

Fasting For Feasting

Sharing Your Food with the Hungry

What is a “Compact”?

A compact is a covenantal agreement among a group of people. Those who voluntarily enter a compact bind themselves to a set of guidelines and standards for the purpose of accomplishing personal and corporate goals.

A Communal Fast

Lent is often considered a personal time to fast, focus ourselves on God, and reflect on the idols that we have been told we cannot live without. Like each Lenten season, we are calling for a communal fast that focuses us not only on our relationship to God, but also on our relationship to “food” in our lives, our communities, our nation and our world. We are calling our church to a true fast – one that is not just the act of denying oneself of something – but a fast that creates justice and reconciliation, by breaking the yokes that bind us and the yokes that bind our neighbors.

In Isaiah 58, specifically verses 6-7, the Lord makes clear what a true fast should accomplish:

*“Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke? Is it not **to share your food with the hungry** and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter— when you see the naked, to clothe him, and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood?”*

This Lent, we will recognize our need for food for health and survival while also recognizing that many people in our nation and around the world do not have access to quality food and are going hungry. Many are literally starving to death.

Why a “Compact for Hunger?”

You’ve heard it said, “You are what you eat.” What we eat literally becomes a part of us. So, what happens when people don’t have enough food? What happens when people only have access to food that has little nutritional value? Food is fundamental to our health, life expectancy and overall well-being.

We live in a world of extremes: where some starve while others are grossly overweight. Some have no access to food and go hungry while others have an unending selection. We also live in a world where food is produced and distributed in a complex network involving government policies, the futures markets, large corporations and migrant workers. Food has become an industry—an industry that is often at odds with the health of those who eat and the well being of those who help to bring it to our tables. Food is also related to the class structure within our society. How well you eat is based on what you can afford.

Despite the abundance of food, almost 1 billion people in the world (1 in 7) live in hunger—most of them in Africa and Asia. Under-nutrition accounts for over 5 million deaths among children each year (source: worldhunger.org). In the United States, despite programs like the Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP), 9.6 million Americans experience hunger on a regular basis, skipping meals or eating too little (source: worldhunger.org). Poverty and hunger go hand in hand nationally and globally.



God is concerned about food. One of God’s first creative acts assures an ongoing food supply (Genesis 1:11-12) and gives fruit and vegetation to the birds, animals and humans for food (Genesis 1:29-30). In the Torah, the “gleaning laws” (See Deuteronomy 24:19-20 and Leviticus 19:9-10) ensure that everyone has access to food no matter what their income or status. In the New Testament, several of Jesus’ miracles provide abundance of food for those who are hungry (Matthew 14:15-21) and the provision of food for the hungry is part of the basis for entrance into the Kingdom (Matthew 25:31-36). The writings of the Apostles also reflect concern for feeding the

hungry (see James 2:14-16). Conversely, the withholding of food is symptomatic of evil and wickedness (Isaiah 32:6). The vision of God’s Kingdom includes a great banquet (Luke 14:15ff) and fruit trees with monthly bumper crops (Ezekiel 47:1-12).

As followers of Jesus, we are called to “live out” the values of the Kingdom of God. Food and nutrition are components of the Kingdom. **We will “fast” to ensure that others have ongoing access to food of the best quality in the appropriate quantity.**



**STARTING WEDNESDAY, FEBRAURY 13th, 2013, AND CONTINUING THROUGH GOOD FRIDAY,
MARCH 29, 2013**

We will FAST to FEED the Hungry

There is only one rule:

Limit your weekly food budget to \$33.35 for each person in your household. The budget represents the average weekly allocation for the 47,525,000 people in the United States who receive money from the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)

Why Eat on \$33.35 Per Week?

By participating this the Compact, you will gain a better understanding of what 1 in 4 Americans deal with on a daily basis. You will also potentially free up money to help others who lack food. It will also challenge you to consider how food scarcity or food insecurity force families into making lifestyle choices—choices that may be destructive to themselves and their families.



How To Participate:

Step 1:

As a household, total your spending on food in the month of January 2013. Be sure to include any money you spent eating out. And don't forget the coffee, beverage or snack purchases, online coupon purchases (for meal deals) and school lunches (if purchased). Divide your total by 4 to calculate your weekly food/beverage budget. (If you cannot track January, keep track during the first week of February to calculate your weekly budget.)

Step 2

Divide the total from Step 1 by the number of people in your household. If the amount is greater than \$33.35 per person per week, decide as a household how you will reduce your costs per week to eat on \$33.35. You may decide to eliminate your visits to Dunkin' Donuts coffee or reduce eating out (or ordering in) during Lent. You may decide to eat less "processed" food. You may "give up" desserts or decide to eat only what is on sale at the grocery store. If your baseline is less than \$33.35 per person per week, discuss if there are ways you could reduce your food budget during Lent to free resources for feeding the hungry.

Step 3

Decide together how you will allocate the difference between your current weekly food/beverage budget (your baseline) and the \$33.35 per person you will use during Lent. We encourage you to contribute ingredients or give a donation to support our meals for the homeless/hungry in February and March. You may decide to give a donation to the Chicago Food Depository at the end of Lent. You may decide to purchase food for a local food pantry. You may decide to give a gift to an organization that is working to end hunger locally or globally like "Bread for the World", "Growing Power", or "Food for the Poor." Come up with your own creative ideas.

Step 4

Multiply \$33.35 by the number of people in your household. Then multiply the total by 6 (the number of weeks during Lent) This is your available Food Budget for Lent.

Step 5

Using the attached Food Spending Log, keep a running total of your food purchases each week during Lent. And remember that going out to eat and drink is to be included in your food budget.

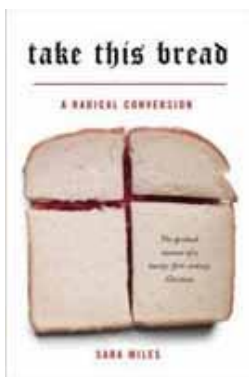
Some members of our fellowship already receive SNAP and may be receiving less than \$33.35 per week in food stamps. If that describes your situation, we encourage you participate in the Compact through the activities listed below.

Other Ways to Participate in our Fast to Feast

To make this Compact even more meaningful, we encourage you to take the following additional steps:

- **Sign up to Receive Daily Devotionals by Email**

Each day, you will receive a Scripture related to food and hunger along with a question or two to help you reflect on the passage.



- **Read a Good Book**

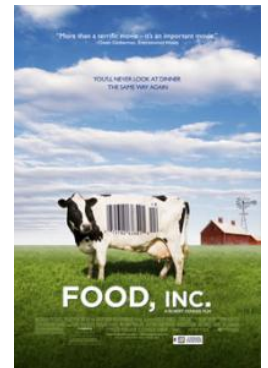
We're recommending the book, Take This Bread: A Radical Conversion by Sara Miles. It is the memoir of an unlikely convert who experiences transformation through communion and embarks on feeding the hungry in San Francisco. For those who choose to read the book, there will be time for discussion at "Eventide" each Wednesday starting February 20. You can order your book through the church by February 3.

- **Keep a Journal or a Blog**

Write about your experience and what you are learning about God and yourself and our relationship to food and those who are hungry.

- **Watch a Food Movie**

There are lots of great documentaries about the state of food production and distribution in the US—from the seeds we sow in the ground to the junk we put in our mouths. Invite someone to your house and watch "Food, Inc.," "King Corn", "The Future of Food", "Dirt: The Movie", "Super Size Me" or "The Real Dirt on Farmer John". Most are available on Netflix or online. We may even schedule a movie night at the church.



- **Try New Recipes**

A great resource for affordable nutritious meals is the "More-With-Less: A World Community Cookbook" produced by the Mennonite Central Committee. Or if you come across a great recipe that is affordable and nutritious (easy is good too), share it with others who are participating in the Compact on paper or online.

- **Plan for Greater Food Independence**

Whether in a container garden on your back porch or on our church property through Chicago Corner Farm, consider how you can become involved in growing some of your own food this spring. In March, we will have an urban gardening workshop to help you develop a plan for growing your own vegetables this summer.

Throughout Lent, you will be given resources to help you understand the dynamics of hunger in the United States, the politics of hunger (ie the US Farm Bill, etc) and how you can be involved in eliminating hunger through compassion and advocacy. During the months of February and March, we will give 5% of our Sunday offerings to organizations that are seeking to end hunger through advocacy and action. You will receive information on each of the organizations we will support.

Finally, we encourage you to share this Compact with your network of friends and family. Consider posting a link on your Facebook page to the church web site (www.kimballavenuechurch.org) or emailing a copy of the Compact to your friends.

While the Compact will end at Easter, it is our hope that "feeding the hungry" will become your Kingdom lifestyle.

