

OUR DAILY BREAD

FOOD IN GOD'S CREATION

Ecumenical service

for groups during Creation Time 2011

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Photo: [Susy Morris](#) 

The following service is for small Christian groups who would like to share prayer, discussion and, possibly, a simple meal. It is particularly suitable for a local Churches Together event around Harvest/Creation Time.

The service includes the option of actually sharing a simple meal together. Try to use food and drink based on Christian Ecology Link's "LOAF" principles, that is: food which is

Locally produced, **O**rganically grown, **A**nimal Friendly and **F**airly traded.

There is an option of using images provided for a PowerPoint presentation which could serve as a backdrop.

Questions are included for reflection.

Setup

It is recommended that participants sit in a circular arrangement and that all are encouraged to participate. A room with a view out to the natural world would be ideal, or, weather permitting, possibly sitting outside for part of the session.

While Leader 1 guides the group through the service as a whole, Leaders 2 and 3 lead reflections and prayers. The passages from scripture could be allocated to others present.

It is suggested that a small table with a colourful table cloth is placed centrally – a rainbow tablecloth would remind of God's covenant with creation - and on it a lit candle and a selection of fresh, wholesome food and water.

Possible hymns

We come to your feast

*Blest are you Lord God of all
Creation*

Seed, scattered and sown

Plenty of bread at the feast of life

Gifts of bread and wine

PowerPoint Photo Credits

Thanks to Christian Ecology Link, National Justice and Peace Network and Soundbites.



Introduction

Powerpoint 1: Eating round a table

Leader 1:

Eating is one of the most intimate ways of joining our lives with others - other people, animals, plants, local habitats, and ecosystem processes. Through eating we encounter and take in life's blessings, connectedness and fragility. Yet in our world of fast food and food brands, engineered food and food produced thousands of miles from where we live we often fail to appreciate the wonders of 'our daily bread'.

From the perspective of Christ's earthly ministry *all* meals are linked to giving and receiving which his many acts of blessing and breaking of bread set forth.

Before our meal today we will say grace. Saying grace reminds us that we are placed in a world of God-given gifts. It helps us to recognise our participation in a great life process and participate in the healing of the world.

Let us reflect, perhaps in twos or threes:

- When do we celebrate food as a gift of God's creation?
- How often is grace before meals said in our homes?

Penitential

Powerpoint 2: Harrowing with horses

Leader 2:

For 12,000 years farmers were guided by two fundamental beliefs: that humans are part of the web of life, and that that web of life is cyclical, communal and mutually reinforcing. For most of that time these beliefs shaped not only the farming year and farming practices but human civilisation in general.

Let us acknowledge that provision of our food today does not always respect the life systems of God's creation here on Earth.

Powerpoint 3: Farmer with industrial background

Leader 3:

Modern industrial agriculture has a preference for monocrops, large fields and chemical inputs. It often sweeps away ancient forests and grasslands, and associated ecosystems which are home to a variety of species. The wisdom of traditional land management practices are often disregarded and waters polluted. Small farmers find it difficult to make a living anywhere in the world – here and in the global South.

For the times when we have ignored the environmental and social costs of our food:

All: Lord, have mercy



Powerpoint 4: Motorway transport

Leader 2:

The distance between field and table has increased with the emergence of a global food economy. This has seen a rise in air-freight and lorry-driven food so that in Britain a typical supermarket contains many foodstuffs transported thousands of miles from other continents. This has involved substantial greenhouse gas emissions which fuel climate change.

For the times we have been indifferent to the food miles involved in bringing food to our shops:

All: Christ, have mercy

Powerpoint 5: Industrial fishing

Leader 3:

The character of shopping today has made us the most ignorant and ungrateful consumers the world has ever known. We have little idea under what conditions our fruit, vegetables, or meats are made available to us. We do not know how the soil and water or animals are treated, nor do we know if the workers involved in production are paid a fair wage or work in safe conditions. The result is that we eat with profound ignorance. We cannot really be thankful for this food because we know next to nothing of its story.

For the times when we have seen food as no more than a commodity, available to us with one swipe of the credit card:

All: Lord, have mercy

Powerpoint 6: Desertified landscape

Leader 2:

Throughout the world, communities are suffering extreme weather and desertification because of climate change. This affects their ability to feed themselves.

For the times we have ignored the challenge to live more simply and reduce greenhouse gas emissions and energy use:

All: Christ, have mercy

Readings from the Old Testament

Powerpoint 7: Pristine rainforest

Exodus 3:8

I have come down to rescue them from the clutches of the Egyptians and bring them up out of that country, to a country rich and broad, to a country flowing with milk and honey.

Psalms 67:6

The earth has yielded its produce; God, our God has blessed us.

Psalms 104:24-25

The earth is full of your creatures. Then there is the sea, with its vast expanses teeming with countless creatures. Creatures both great and small.

Ezekiel 34: 27

The trees of the countryside will yield their fruit and the soil will yield its produce; they will be secure on their soil.

Isaiah 5:12-13

Never a thought for the works of Yahweh, never a glance for what Yahweh's hands have done. That is why my people are in exile, for want of perception; her dignitaries starving, her populace parched with thirst.

Pause: *Time for quiet reflection and then sharing insights from these readings.*

Readings from the New Testament

Powerpoint 8: African women watering crops

Matthew 6:11

Give us today our daily bread.

Matthew 15:32

Jesus called his disciples to him and said: "I feel sorry for these people; they have been with me for three days now and have nothing to eat. I do not want to send them off hungry, they might collapse on the way."

Luke 12: 16-18, 20-21

Then he told them a parable, "There was once a rich man who, having had a good harvest from his land, thought to himself, 'What am I to do? I have not enough room to store my crops.' Then he said, 'This is what I will do: I will pull down my barns and build bigger ones, and store all my grain and my goods in them'... But God said to him, 'Fool! This very night the demand will be made for your soul; and this hoard of yours, whose will it be then?' So it is when someone stores up treasure for himself instead of becoming rich in the sight of God."

James 2:15-16

If one of the brothers or one of the sisters 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 these bare necessities of life then what good is that?

Pause: Time for quiet reflection and then sharing insights from these readings.

Shared meal

Leader 1

Before we eat our meal we will give prayerful recognition of the gifts of creation through saying grace. When we offer a blessing upon our food, we do not merely pronounce a few pious words, but rather commit ourselves to the nurture, protection, and celebration of the gifts of creation.

All say the grace:

**Blessed are you, lord God of Creation,
Giver of all that is good.
God of peace, God of justice,
Bless us and this food we share,
That we may be one in heart and mind,
A sign of your peace on earth.
Just as the bread we break,
Once scattered as grain upon the hills,
Has been gathered and made one,
So gather us together and make us one.
Yours is the kingdom, the power and the glory,
Now and forever,
Amen.**

Enjoy the shared meal together.

Consider:

- When have we been most aware that we must treasure the natural world as the source of our food?
- What initiatives do we know of where people and communities are growing their own food, and supporting the LOAF principles in their food consumption?
- How aware are we of the presence of God in creation?

Thanksgiving

Powerpoint 9: Food laid out

Leader 1:

Eating introduces us to the deeply mysterious and miraculous character of life. Eating that includes thanksgiving, will eventually lead us to a sacramental understanding of life.

Let us give thanks.

Powerpoint 10: Man planting

Leader 2:

Let us acknowledge the miracle in the ground beneath our feet. Soil perpetually transforms death into the conditions for new life. It is a complex web of relationships that succeeds because of multiple, dynamic associations that we have barely begun to understand.

All: We say thank you to God the Creator

Powerpoint 11: Water gurgling

We rely on the rain to sustain our crops as they grow and bring goodness to every part of a plant or tree. Water provides us with the means of quenching our thirst and cleaning and refreshing our bodies, and is literally at the very centre of all that we are. Without water we are physically dead within a short space of time.

All: We say thank you to God the Creator

Powerpoint 12: Allotments

Leader 3:

There has been renewed interest in allotments, planting fruit trees and producing homegrown vegetables.

All: We say thank you to God the Creator

Powerpoint 13: Ocean surface

Life on our planet originated in the seas, and we know it continues to serve as a home for an incredibly diverse web of life. Our seafood comes from so many species.

All: We say thank you to God the Creator

Leader 1:

Let us give thanks for the food in God's creation and say together the Lord's Prayer.

All: Our Father ...

Intercessions

Leader 1:

Let us pray

Powerpoint 14: *African farmers with crop*

"Give **us** this day our daily bread."

The 'Our Father' teaches the lesson of **unselfishness**. It is not "Give *me*" but "Give *us*." We cannot come to God for *ourselves* alone. We ask bread for others as well and we especially remember the vulnerable and those who are hungry today.

All: Lord, hear us.

Powerpoint 15: *'Soundbites' shop*

Leader 2:

"Give us **this day** our daily bread."

We are taught to pray for only the bread of one day. We are taught to **live one day at a time**. We ask that we may worry less about the future and planning and hoarding for it, and instead place more emphasis on the encounters we have today and living more simply.

All: Lord, hear us

Powerpoint 16: *Our Daily Bread poster*

Leader 3:

"Give us this day **our** daily bread."

There is a special suggestiveness in the word **OUR**. The gift of food is a gift to all of us and we must beware of taking food which deprives others of their livelihoods. We pray that we may never be indifferent to the plight of those who lose land and self-sufficiency because of export crops for us.

All: Lord, hear us

Powerpoint 17: *Food on plate*

Leader 2:

"Give us this day our **daily bread**."

There is a limitation in the word **DAILY**. It means sought for the day—a *daily provision*. It is not a prayer, therefore, for a *large supply*. We are *not authorized* to ask for **luxuries**. We pray that we have enough to meet our needs without being too greedy and wasteful.

All: Lord, hear us

Closing Reflection

Powerpoint 18: *Rainforest being burned*

Leader 1:

The following is a Cree Indian Prophecy:

When all the trees have been cut down,
when all the animals have been hunted,
when all the waters are polluted,
when all the air is unsafe to breathe,
only then will you discover you cannot eat money.

Powerpoint 19: *'Food for life' stall*

Leader 2:

As we begin to appreciate the complexity and interdependent character of created life, we pledge ourselves to the celebration, maintenance, and nurture of the creatures and processes that nourish us. We celebrate the sacrament of life when we transform mundane eating into an act of solidarity with creation and communion with God.

Blessing

Powerpoint 20: *Binding and stooks*

Leader 3:

Lord, may we develop the sensory capacities to see and smell and touch and taste the goodness of God made manifest in our daily bread. Bless us as we live our lives in the context of your loving gift of the natural world.

All: Amen.

Leader 1:

And let us conclude with the Sharing of Peace.

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[Corn texture: Jon Smith](#) 