



Fast and Pray with Presbyterians as a response to the world hunger crisis



“Won’t you join us as we stand in solidarity with the poor and the hungry, discerning – with God’s help – faithful responses and meaningful coordinated actions to lift up our worldwide community through this global crisis?”

- The Rev. Bruce Reyes-Chow, Moderator of the 218th General Assembly

FAST • PRAY • REPENT • ACT

September 18, 2008

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Because we are called by Christ to respond to the cry of the poor, we invite you to take action with us by joining in an important new **churchwide initiative**, which we pray will make a difference in the lives of those who are suffering in the wake of the global food crisis.

Starting this October, Presbyterians will be encouraged on a monthly basis to **adopt the ancient spiritual practice of fasting**, beginning on Friday evening, and ending with Communion on a Sunday morning, where the Sacrament is regularly observed. The year-long cycle of prayer and fasting – or the partaking of simple meals – will end October 16, 2009, on *World Food Day*. Interpretive materials for each month will be available through www.pcusa.org/foodcrisis.

Won’t you join us as we stand in solidarity with the poor and the hungry, discerning – with God’s help – faithful responses and meaningful coordinated actions to lift up our worldwide community through this global crisis?

Faithfully yours,

The Rev. Bruce Reyes-Chow , Moderator of the 218th General Assembly

Elder Linda Bryant Valentine, Executive Director, General Assembly Council

The Rev. Gradye Parsons, Stated Clerk of the General Assembly

NOTE: See page 4. of this publication for the 2008 General Assembly Action On Mobilizing Presbyterians for a Significant Response to the Global Food Crisis

INVITATION TO A CHURCH-WIDE FAST



A letter to San Jose Presbytery Congregations, members and friends from Ruth Farrell, Coordinator, Presbyterian Hunger Program:

At the behest of the 218th General Assembly, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) is inviting its congregations to engage in a monthly church-wide fast to discern faithful responses to the global food crisis, in a world where more than 845 million people go hungry. As many as 100 million more risk starvation, while others live with plenty to spare.

Beginning in October, Presbyterians are encouraged to fast monthly, beginning on Friday evening, and breaking the fast with communion on Sunday morning. Those who are physically unable to fast may eat simple meals. The year-long cycle will end Oct. 16, 2009, on *World Food Day*, with new materials available each month.

Congregations may commit to the fast as a body; individuals and smaller groups may also participate.

The website and fast materials will launch on Sept. 18 at www.pcusa.org/foodcrisis/. Prayers for communal or individual use will be provided for the 40-hour fasts and will be written by fast participants, church partners and theologians from the United States and overseas.

Each month, the site will offer fresh analysis on an aspect of the food crisis, such as global warming, flawed trade agreements, lack of access to food or loss of inherited seeds to grow indigenous crops.

- Other new material each month also includes:
- A biblical study by a respected scholar and/or pastor
- Liturgy for corporate worship
- Reflections on spiritual practice by a recognized author and/or teacher

Church partners from heavily-hit nations like Congo, Sudan, Haiti and India will join us by telling their stories and by providing us data about the food crisis from their particular context. In fact, partners have asked that the Presbyterian Church (USA) engage with them in study and worship. That request was honored by the General Assembly last June when it voted to initiate a church-wide fast to seek God's presence, purpose and power in the midst of such devastating tragedy.

Food shortages and famines are not new. **The difference now is that food, water and climate crises are converging to create what has been called a "perfect storm" with unprecedented suffering that calls us all to respond.**

Please circulate this invitation to others who are seeking a faith-based response to the global food crisis and who are willing to engage it through a sacrificial practice. Let's fast, pray, repent and act, following the example set by Jesus in the sacrament of eucharist, to divide the gifts of the earth fairly, sharing them with the weak, the poor and the hungry.

If you have questions, do not hesitate to contact me, Ruth Farrell, coordinator of the Presbyterian Hunger Program at (888)-728-7288, ext. 5816, or Ruth.Farrell@pcusa.org.

Sincerely,

Ruth Farrell

Coordinator Presbyterian Hunger Program

P.S. The URL for the Facebook group is <http://www.new.facebook.com/group.php?gid=25180701228&ref=mf> or people can search for Presbyterians Respond to Global Food Crisis while on Facebook.



FASTING RESOURCES FOR INDIVIDUALS AND CONGREGATIONS

"If your brother or sister is being injured by what you eat, you are no longer walking in love." (Romans 14:15)

Presbyterian Hunger Program Fast Resources: <http://www.pcusa.org/foodcrisis/>

Learn about hunger in the world and the current food crisis

- Resources for monthly fasts: www.pcusa.org/foodcrisis/
- Fasting and Worship Resources: www.pcusa.org/foodcrisis/fastworship.htm
- About the global food crisis and it's causes: www.pcusa.org/foodcrisis/resources.htm
- Sign up and be counted as Presbyterian fasting each month in solidarity with starving people: www.pcusa.org/foodcrisis/signup.htm

Scripture on Fasting:

Ezra 8:21-23; 10:6, Nehemiah 1:4, Esther 4:16, Job 33:19,20, Psalm 69:10; 102:4, Isaiah 58: Daniel 9:3,20-23; 10:3; Joel 2:15; Exodus 34:28; Deuteronomy 9:9-18; 2 Samuel 12:16,17; Matthew 4:2; 6:16; 9:15, Acts 13:3; 14:23; 1 Corinthians 7:5, 2 Corinthians 11:27,28, Jonah 3:5,10; Luke 2:37, 4:2; Acts 13:2

Small group and class resources:

- **Just Eating:** www.pcusa.org/hunger/features/justeating.htm (download curriculum or order through the Presbyterian Distribution Service: Just Faith Participants Guide - PDS #7436505361; PDS Phone: (800) 524-2612)
- **Making Poverty History: Hunger Education Activities that Work** - Order or Download: \$1.00, PDS# 74360-07-364

Bread for the World Resources: www.bread.org

- Recipe for Hope on the global food crises: <http://www.bread.org/learn/rising-food-prices/>
- **Order this booklet: Elections Matter: A Handbook for Participating in the 2008 Elections;** Bread for the World, Order at: (free; also can download) www.breadstore.org/elmahaforpai.html
- Good books on hunger basics: "**Grace at the Table,**" "**How Much is Enough: Hungering of God in an Affluent Culture:**" by Art Simon (founder of Bread for the World). Order at: www.breadstore.org/reandfa.html

More Resources

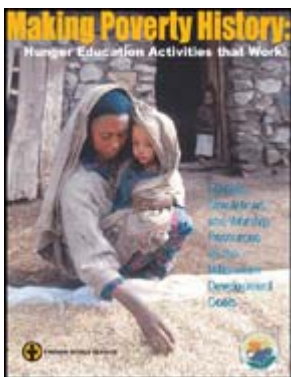
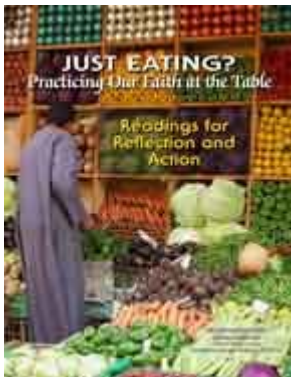
- A must read "**Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger; Moving from Affluence to Generosity**" by Ronald Sider
- "**Celebration of Discipline: A Path to Spiritual Growth**" by Richard J. Foster (Chapter 4 on Fasting as a Spiritual Discipline)

Pray:

Prayers and worship materials: <http://www.pcusa.org/hunger/foodcrisis/index.htm>

Our table is filled with beautiful food, O God, and soon we will be filled with this bounty from your hand. Help us remember to give you thanks for all your blessings. And help us remember those without food or table. Amen

(by Rev. Cathy Stenzel, the University of the Poor)



2008 General Assembly Action: On Mobilizing Presbyterians for a Significant Response to the Global Food Crisis

That the 218th General Assembly (2008) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) urgently take the following steps in response to the global food crisis:

1. Launch a general appeal to all Presbyterians to donate to a special fund set up by the General Assembly Council to enable the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to provide better support to and accompaniment of our overseas partners trying to step up their response to the global food crisis.
 2. Step up and speed up mission personnel deployment, in response to overseas partners who so request, to advise and accompany them as to the kinds of actions that could be undertaken to alleviate hunger in the short term without creating new dependencies and/or compromising their countries' sovereignty and economy.
 3. Invite all Presbyterians to join in the church-wide practice of spiritual disciplines, such as monthly fasting for repentance and reflection, which may lead to meaningful coordinated actions to accompany those who are poor and hungry around the world.
 4. Produce relevant resources, using all available communications means, to raise the awareness of Presbyterians about the current food crisis, including the dangers for the U.S. government, the European Union, and other international entities who want to use the current food crisis as an opportunity to offer more direct food aid exports and genetically modified (GMO) seeds to affected countries, instead of offering economic and financial assistance to enable them to increase the production and marketing of their own traditional food commodities.
 5. Call on the Stated Clerk and on appropriate entities of the General Assembly Council (GAC) to contact the U.S. government, the World Bank, and other relevant institutions, to call for the continued pursuit of debt relief as well as an immediate increase in their financial assistance for food aid and agricultural development in developing countries.
-

Pray and Act

PRAY:

- God's help for hungry people in the US and around the world
- God's wisdom and strength for those who reach out with food, encouragement, support and advocacy
- God's guidance for legislators who pass laws, approve programs, and appropriate funds affecting hungry people
- God's guidance for all who work for peace, so that fear of violence will no longer keep peasant farmers from their fields
- God's blessing on the church's hunger ministries

ACT:

- Follow this years Bread for the World Campaign and letter writing campaign: www.bread.org/take-action/take-action-2008-01.html
 - Learn all you can about global hunger and tell others
 - Vote for candidates who care for the poor and will act on their behalf once elected
 - **Collect food** or contribute funds for local people in need: HAA Pat Plant can advise you on techniques, marketing ideas and groups to contribute to.
 - **Volunteer** at local food pantry and soup kitchens: For a list of such groups in your area
-

Pat Plant, Hunger Action Advocate

Presbytery of San Jose

pat@sanjosepby.org, (408)279-0220