soup kitchens, preparing food to serve at a local community center)?

More Resources: Listen to an episode of the [Fresh Take Podcast](#).



Asset Mapping

WHAT RESOURCES ARE IN MY NEIGHBORHOOD?

Luke 9:13 Then Jesus replied: "You give them something to eat."

Knowing what resources are available for our neighbors who are affected by the myriad of systemic injustices is part of the work of being an ecclesial disruptor.

On this page and the next, let's do some asset mapping and take a look at some basic things in your community.

What public transportation is in your community?

If you answered none, then how does a person without access to a car get to work, run errands, and to the grocery store?

When was the last time you used public transportation in your city?

Where is the nearest food bank or food pantry in your zip code and/or in your house of worship's zip code?

Does your community have a farmers' market? When is it open? Does the market accept EBT cards/food stamps? Does the market accept "prescription vouchers"?

Does your community have CSA (community supported agriculture)?

Does your community have a seniors' program that provides free, fresh food for neighbors who are 65 and better?

What churches in your community offer hot meals?

In My Neighborhood

Isaiah 1:17 "Do good, seek justice. Defend the oppressed."

In case you are still unsettled about whether faith-based communities should be involved in political matters around food, consider this: **Bread For the World** is a Christian advocacy organization urging U.S. decision-makers to do all they can to pursue a world without hunger. The organization advocates for government policies and programs that will end hunger for good in the U.S. and around the world. Learn more at bread.org and listen to the [Food Talk podcast](#) in the Lent Introduction.

Where do you shop for groceries?

How far is the grocery store(s) from where you live?

Within a one-mile radius of where you live, count the number of:

corner stores

food marts

grocery stores

99 cent or dollar stores

How many fast-food eateries are within a one-mile radius (walking distance) of where you live? Re-read "[Redlining in Our Foodways](#)" in Chapter Two.

How many *healthy food* options are within a one-mile radius?

What social service organizations are in your community?

Where in your community can a person get assistance with their utility bill or rent?

When does your city council/township council meet?

When does your county governing body meet?

How many times a year do you attend the public meetings held by your city or county? Look up the agenda for the upcoming city or town council meeting to be informed.

Mapping the Gaps in Meals

Matthew 25:35 "For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty, and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger, and you welcomed me." 

One of the fastest-growing demographics of food-insecure neighbors is college students. More and more colleges and universities are setting up food pantries, community fridges, and on-campus "pay what you can" stores to fill the gap and meet the need. College students, many who are away from home for the first time, might be "making the grade" but they are going hungry.

Where does your moral compass point when it comes to food insecurity? Do you see it as an individual problem, a community problem, the church's problem?



If the North Star is your guide, then which of the abovementioned answers frames how you see food insecurity today?

Where do you sense God is guiding or pointing you as you begin to understand what it means to show up at the intersection of faith and food injustice as an ecclesial disruptor?

Feeding America is an organization with a mission that mirrors an ecclesial response to food insecurity. That's because its origin story goes back to America's first food bank at St. Mary's. What started there grew to become Second Harvest, then America's Second Harvest and finally Feeding America. It started at the church. Re-read "*The Origin of Food Banks*" in Chapter Two.

Feeding America has a mission to advance change in America by ensuring equitable access to nutritious food for all in partnership with food banks, policymakers, supporters and communities.

Food Mapping

Jeremiah 1:17 "Get yourself ready! Stand up and say to them whatever I command you. Do not be terrified by them or I will terrify you before them."

Do you sense yet that God is calling you to this food justice ministry? If so, heed the words of the prophet Jeremiah. Get yourself ready to talk about it!

Feeding America has an online tool that gives data about food insecurity by state. On their website, **feedingamerica.org**, search for your state.

What is the estimated food insecurity rate for your state?

What is the average meal cost?

Go deeper and look at your county. What is the projected annual food budget shortfall?

As you look at the data, keep in mind that these are real people, made in the image of God, with real-lived experiences of food insecurity.

These are children, college students, adults, seniors, people on fixed incomes, people working two jobs, people who are unemployed, and people who are struggling to make ends meet. They deserve access to God's abundance of resources and food.

As you continue fasting, think about these neighbors. While you are choosing to fast as a spiritual discipline, these neighbors don't have the luxury of abstaining from specific foods. They need more than thoughts and prayers. They need access to fresh, healthy, affordable food.

We are called to act justly, love kindness and to walk humbly with God (Micah 6:8). Micah's name means "who is like the LORD?"

Spend some time discerning how you can act justly in an unjust system where some of your neighbors are in the data numbers. God loves justice. Do you? Are you like the Lord in that way? Stand up and say to policymakers what God is commanding you. Do not be terrified by them!

Notes: