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| Minneapolis Area Synod Hunger Committee  |

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| 2016 | World Food Sunday Resource Packet |

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**Prepared by Rev. Siri Strommen Campbell on behalf of the Hunger Committee of MAS Synod**

**WORLD FOOD SUNDAY WORSHIP**

**October 16th, 2016 (Or other of your choice)**

**GATHERING DIALOGUE BASED ON ISAIAH 58**

L: Shout out, do not hold back! Lift up your voice like a trumpet!
Announce to my people their rebellion, to the house of Jacob their sins.

**C: Look, you serve your own interest on your fast-day, and oppress all your workers. Look, you fast only to quarrel and to fight and to strike with a wicked fist.**
L: Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of injustice, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke?

**C: Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover them, and not to hide yourself from your own kin?**

L: If you remove the yoke from among you, the pointing of the finger, the speaking of evil, if you offer your food to the hungry and satisfy the needs of the afflicted, then your light shall rise in the darkness and your gloom be like the noonday.

**C: The Lord will guide you continually, and satisfy your needs in parched places, and make your bones strong; and you shall be like a watered garden, like a spring of water, whose waters never fail.**

L: Your ancient ruins shall be rebuilt; you shall raise up the foundations of many generations; you shall be called the repairer of the breach, the restorer of streets to live in.

**C: If you refrain from trampling the Sabbath, from pursuing your own interests on my holy day; if you call the Sabbath a delight and the holy day of the Lord honorable;**

L: Then you shall take delight in the Lord, and I will make you ride upon the heights of the earth. I will feed you with the heritage of your ancestor Jacob, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken.

P: People of God, we gather together in truth and honesty of the ways we have neglected the needs of others. We gather to remember that we are all beloved children of God. Fed by the Word and the Holy Supper, we remember who we are, and join in God’s mission of making the world whole. In the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.

**GATHERING HYMN CHOICES**

 “God of Grace and God of Glory” ELW #705

 “Canticle of the Turning” ELW #723

 “Christ, Be our Light” ELW #715

 “You Have Come Down to the Lakeshore” ELW #817

 “With Every Act of Love” by Jason Gray

 “Do Something” by Matthew West

**GREETING AND PRAYER OF ST. FRANCIS**

P: Let us pray**.**

**C: Lord, make us instruments of your peace. Where there is hatred, let us sow love; where there is injury, pardon; where there is discord, union; where there is doubt, faith; where there is despair, hope; where there is darkness, light; where there is sadness, joy.**

 **Grant that we may not so much seek to be consoled as to console; to be understood as to understand; to be loved as to love. For it is in giving that we receive; it is in pardoning that we are pardoned; and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life. Amen.**

**ELCA WORLD HUNGER VIDEO** (*can be found on Youtube***)**

**Psalm 133 “Behold, How Pleasant” ELW #649**

**Scripture of Your Choice**

**SERMON**

**HYMN OF THE DAY**

 “Light Dawns on a Weary World” ELW #726

 “Here I Am, Lord” ELW #574

 “Lord, You Give the Great Commission” ELW #579

 “Where True Charity and Love Abide” ELW #653

**WORLD HUNGER CREED**

**We believe in God, Creator of all,**

**All tribes, all nations, all animals and plants, all that is seen and unseen.**

**We believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,**

**Who fed the hungry and cured the sick,**

**Who died on the cross speaking words of forgiveness.**

**Who rose from the dead and appeared to many,**

**Empowering them to preach the Good News.**

**We believe in the Holy Spirit, who calls us to discipleship,**

**Who empowers us to speak for peace and justice,**

**Who enlightens us with wisdom and compassion,**

**Who calls us to care for the world and all that God created.**

**We believe that God has a mission and we are God’s church.**

 **We are the body of Christ, the Hands of God.**

 **In our Holy Baptism we are given purpose and identity,**

 **In our Holy Meal we are fed to feed the world.**

**PRAYERS OF THE CHURCH**

Let us pray together for the church, the world, and all that God loves. *(silence for reflection)*

Look with mercy, gracious God, upon people everywhere who live with injustice, terror, disease, and death as their constant compassion. Rouse us from our complacency and help us to eliminate cruelty wherever it is found. Strengthen those who seek equality for all. Grant that everyone may enjoy a fair portion of the abundance of the earth.

Lord in your mercy,

**Hear our prayer.**

Grant, O God, that your holy and life-giving Spirit may move every human heart; that the barriers dividing us may crumble, suspicions disappear, and hatreds cease; and that, with our divisions healed, we might live in justice and peace. Lord in your mercy,

We pray for the boys and girls, men and women, victims and victimizers of violence and war. Empower leaders and voices of all kinds to educate, speak out, and shed light in the darkness. Lord, in your mercy,

We pray that your church around the world rise up to open their eyes to the suffering of this world. That they would find the courage to learn, to speak out, to change mourning into dancing. Lord, in your mercy.

We pray for those gathered here in this assembly that they would feel empowered to make change where they are, in small and large ways, always remembering that it is your work and mission we are participating with. Help us to rest at night, giving our work back to you, knowing that we are not alone in our efforts. Lord, in your mercy,

We bring these prayers to you, trusting that you will take our energy and our sighs and use them for the good of your world, in the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.

**PASSING OF THE PEACE**

**OFFERING-** *Special baskets dedicated to ELCA World Hunger are set in the front of the church for members to walk up and place their offering.*

**OFFERING SONG**

 “Change My Heart, O God” ELW #801

 “Take My Life, That I May Be” ELW #583 Chorus, Verse 2, Chorus

**OFFERTORY PRAYER**

 Holy God, gracious and merciful, you bring forth food from the earth and nourish your whole creation. Turn our hearts toward those who hunger in any way, that all may know your care; and prepare us now to feast on the bread of life, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.

**LORD’s PRAYER**

**BLESSING**

Finally, beloved, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. Keep on doing the things that you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, and the God of peace will be with you.

**SENDING HYMN**

“Lift High the Cross” ELW #660

 “Heaven is Singing for Joy” ELW #664

 “The Lord Now Sends us Forth” ELW #538

**Other Additional Ideas for World Hunger Sunday:**

* **Bulletin Inserts**: You can order *free* bulletin inserts with basic information on World Hunger at the ELCA website under ELCA World Hunger Resources.
* **Offering Envelopes**: You can order *free* offering envelops for World Hunger.
* **No Video?** If you aren’t able to play a video, you can download or print off stories to share in worship. Ask several congregational members to read a different story as an introduction to your sermon. Maybe they can dress up and pretend to be “visitors” coming to share their story.
* **Facebook:** Share the videos from ELCA World Hunger on your church facebook site. Post reminders and invitations, one statistic at a time (from Adult Forums) to garner attention and prepare people for worship
* **Sign-up Table:** Have an ELCA World Hunger table out for at least this Sunday where people can pick up information and sign up to join Monthly Partners, which deducts a set amount each month from your account.
* **Placemats**: order free placemats through the ELCA Website to decorate the tables at Fellowship time.

**http://www.elca.org/Resources/ELCA-World-Hunger**

**How to Keep ELCA World Hunger at the Forefront**

**September:** Plan a Sunday for WORLD FOOD Sunday worship, an offering, and possible educational components.

**October**: World Food Sunday worship, offering, etc. CHALLENGE: Ask for one, five, or ten members to sign up for Monthly Partners\*, the program that deducts a monthly amount of your choice from your checking account. (\**More on Monthly Partners page 7)*

**November**: Report back what was collected and thank the congregation.

**December/Advent:** Make awareness of local, national, and international hunger a focus of Advent. Dedicate your Advent offerings to ELCA World Hunger. Place ELCA Good Gifts catalogues in prominent places and invite people to replace some of their gift giving with this option.

**Christmas Eve**: Give your loved ones a card on their plates before dinner indicating how much money they can “spend” on the ELCA Good Gifts website. Pray, eat your dinner, and then make it a special event to choose what good projects they want to support this year before they open their own gifts.

**Lent:** As Jesus fasted in the desert for 40 days, we can make Lent a time to focus on National and World Hunger. There are many educational resources available, special speakers, and programs to lift up, including ELCA World Hunger. Dedicate your Lenten offerings to this non-profit.

**Anytime:**

* **5th Sunday:** Whenever there is a fifth Sunday of the month, dedicate it to educating about World Hunger somehow. Maybe it is a video, or a bulletin insert, or a noisy offering.
* **Sunday School Challenge**: Hand out pink piggy banks to the kids and invite them to collect the family’s spare change and contribute out of their own resources. Make a big deal out of the Sunday they bring them back and challenge the congregation to meet whatever the kids raise.
* **Sermon Series on the Liturgy:** We pass the peace on Sundays, but do we ever talk about what it means? What is this peace God wishes for us? We pray every Sunday for OUR daily bread. What does that mean? Who is OUR? We are dismissed to be a blessing to this world. What does that mean? What are we sent out to do?
* **World Hunger Dinner**: Use ELCA World Hunger placemats and other creative decorations to host a special dinner. Maybe you serve ethnic food of some kind and have music from another country playing lightly in the back ground. Maybe the program is very simple: a 5 minute video, a powerpoint with a few important facts to consider. Invite attendees to commit to being a monthly partner, giving a one-time gift, or buying their next round of birthday presents through Good Gifts.

**Monthly Partners**

95% of funding to ELCA World Hunger comes in December. For an annual budget of $19 million, that is a lot to have faith about the rest of the year! Imagine if they had a steady ground base all year long? What if the special gifts were the gravy and not the bread and butter? How much MORE good could ELCA World Hunger do with an increased financial base and budget?

**What Level of Partnership are You Ready For?**

$10/month= $120 a year

$12/month= $144 a year

$15/month= $180 a year

$20/month= $240 a year

$25/month=$300 a year

**$30/month=$360 a year**. *$1 for every day of the year, roughly.*

$40/month=$480 a year

$50/month=$600 a year.

**If one person from every congregation in the ELCA gave at the basic level, that would be $1,200,000 a year of consistent income!**

**If one more person from every congregation in the ELCA gave at the highest level, that would be an additional $6 million dollars. Just like that.**

*Consider Monthly Partners in addition to your church tithing, knowing that this direct funding is changing the world! Be sure to indicate what church you belong to.*

**Adult Education Sessions**

You can plan dozens of your own Adult Education sessions by going to the ELCA website. Under their Toolkits they have multiple topics and several lessons under each topic, all at low, medium, or high activity levels for your needs. Go to:

<http://www.elca.org/Resources/ELCA-World-Hunger>

**ELCA World Hunger Toolkits (Each topic has multiple lessons to choose from)**

* [Animals and Hunger](http://download.elca.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/Animals_and_Hunger.pdf)
* [Disaster and Hunger](http://download.elca.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/Disaster_and_Hunger.pdf)
* [Disease and Hunger](http://download.elca.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/Disease_and_Hunger.pdf)
* [Hunger Basics](http://download.elca.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/World_Hunger_Basics.pdf?_ga=1.32587965.2089448839.1429036816)
* [Food and Hunger](http://download.elca.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/Food_and_Hunger.pdf?_ga=1.254486411.2089448839.1429036816)
* [Hunger and Climate Change](http://download.elca.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/Climarte_Change.pdf)
* [Water and Hunger](http://download.elca.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/Water_and_Hunger.pdf)

**Here’s a Sample Adult Forum Series:**

**Session One:** The “Monopoly” Game: Speaking of Privilege

**Session Two:** What is the Problem? (Hunger and Poverty in our world and nation)

**Session Three**: Why should we Care? (A Biblical calling to action)

**Session Four**: The REASON why ELCA World Hunger works!

**Session Five:** Let’s get political! (Political vs. Partisan, what that means for a Christian)

**Session One: The “Monopoly” Game: Speaking of Privilege**

**Beforehand:** You’ll want enough monopoly game boards to have about 7 people per board. You can also have one group play and let others be observers. Take money, property cards, houses/hotels and divide them into 6 labeled bags:

* Bag 1: Give 8 properties, 4 hotels, 8 houses, and $3000 in assorted bills
* Bag 2 and 3: Give 4 properties, 3 hotels, 4 houses, and $ 1500 in assorted bills
* Bag 4, 5, and 6: Give 1 property, no hotels, 1 house, and $1000 in assorted bills
* Instructions for the Banker

**Introduction**: There is no preparation for the game. Don’t tell people what they are going to do, simply ask 7 people to each monopoly game, letting them know this will be “speed” monopoly and will end after 15 minutes no matter what.

**One person is the banker**. Here are their instructions for their eyes only: (write on paper)

* Hand out the 6 pre-packaged bags to the 6 players
* When Bag 1 person passes “Go”, they get $400, instead of $200 for the rest.
* You may give out loans if you want, but always to Bag 1 if they want.
* You can deny anyone from buying property or houses, except Bag 1 can get a deal. You can offer property to Bag 1 at a cheaper cost.
* If Bag 1 lands on “income tax”, you can lower the amount if they ask.

**Playing the Game**: Let the game play out. Do not answer questions, there is no more to know. The players can decide for themselves how to proceed.

**Afterwards**: Chances are there will be a few strong emotions about the game. Discuss the following in large or small groups:

1. What did you notice?
2. How did the privileged feel playing the game?
3. How did the underprivileged feel?
4. To those who were privileged, why were you doing so well?
5. To those who were poor, why were you doing so poorly?
6. How does this game relate to real life? How might it be different?
7. How might we have changed the game? (Change the rules?)

**Note:** In actual psychological experiments with this game, it was consistently observed that the privileged players began to act more dominant, more powerful, more entitled, and less compassionate as the game proceeded. One privileged player even bragged that he won the game because of his smart investments and strategy.

 This is a game with rules. When we consent to play the game, we consent to the rules and the goal, which we believe is to win while others lose.

 What game are we playing in life? What do we believe the rules are? What is the goal? If we don’t like the rules or the goal, how can we change it?

**Session Two: What is the Problem?**

(Hunger and Poverty in our world and nation)

**Begin with Prayer**

**Introduction:** Hunger and poverty are as ancient as civilization. Because of famine, drought, increasing populations, humans have experienced hunger and the diseases that come from malnutrition. Yet, while many of us have the luxury of going to a grocery store year round to find nutritious food, we know that many people around the world and in our country still struggle with poverty, hunger, and hunger-related issues.

Why? Before we explore what to do and how to do it, let’s understand what the problem actually is.

**Story Telling:**

* In a small group or in partners, share a time in your life when you or someone you know experienced food insecurity or hunger. What were or are the feelings associated with that experience?
* In the large group, invite those who wish to share their stories and reflections.

**Hunger Statistics in America *From World Hunger Education Services***

* **In 2013, 14.3 percent of households (17.5 million households, approximately one in seven), were food insecure**.
* In 2013, 5.6 percent of U.S. households (6.8 million households) had very low food security. In this more severe range of food insecurity, the food intake of some household members was reduced and normal eating patterns were disrupted at times during the year due to limited resources.
* Children were food insecure at times during the year in 9.9 percent of households with children. **These 3.8 million households were unable at times during the year to provide adequate, nutritious food for their children.**
* **Very low food insecurity means that, at times during the year, the food intake of household members was reduced and their normal eating patterns were disrupted because the household lacked money and other resources for food**. This means that people were hungry (in the sense of "the uneasy or painful sensation caused by want of food”) for days each year.

**Poverty in the United States**

* **In 2013, there were 45.3 million people in poverty (14.5 percent).** This is up from 37.3 million in 2007.  The number of poor people is near the largest number in the 52 years for which poverty statistics have been published.
* The 2013 poverty rate for Blacks was 27.2 percent, for Hispanics was 23.5 percent, for Asians 10.5 percent, and for non-Hispanic whites 9.6 percent .
* **The poverty rate for children** under 18 fell from 21.8 percent in 2012 to 19.9 percent in 2013. The number of children in poverty fell from 16.1 million to 14.7 million. Children represented 23.5 percent of the total population and 32.3 percent of people in poverty.
* **19.9 million Americans live in extreme poverty**. This means their family’s cash income is less than half of the poverty line, or about $10,000 a year for a family of four. They represented 6.3 percent of all people and 43.8 percent of those in poverty.

**There are three main causes of poverty in the United States:**

1. The operation of the US economic system: The operation of the US economic and political system has led to certain people/groups being relatively disenfranchised. **The normal operation of the economic system will create a significant amount of poverty.**
2. The operation of the US political system, which should address the major problems of its citizens, is to a great extent not focused on fundamental concerns of poor people, but on other concerns.
* Military and security expenditure represent half of US federal government discretionary expenditures, much larger than expenditures to assist poor people.
* Corporations and the rich, through their ability to lobby Congress and the Administration effectively by such means as spending large amounts of money on lobbying efforts and on political campaigns of elected officials,  have succeeded in establishing their priorities, including tax breaks and subsidies.
1. The culture of inequality: People are typically segregated by income and often race.
* Jobs are low paid and scarce.  This can lead to crime as a way of obtaining income, and also to unemployed men not willing to marry, which can play a significant role in developing a cultural model of single parent families.
* The lack of income, as described in the poverty section above, creates problems, including poor housing, lack of food, health problems, and inability to address needs of one's children.
* As a result of their situation, some people living in poverty can themselves have patterns of behavior, such as alcoholism or a 'life of crime,' that are destructive to them.

**Programs to address Hunger and Poverty**

SNAP/Food stamps

* **SNAP is the nation’s most important anti-hunger program**.  In 2014, it helped 46 million low-income Americans to afford a nutritionally adequate diet.
* In fiscal year 2014, the federal government spent $76 billion on SNAP.  About 92 percent went directly to benefits that households used to purchase food.
* **Seventy percent of all food stamp participants are in families with children**; more than one-quarter of participants are elderly people or people with disabilities.
* **The average SNAP recipient received about $125 a month** (or about $4.17 a day) in fiscal year 2014.
* The SNAP benefit formula targets benefits according to need: very poor households receive larger benefits than households closer to the poverty line since they need more help affording an adequate diet

WIC (Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children)

* Provides nutritious foods, nutrition education, and referrals to health and other social services to low-income pregnant, postpartum and breastfeeding women, and infants and children up to age 5 who are at nutrition risk.
* WIC participants receive checks or vouchers to purchase nutritious foods each month.
* **6.4 million infants and children under five and 2 million women received WIC benefits in 2014**.
* The cost of the program is approximately $7 billion annually.
* Participants family income must fall at or below 185 percent of the U.S. Poverty Income Guidelines (in 2010, $40,793 for a family of four).
* WIC is a Federal grant program for which Congress authorizes a specific amount of funding each year for program operations.

National School Lunch Program

* **During the 2012-13 school year, 30.7 million children in more than 98,433 schools and residential child care institutions participated in the National School Lunch Program.**
* On a typical school day, 21.5 million of these 30.7 million total children, or 70.5 percent, were receiving free or reduced price lunches
* To receive free lunch, household income must be at or below 130 percent of the federal poverty level; for reduced price lunch, income must be between 130 percent and 185 percent of the poverty level.
* Studies show that proper nutrition improves a child’s behavior, school performance, and overall cognitive development.

*Minimum wage*

* In 2014, the official U.S. poverty level for a family of 4 was $24,008. With a 40 hour week, a family of 4 with one minimum wage earner (working 52 weeks a year, typically with no paid vacation) would earn $15,080, only 62 percent of the poverty level.
* The minimum wage is not indexed for inflation.  Thus its value over the years has been diminished substantially, as increases in the minimum wage have not kept up with inflation.

**International Statistics**: (**taken from Food and Agriculture Organization of the U.N)**

* One in 9 people (795 million people) in the world are undernourished. This number has declined in the last decade, especially in developing regions.
* Political instability will hinder this progress.
* Stable political conditions and economic growth, accompanied by social protection policies targeted at vulnerable population groups aids this progress. These social policies include income security and access to better nutrition, health care, and education.
* Undernourishment declined faster than underweight children under 5, suggesting that improving the quality of diets, hygiene, access to clean water is key.
* Economic growth is a key success factor, but it has to be inclusive and provide opportunities for improving the livelihoods of the poor.
* Enhancing productivity and incomes of smallholder family famers is key to progress.

**Discussion Questions**:

1. What jumped out at you in the information given today?
2. What did you notice about the causes of poverty and hunger in our nation and the world?
3. What did you notice about the solutions or programs that help families in poverty in our nation and the world?
4. What further information would you like to have?
5. What are some of the myths and misperceptions of poverty and hunger?
6. What do you feel needs to change to create solutions?

**Session Three**: **Why should we Care? A Biblical Call to Action**

**Begin with Prayer**

**Introduction:** As we learn about the sad reality of poverty and poverty-related diseases in our country and around the world, before we decide what to do we should discuss why. Why are we compelled to care? Why are we compelled to help? Is it Biblical to help those in need, and if so, how do we answer that call faithfully?

**Discussion Question for each Scripture Reading**:

1. What did you notice? What jumped out at you?
2. How is faith described in this passage?
3. How does this reading apply to your congregation/life/nation?

**Reading One: Amos 5:21-24**

**Reading Two: Micah 6:6-8**

**Reading Three: Isaiah 58**

**Reading Four: Matthew 7:1-3, 5**

**Reading Five: Matthew 7:12**

**Reading Six: Luke 10:25-28**

**Reading Seven:** **John 13:34-35**

**Reading Eight: Philippians 2:1-5**

**Reading Nine: James 2: 14-20**

**Note:** There are so many more parts of scripture in the Old and New Testaments that point us back to communal love and justice. The prophets remind us that we cannot divorce worship from social justice and care of neighbor.

**Close in Prayer**

**Session Four**: **The REASON why ELCA World Hunger works!**

**Begin with Prayer**

**Introduction:** In 1970, Lutherans saw their first images and statistics of extreme poverty in the world and were horrified. 1 in 4 people on the planet were starving. As a response, Lutherans created non-profits to respond and call churches to action.

Forty years later, we have cut poverty in half. As of 2014 the number is 1 in 9 people in this world who experience poverty. But Hunger still kills more than TB, Malaria, HIV/AIDS combined. And the numbers of hungry people in *America* has not changed in 40 years.

Beyond food, we have a new Global Water Crisis. 1. 8 billion (1/4) people drink bad water every year, causing preventable illness and death. By the way:

* + United States person uses average of 152 gallons a day
	+ Japan uses 99 gallons a day
	+ Kenya uses 12 gallons a day
	+ Cambodia/Uganda uses just 4 gallons a day per person

ELCA World Hunger also started a Five-year Malaria Campaign to address a preventable and yet devastating disease in Africa. The 5 year Malaria campaign is almost to a close and we have good news.

* + Malaria cases have gone down 467% since 2000.
	+ More tests than treatments are administered since 2013
	+ Still 584,000 deaths in 2013 and it’s very preventable and fixable

ELCA World Hunger works. Here’s the REASON why:

**ELCA World Hunger Response: REASON**

**R- Relief**:

By providing immediate relief to those who are hungry, we meet basic needs and recognize the universal human right to food. But ending hunger is about more than food.

**E-Education**:

Through a variety of learning opportunities for children, youth, and adults across our church we discover ways we can work toward the prevention and alleviation of hunger. ELCA World Hunger develops and provides educational [resources](http://www.elca.org/Resources/ELCA-World-Hunger) and [events](http://www.elca.org/News-and-Events/Calendar) that equip the members of this church to make a difference.

**A-Advocacy**:

We believe that government and elected officials play an essential role. We encourage funding that helps people who need food, housing and healthcare, and we urge protection of the land and waters that people rely on for food and livelihood. By speaking with and on behalf of those who are hungry through [advocacy](http://www.elca.org/Our-Work/Publicly-Engaged-Church/Advocacy), ELCA World Hunger works to change the systems that perpetuate poverty.

**S-Sustainable Development**:

By connecting people with the resources they need to produce food and gain access to clean water, education, health care and sources of income, long-term, sustainable change can be accomplished.

We start with relationships marked by conversation and listening. We believe people know their own communities best. It is our congregations and our global companion churches that first identify the local needs and related solutions to help make a difference. Then, we partner with communities to help make those solutions a reality.

**O-Organizing:**

We accompany and assist ELCA congregations, social ministry organizations and grassroots community-based nonprofits that address poverty, hunger and related social justice issues. By offering assessment and consultation services — as well as providing funding through ELCA World Hunger-funded [Domestic Hunger Grants](https://scstg.elca.org/Our-Work/Relief-and-Development/ELCA-World-Hunger/Get-Involved/Domestic-Hunger-Grants) and the Developmental Loan Fund — we partner with others to build healthy, sustainable ministries.

**N-Networking**:
We depend on volunteers across the ELCA to raise awareness, share the story and promote the mission we are part of through ELCA World Hunger. Individuals, congregations and synods all play unique roles in eradicating poverty and hunger, and we leverage those networked efforts to make a difference. By sharing best practices and stories from our congregations, we multiply our effect.

**Some other ELCA World Hunger Facts**:

Your gifts to ELCA World Hunger are making a difference. As a partner of churches, [social ministry organizations](http://www.elca.org/Our-Work/Relief-and-Development/Social-Ministry-Organizations) and development and [advocacy](http://www.elca.org/Our-Work/Publicly-Engaged-Church/Advocacy) organizations, ELCA World Hunger helps reach communities most in need throughout the world. Our relationships in the U.S. and around the world create an infrastructure that allows us to be very cost efficient and effective — less than 10 cents of every dollar is used for program administration and fundraising.

**In 2012, your support of ELCA World Hunger totaled: $18.6 million**

From Alaska to Alabama, from Chile to China, your gifts are hard at work helping our neighbors near and far break the cycle of hunger and poverty. Your generous giving makes it possible for ELCA World Hunger to be present throughout the United States and throughout the world. We support projects and programs in:

* 43 U.S. states
* 56 countries (including the United States)

From health clinics to microloans, food pantries to soup kitchens, advocacy to community organizing, your gifts are supporting innovative solutions that get at the root causes of hunger. Last year, your gifts to ELCA World Hunger supported at least 636 projects around the world, including:

* 388 food pantries, homeless shelters and other projects in the United States;
* 239 sustainable development, health and other projects around the world; and
* 15 education and networking programs in the ELCA.

**Closing Discussion:**

1. What statistics of information seemed most interesting to you?
2. Which “letter” in the REASON struck you as most important or vital?
3. Which “letter” do you think your congregation might be willing to focus on?
4. What else to you want to know?

**Close in Prayer**

**Session Five: Let’s Get Political! The Publicly Engaged Church**

**Begin with Prayer**

Grant, O God, **that your holy and life-giving Spirit may move every human heart; that the barriers dividing us may crumble, suspicions disappear, and hatreds cease; and that, with our divisions healed, we may live in justice and peace, through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

**Introduction from the ELCA Website Page**

We are a publicly engaged church that rolls up our sleeves and gets to work. We do God’s work in the world, the work of restoring and reconciling communities. We pursue justice and seek peace no matter how long the journey or wide the chasm.

Our faith and our call to boldly serve and love our neighbor take us into some interesting and challenging aspects of life: advocacy, corporate social responsibility, racial justice, science and ethics, peacemaking, justice for women, social issues, and community organizing. We are drawn into every corner of life, society and its institutions to bring the good news of Jesus Christ and to work for lasting, positive change that upholds human dignity.

**Dialogue:** *Either set this up as a skit, or have different adults read the Questions in order with a responder.*

**Questions and Answers for a Publically Engaged Church**

**Q: Wait a minute. I thought Christians weren’t supposed to be political. I can’t stand it when Pastors get up and tell people how to vote and what to think.**

A: There is a difference between being Political and being Partisan. Partisan politics is linked with a particular party and their beliefs. Sometimes these parties may claim connection to a particular faith as forming their beliefs, but this is not what we are advocating. Any Christian (or Pastor) can belong to whatever political party they feel comfortable with. No Christian body should advocate one political party over the other.

**Q: Okay. So being partisan has to do with a political party, and we have the freedom to align ourselves with one party over the other without being told from the pulpit. But then, how are we supposed to be “political” the right way**?

A: Politics is about power. It’s about voice. When women got the vote, they were finally allowed to be officially political, to give their voice, and thus, to have power. We use our voice and our power by being involved in the politics of our government locally and nationally, and internationally.

**Q: I like the idea of using our voice, but aren’t Christians supposed to be about humility and not power?**

A: If you think of power as being controlling, negative, and self-serving, then yes, we shouldn’t have any part of it. But in truth, power is neutral. It can be used for the good of many or abused for the interests of a few. As Christians, we are called through the Bible to lift our voices and use our power positively to speak up for the powerless, the voiceless, the poor, and those in need.

**Q: Sure, I agree! I want to help the hungry. That’s why I give to charities and non-profits. They feed the hungry. I even volunteer at a homeless shelter. Isn’t that enough?**

A: It’s wonderful to do service and to give to charity. But that is only half of our calling as Christians. Charity and service try to help those already suffering. Getting political is asking why people are suffering in the first place, pressuring our political leaders to look more deeply into how laws and systems benefit some and exclude others. Getting political and advocating for the poor is creating laws that would prevent suffering in the future.

**Q: Wait a minute, here. In other countries there are bad governments. In other countries there is war and obvious situations that create hunger. But we have a great government! America is the land of opportunity! We grow plenty of food and everyone has the chance to change their circumstances.**

A: All governments are created and run by humans, who are prone to sin. All systems are created and run by humans, who are prone to sin. We continue to struggle in this country with racism, sexism, and other forces of prejudice that effect people in complex ways. It isn’t a judgement on our country, but rather a reality of human sin. Causes of poverty are complex as are the solutions. We can’t simplify a problem by calling someone lazy, nor simplify the solutions by telling someone to work harder.

**Q: Are we talking about welfare and food stamps? I’ve heard stories about people who take advantage of those government programs. I think churches should just help the poor and keep government out of it.**

A: SNAP, WIC, and other government programs are a very low percentage of the government’s budget, and through reforms, are some of the most efficient. Can you find abuse of the system? If you look hard enough, you will find it in every system created. The truth is, when those programs are strong, poverty decreases, giving people the help they need to get out of poverty. If those programs ended and helping the poor was completely handed over to churches and non-profits, each church in America would suddenly have an enormous financial task, not to mention needing significant trained staff added.

**For example:**

* In Hennepin Country alone, there is a population of 1.2 million people.
* Taking the state average of 11% poverty, Hennepin County needs to help 144,000 people in poverty.
* Divided out to the 838 congregations in Hennepin County, that would be 171 people for each church to help (approx. 18 families).
* SNAP benefits alone are currently an average of $125 a month per family.
* Making up for SNAP alone would be an additional line item of $27, 000 a year for every congregation.
* This wouldn’t include Free and Reduced Lunch programs, WIC, and other federal programs that help children and families in poverty.
* This wouldn’t include paying a staff person to manage the program.

**Q: Okay. Let’s say the government does a good job at these programs. So why do I have to add my voice? Can’t we just let our elected officials take care of it?**

A: These programs are constantly in jeopardy of being cut because no one is speaking up for them. Myths abound about the effectiveness of such programs and often Peter is robbed to pay Paul, meaning, one program that helps the poor wins an increased budget to the detriment of another program. But our political voice isn’t just about programs. It’s about calling attention to a system that is often unfair, tilting towards those in power, larger corporations, and away from those in poverty. Our elected leaders fight for what we speak up for. If we don’t they assume it doesn’t matter to us.

**Q: But I don’t even know what these laws would be! What can I do?**

A: Educate yourself. Bread For the World and ELCA Advocacy can give you updates, information, and specific ways to help. They know what laws are being discussed and what the consequences-good and bad-would be if that happened. Out of compassion for those struggling, knowing how complex the problems and solutions are, we add our voice to the ongoing political climate where power pushes policy. Other powerful voices are speaking loud and clear. Who is speaking for the poor?

**Closing Conversation**:

* What struck you in the dialogue?
* What would you like to know more about?
* What next steps might you take individually or as a congregation to be more political?

**Close in Prayer**