

ELCA WORLD HUNGER'S 40 DAYS OF GIVING

Educational Series

Over the next six weeks, we will journey together through the season of Lent, reflecting on hunger, hope, and God's love in a world of both abundance and need. Each weekly session is based on a devotion from ELCA World Hunger's 40 Days of Giving, a special devotional for your congregation to use as you take up the challenge of responding to hunger through ELCA World Hunger together.

Each weekly session will have: an opening prayer, a Scripture reading, a devotion from a leader in the ELCA that introduces the session's theme, instructions for a group activity, a story from a ministry supported by ELCA World Hunger, questions for discussion and a closing prayer. You are welcome to adapt these sessions to fit your needs, perhaps by adding a hymn or writing your own discussion questions.

Weekly Session Two: HUNGER AND DAILY BREAD (Luke 4:1-4 and Deuteronomy 8:2-3)

Devotion from Pastor Ignaki Unzaga, pastor at St. John's Lutheran Church in Passaic, N.J.

LEADER'S GUIDE

Instructions for leader:

Welcome the participants and introduce the session's theme: HUNGER AND DAILY BREAD. This week, we will read a poem from Pastor Ignaki Unzaga of St. John Lutheran Church in Passaic, N. J. St. John's breakfast ministry accompanies day laborers who wait in parking lots, sometimes in the freezing cold, for work each day.

Invite the group to join in a brief moment of silence before continuing with the opening prayer.

Materials needed:

- Pens or markers
- 3x5 cards, pieces of blank paper or sticky notes to write on (about two or three per person)
- Two large pieces of poster board
- Copies of Pastor Ignaki Unzaga's poem (below; about one copy for every two to three people)



Prayer

Gracious God, you invite all who hunger and thirst to your table, where plates and cups run over with your gifts. Bless us in our hunger, that we may be filled and learn to fill others at the tables in our midst. In the name of Jesus Christ, the bread of life who meets our every need, we pray. Amen.



Read (or invite someone to read) Luke 4:1-4 and Deuteronomy 8:2-3

Luke 4:1-4 – ¹Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness, ²where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing at all during those days, and when they were over, he was famished. ³The devil said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become a loaf of bread." ⁴Jesus answered him, "It is written, 'One does not live by bread alone.'"

Deuteronomy 8:2-3 – ²Remember the long way that the Lord your God has led you these forty years in the wilderness, in order to humble you, testing you to know what was in your heart, whether or not you would keep his commandments. ³He humbled you by letting you hunger, then by feeding you with manna, with which neither you nor your ancestors were acquainted, in order to make you understand that one does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord.

Divide the participants into small groups or pairs to discuss these questions:

What does it mean to be hungry?

When Jesus was in the wilderness, what kind of hunger might he have had besides hunger for food?

The writer of Deuteronomy reminds the people of their own journey in the wilderness. What might they have hungered for besides bread?

Ask

Put one piece of poster board on a wall and draw a large empty bowl on it. Invite participants to write down something for which they hunger on the 3x5 cards or sticky notes. As they finish, invite them to put their cards on the poster board. Once everyone has finished, ask participants to share with the group what they wrote.

Invite participants to read Pastor Unzaga's poem out loud to the group (perhaps with each person reading one stanza):

To be hungry during Lent is to be hungry in the midst of the cruel winter sting;
To be hungry during Lent is to hunger for answers and the meaning of things.

To be hungry during Lent is to be hungry outside in the perennial white snow;
To be hungry during Lent is to hunger to know what to change, what to hold.

To be hungry during Lent is to be hungry and lost in a place you don't belong;
To be hungry during Lent is to hunger for a chance to change what's wrong.

To be hungry during Lent is to be hungry and forgotten in the morning dew;
To be hungry during Lent is to hunger for the words: always being made new.

To be hungry during Lent is to be hungry on Sunday with hosannas and palms;
To be hungry during Lent is to hunger to give way more than leftovers and alms.

To be hungry during Lent is to be hungry in the night in which he was betrayed;
To be hungry during Lent is to hunger for a call to serve the hopeless and afraid.

To be hungry during Lent is to be hungry, dispensable, an affordable sacrifice;
To be hunger during Lent is to hunger to hear: You. Today. With me. Paradise.

Allow some time for reflection.

Ask

Pastor Unzaga offers several descriptions of hunger. How does he define hunger? How do his examples differ from the ones we have written?

What does it mean to "hunger for the words: always being made new" or for the words "You. Today. With me. Paradise"? (Note: The first reference comes from Revelation 21:5; the second from Luke 23:43.)

What phrases or images stand out to you from Pastor Unzaga's poem?

On another piece of poster board, draw a large slice of bread and write "Daily Bread" at the top. Read the fourth petition from the Lord's Prayer:

Give us this day our daily bread.

Invite participants to write down something they think is included in "daily bread" on the 3x5 cards or sticky notes. As they finish, invite them to put their cards on the poster board. Once everyone has finished, ask participants to share with the group what they wrote.

Read (or invite someone to read) the following from Luther's Small Catechism:

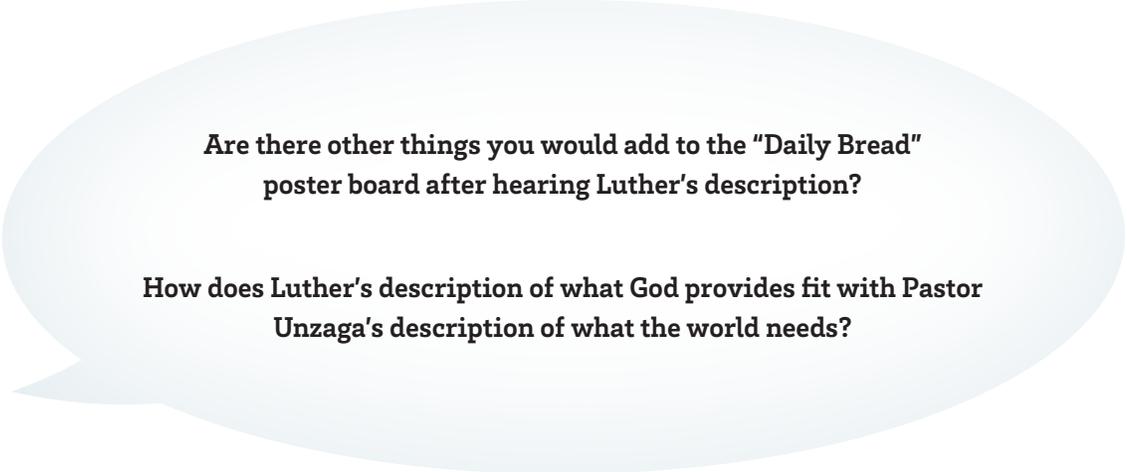
Give us this day our daily bread.

What does this mean?

God gives daily bread, even without our prayer, to all wicked men; but we pray in this petition that He would lead us to know it, and to receive our daily bread with thanksgiving.

What is meant by daily bread?

Everything that belongs to the support and wants of the body, such as meat, drink, clothing, shoes, house, homestead, field, cattle, money, goods, a pious spouse, pious children, pious servants, pious and faithful magistrates, good government, good weather, peace, health, discipline, honor, good friends, faithful neighbors, and the like. (Martin Luther, The Small Catechism, The Lord's Prayer, Fourth Petition)



Ask

Are there other things you would add to the “Daily Bread” poster board after hearing Luther’s description?

How does Luther’s description of what God provides fit with Pastor Unzaga’s description of what the world needs?

Read (or invite someone to read) the following story:

A job is more than just a paycheck. As Pastor Michelle Townsend de Lopez of Cross Lutheran Church in Milwaukee says, “By societal standards your job determines your self-worth. [Without it] you don’t have access to credit ... access to buy a home. You don’t have access, period.”

For Kenneth Barron, Sr., finding sustainable employment was a key part in rebuilding the life and dignity he felt he had lost.

Once a respected karate teacher, Kenneth went through “some challenging years,” which included struggles with addiction, divorce and incarceration. Like nearly 65 million Americans, Kenneth sought employment with the stigma of a criminal record. When employers found out about his record, “the application and interview stopped right there,” according to Pastor Michelle.

But Kenneth refused to let his past determine his future. He sought the support of the Jobs Program at Cross – a program supported in part by gifts to ELCA World Hunger. As Kenneth describes, he also discovered the need “to change my viewpoint about what was going on in my life ... I had to start loving myself more.”

Through the Jobs Program, Kenneth was able to secure a cleaning contract with a local school. “I just feel that I am able to recognize and see it today and to be able to walk this street and know that I have a chance [and] the resources out here to help me to rebuild [my life],” he says.

Kenneth has also found a way to give back through volunteering. “He now is a person who helps others,” Michael Adams, jobs coordinator, says proudly. Together with his volunteerism, Kenneth’s job gives him more than a paycheck, too.

For Kenneth, “It makes you feel like you are somebody, you’re part of this world, you’re contributing, and at the end of the day, you feel good about yourself, because you’ve done something positive – something that contributes to your family, yourself and your community,” he says.

What things did Kenneth hunger for besides the resources to physically feed himself?

How did the jobs program provide "daily bread" to Kenneth and other participants? How does volunteering meet other kinds of "hunger" Kenneth and other volunteers experience?

What hungers might have driven the church to start such a program? (for example, desire for community, the need to express their faith)

How might the program help give the volunteers, staff and congregation "daily bread"? (for example, a sense of community with their neighborhood, dignity from volunteering)

Ask



Prayer

Lord God, in your power and wisdom you created a world in which all can be fed. Bless us and our neighbors with the daily bread that meets all our needs – for food, for shelter and for community. Keep us steadfast in our trust in you and your plan for your creation, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God now and forever. Amen.