

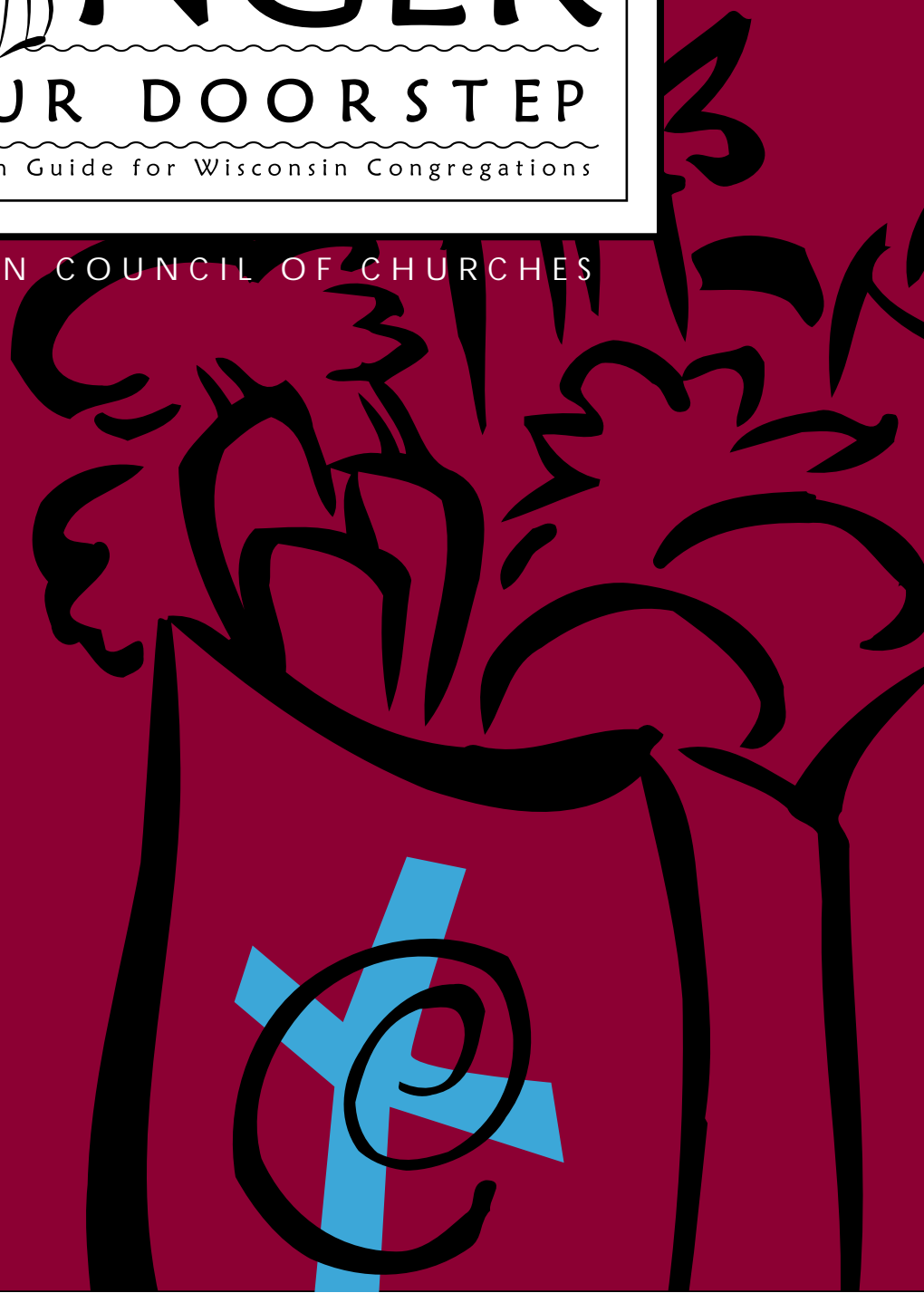


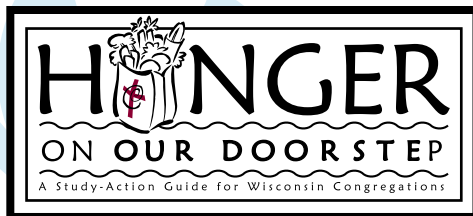
HUNGER

ON OUR DOORSTEP

A Study-Action Guide for Wisconsin Congregations

WISCONSIN COUNCIL OF CHURCHES





An Advocacy Network project of the Wisconsin Council of Churches

The Wisconsin Council of Churches

WCC is a community of Christian denominations that covenant to pray and work together for the unity and renewal of the church and the healing and reconciliation of the world. Tracing its roots back to the early 1940's with an inter-denominational recreational ministry for young people, the Council was incorporated in 1962 and now encompasses 12 denominations with approximately 3,000 congregations and over one million church members. The Council's network of individuals and congregations reaches every corner of the state.

Current Members of the Council

American Baptist Churches of Wisconsin, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Church of the Brethren, Episcopal Church, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Greek Orthodox Church, Moravian Church, Orthodox Church in America, Presbyterian Church (USA), Reformed Church in America, United Church of Christ, and the United Methodist Church. The Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Milwaukee and Diocese of La Crosse sit as observer members on the Council's Board of Directors. Church Women United, the Interfaith Conference of Greater Milwaukee and the Madison Area Urban Ministry are Associate Members.

Curriculum Writing and Funding

About the Curriculum Writer:

Peter W. Bakken is Coordinator for Public Policy for the Wisconsin Council of Churches. He holds a Ph.D. from the University of Chicago Divinity School and lives in Madison, Wisconsin with his wife and daughter.

Editorial Team:

Peter Bakken, Curriculum Writer; Scott Anderson, WCC Executive Director.

Funding:

Funding for this curriculum has been provided by: American Baptist Churches Domestic Development Grant; American Baptist Housing Ministries of Wisconsin; Mazon: A Jewish Response to Hunger; Presbyterian Hunger Fund; United Methodist General Board of Global Ministries; United Methodist Women; United Church of Christ Justice & Witness Ministries; and member judicatories of the Wisconsin Council of Churches.

Thanks to Many

Jonathan Bader, Food Security Director, WISCAP; Nancy Coffey, Wisconsin Nutrition Education Program Coordinator, UW-Extension, Eau Claire County; April Lackas-Schmid, Wisconsin Nutrition Education Program, UW-Extension, Juneau County; Pat Ludeman, Family Living Educator, UW-Extension, Dane County; Cynthia Lartz, Executive Director, Mukwonago Food Pantry; Jennifer Nkonga, Community Educator, Hunger Task Force; Kadi Row, Food Security Specialist, UW-Extension; Jan Skell, Nutrition Coordinator, UW-Extension, Waukesha County; and Karen Tredwell, Executive Director, Food Pantry of Waukesha.

Table of Contents

Before You Begin	2
Introduction	3
Session I: Hunger on Our Doorstep	5
Session II: Why Are Our Neighbors Hungry?.....	10
Session III: What Can Be Done About Hunger?	15
Session IV: Hunger in Our Community	21
Session V: Taking Action Against Hunger.....	25
Class Handouts	
#1: Hunger in Wisconsin: A Quiz.....	29
#2: Who is Hungry in Wisconsin?.....	31
#3: Who is Hungry in Wisconsin? — Discussion	33
#4: Hunger’s Impact on Children and Others	34
#5: A Family Budget	35
#6: Causes of Hunger	36
#7: Community-Based Food and Nutrition Assistance	38
#8: State and Federal Assistance Programs.....	40
#9: Public Policy Advocacy.....	42
#10: Twenty Ways to Get Started.....	44
#11: Closing Litany.....	45
Case Studies	
#1: The Hagen Family	46
#2: Brenda and Her Children.....	47
#3: Badgerville Food Pantry	48
#4: The Xiong Family	49
Chart: Income Inequality in Wisconsin.....	50
Need and Response Exercise.....	51
Evaluation Form.....	53
Hunger on Our Doorstep Poster and Announcements	55

Before You Begin

Read this guide from cover to cover. This will give you a sense of the flow of the study and how it is designed to lead your congregation to take action.

Invite the Pastor and lay leaders of your church, including members of any committees that focus on peace and justice issues or community outreach. Their support and involvement will be important for carrying out an action plan to address hunger in your community – so get them engaged in the course from the beginning.

Partner with another congregation or community group in presenting this course. Hunger and the issues surrounding it can look very different depending on a person's background and situation. Enrich the conversation by reaching across racial and class lines as you plan and gather participants for this course. Involve persons who have experienced food insecurity themselves, if at all possible.

Talk with experts in your community. In Session IV, your class will meet with someone who is an expert on hunger issues in your area. You will need to invite them well in advance and fill them in on your goals for the session. If you do not already know a local resource person, see the lesson plan for Session IV for suggestions on how to find someone.

Visit the Hunger Resources section of the Wisconsin Council of Churches website.

At www.wichurches.org there are links to sites and resources that will help you get a better understanding of the issue. You can also find a .pdf version of this study-action guide and all handouts, plus updated information.

Sign up for the Hunger Advocacy Network. Contact the Wisconsin Council of Churches to receive alerts about public policies relating to hunger and find out what you and your congregation can do to be advocates for your hungry neighbors.

Introduction

Course objective

To prepare congregations and their members to actively promote public policies and direct service projects that will reduce hunger and vulnerability to hunger in their communities.

The study / action approach

The approach of this resource is to begin with study that leads to concrete action. Keep in mind that these five sessions are only the beginning. We are called to “be doers of the word, and not merely hearers” (James 1:22).

How to recruit a study / action group

The poster and announcements on pages 55 and 56 can be used to generate interest. Personally invite not only those who are already interested, but anyone who may resonate with this issue because of personal circumstances, or who can contribute because of expertise. Consider inviting other congregations in your neighborhood or community to join your study.

How to use this curriculum

This is a flexible resource designed to be tailored to the needs of your congregation or group. Some possibilities include:

- » Five one-hour sessions. *(Add an extra half hour if optional exercises are used.)*
- » Two three-hour sessions. *(Add an extra hour if optional exercises are used.)*
- » Half-day workshop.
- » Short, introductory programs. Use one of the sessions as the program for a congregational dinner or get-together.
- » Church Council retreat.
- » An Ecumenical Lenten Study involving several congregations in your community.

Each session will suggest “homework” activities participants can do between sessions (If there is time, participants can report on their “homework” at the beginning of the session; or they can be encouraged to draw on what they have learned at the appropriate points during discussions.)

Four sessions include a case study. These may be used in several ways: as an additional activity for each session; in place of one of the other activities; or as homework for the whole class or for a volunteer to present at the following session.

Note that Session IV involves inviting a resource person to talk about your community’s needs and resources. This session is crucial for enabling participants to move from study to effective action.

Introduction

Tips for leading discussions

This study will raise issues of hunger, poverty, government assistance, policy advocacy, etc. that may be controversial and arouse strong feelings in participants. Some participants may themselves have personal experience of hunger or food insecurity, in the present or in the past. It may be helpful to briefly review some “ground rules” for discussions at the beginning of each session:

1. Each person gets a chance to talk.
2. One person talks at a time. Don't interrupt.
3. Help the discussion leader keep things on track.
4. Listen carefully and with respect.
5. It's OK to disagree, but be sure to show respect for one another.
6. If someone says something that hurts or bothers you, say so, and say why.
7. Speak for yourself, and not as the representative of any group. Don't put words in other people's mouths. Remember that others are speaking for themselves, too.
8. Some of the things we say in this course will be personal. Any personal story told by someone in the group is not to be repeated outside the group unless that person gives permission.

Prayer

Each participant is asked to pray for the process, the members of the study group, those who are hungry or food insecure, and those who serve and advocate for them. Copy the following prayer onto a large sheet of paper (flip chart or butcher paper) and use it to open each session:

God of justice and compassion, you open your hand and satisfy the needs of every living creature.

Open our hearts and our ears to those who do not have enough to eat, and those who worry about how to feed their families.

Help us to open our hands and share our food with them.

Teach us to open our mouths and speak to our leaders on their behalf.

We ask in the name of Jesus Christ, the bread of life who summons us to acts of love and mercy. *Amen.*



Goal

To recognize hunger and food insecurity as real problems in our community, to which we are called to respond as a matter of faith.

Materials Needed

The opening prayer (p. 4), copied onto a large sheet of paper (Before class begins, post it where everyone can read it)

Bibles (encourage participants to bring their own)

Small paper lunch bags; small cookies, candy bars, or other small treat.

Copies of the following (found in the back of this study guide):

- » Handout #1, “Hunger in Wisconsin: A Quiz” (for everyone), pp. 29-30
- » Handout #2, “Who is Hungry in Wisconsin?” (for everyone), pp. 31-32
- » Handout #3, “Who is Hungry in Wisconsin? —Discussion” (one for each small group), p. 33
- » Handout #4, “Hunger’s Impact on Children and Others” (for everyone), p. 34
- » “Income Inequality in Wisconsin” (one copy), p. 50
- » Case Study #1 (for everyone), p. 46

The closing litany (p. 9), copied onto a large sheet of paper

Introduction

5 minutes

Introduce the entire study-action series, making the following points:

- » We will learn about the issue of hunger and access to food as it relates to our own community.
- » We will examine the causes of hunger, its effects, and what is being done about it in our community.
- » We will explore how we as individuals and as a congregation can take action against hunger in our community.
- » We need to listen carefully and speak honestly but respectfully to one another (see “Ground Rules” in the Introduction.)

Have the members of the class introduce themselves. Ask them to tell a little about themselves, or to say why they have come to this discussion and what they hope to get out of it.

Have everyone read the opening prayer in unison.

Introduce this session:

God’s concern for feeding the hungry is a pervasive theme in scripture. God “has filled the hungry with good things” (Luke 1:53) and Jesus had compassion on the hungry crowd (Matthew 15:32). We are to pray for our daily bread (Matthew 6:11). We read again and again that caring for the poor and feeding the hungry is a basic responsibility of God’s people (see, for example, Proverbs 22:9).

Session 1 » Hunger on Our Doorstep

As Christians, God's concerns should be our priorities. How should we respond? Are there hungry people in our own communities? Why? What does it mean to be hungry in America today? What about people who may not be hungry now, but can't always be sure where their next meal is coming from? This session will help us learn the answers to these questions, so that our congregation can help eliminate hunger in our community.

Quiz on Hunger in Wisconsin

15 minutes, optional

Distribute Handout #1: "Hunger in Wisconsin: A Quiz" (pp. 29-30) and pencils or pens. Ask the class members not to look at the back of the sheet, and give them about 5 minutes to fill out the quiz. Then go over the answers on the back of the handout.

(If you choose not to use this exercise in class, you could post or distribute it beforehand as part of your advertising and recruitment for the series. Or, you could hand it out at the end of this first session as "homework.")

Ask:

- » What did you learn? What surprised you? Can you think of any other actions that congregations can take to respond to hunger in their communities, in addition to the ones listed in question 9? Do you think any of the suggested actions are not possible or inappropriate for churches?

Case Study #1

15 minutes, optional

If you have time to do the case study during the session, hand out copies now. Give participants time to read, reflect and write on their own or in pairs or small groups. Then discuss the questions as a group.

If you don't have time during the session, hand out the case study at the end of the session as "homework."

Handout: Who is Hungry in Wisconsin?

15 minutes

Leader Presentation

Pass out copies of Handout #2, "Who Is Hungry in Wisconsin?" (pp. 31-32). Review the section on "Definitions." You may need to point out that while people often think of "food security" as protecting our food supply from terrorism or sabotage, in this study we will be using it as it is defined in the fact sheet.

Review the sections, "How Many People are Food Insecure?" and "How Many Households Experience Hunger?" Note that, while hunger and food security can be difficult to measure, and statistics may vary according to the time period studied and the research methods used, these numbers do give us a good picture of the scope of the problem and help identify who the most vulnerable people are. (You can check for updated hunger statistics and find the most recent studies by checking the Hunger Study/Action Guide resource page on the Wisconsin Council of Churches Website, www.wichurches.org.)

Review the sections, "Who is at Risk of Food Insecurity in Wisconsin?" and "Who Else is Food Insecure in Wisconsin?" Point out to the class:

Session 1 » Hunger on Our Doorstep

Note that there is an important difference between identifying which characteristics are most likely to put a household at risk of food insecurity, and which characteristics are most “typical” of food insecure households. For example, while households where no one is employed and whose incomes are below the poverty line are at a much higher risk for experiencing hunger or food insecurity, most food-insecure households are above the poverty line or have at least one person working.

Group Discussion

If the group is larger than 8-10 people, split into smaller groups of 4-5 people. Give one copy of Handout #3, “Who is Hungry in Wisconsin? —Discussion” on p. 33 to each group to discuss. If there is time, you can have each small group briefly report back to the entire class on the main ideas, questions, or observations that they discussed.

Scripture Study: Wealth and Poverty

20 minutes

Unequal Distribution Exercise

Based on an exercise in “Hunger 101” by the Atlanta Food Bank, www.acfb.org

Prepare in advance: *Have enough small, identical brown paper lunch bags for each person in the class (don’t use transparent bags) and divide them as evenly as you can into five groups. Put 6 treats (candy bars, small cookies, etc.) in one-fifth of the bags. Put one treat in each bag of another fifth. Put two treats in each of the remaining bags.*

In class: *Hand out the bags at random (if there are fewer people than you expected, just make sure that at least one person gets the 6-treat bag and that at least one person gets a one-treat bag). Don’t let anyone peek before all have received their bag. Then, instruct all the participants to open their bags.*

Ask the class:

- » What did you discover about your bags? How much did each of you receive? How does the person who received 6 treats feel? How do those who received one feel? How do the others feel? How does the class feel about the unequal distribution?

Reading: Luke 1:46-55

10 minutes

Leader Presentation

The distribution of the bags created three groups within the class: the have-somes, the have-littles, and the have-lots. *(If feasible, have the participants rearrange themselves so that the members of each group are sitting together.)* The following reading shows God’s concern for the relationship between the rich and the poor. We will hear the Magnificat, spoken by Mary when she was pregnant with Jesus. *Distribute Bibles to any class members who did not bring their own. Have someone read aloud Luke 1:46-55 from their Bible while the others follow along.*

Group Discussion

While you were listening to the reading:

- » What thoughts or feelings did those of you who received the one-treat bags have? What thoughts or feelings did those of you who received the six-treat bags have? What thoughts or feelings did the rest of you have?

Session 1 » Hunger on Our Doorstep

Leader Presentation

Hold up the “Income Inequality in Wisconsin” chart (p. 50). While pointing to the corresponding bars on the chart, tell the class:

- » The poorest fifth of families in Wisconsin had an average income of \$17,677 in the early 1980s, which increased 14.3% to \$20,197 in the early 2000s.
- » The middle fifth of families in Wisconsin had an average income of \$39,984 in the early 80s, which increased 23.4% to \$49,327 in the early 2000s.
- » The richest fifth of families in Wisconsin had an average income of \$74,653 in the early 80s, which increased 48.2% to \$110,653 in the early 2000s.

\$20,000 is the **average** income for the poorest 1/5 of families in Wisconsin – so there are families whose income is even less. As we will see in the next session, hunger is an income issue: people are hungry because they can’t afford to buy food.

Group Discussion

- » What does this Bible passage suggest about God’s response to the way resources are distributed in our country and community?
- » How would you apply these words to your own life situation?
- » If you identify yourself with the “have somes” or the “have lots,” how do you feel? Proud? Grateful? Guilty? Defensive? Responsible? Or something else? If you identify with or can put yourself in the place of the “have littles,” do you feel angry, guilty, envious, resentful, or something else? Which of these reactions do you think are most likely to lead to an appropriate Christian response?

Consequences of Hunger

15 minutes

Handout #4, “Hunger’s Impact on Children and Others” (p. 34) Distribute and give participants some time to review it or to read it aloud.

Ask participants:

1. Are there any effects of hunger or food insecurity that you think are especially important or surprising?
2. How might these effects of hunger or food insecurity cause other problems for individuals or families? How might these effects affect individuals’ or families’ ability to lift themselves out of hunger and poverty?
3. How will these consequences of hunger affect the child? The child’s family? The child’s schoolmates and playmates? The community? What effect will they have on the child’s future?
4. Can you think of other community problems to which hunger and food insecurity might contribute? (Examples: alcohol and drug addiction, crime, domestic violence.)
5. Have you ever gone a day or more eating no or very little food? If not, have you ever gone most of a day without eating? What effect did that have on you? How did it feel? How did it affect your emotions or your ability to work? Why did you go without eating – was it voluntary or involuntary? Do you think that made a difference? (*Note: for some participants, this question may touch on painful or embarrassing experiences of hardship or poverty. They may be reluctant to speak about their experiences, and should not be forced to do so. If they do talk about them, they should be treated respectfully by the group. If you think it would be better to omit this question, you may do so.*)

Conclusion

5 minutes

As “Homework,” encourage each member of the class to do one of the following:

- » Complete the “Hunger in Wisconsin” quiz or the case study (if you did not use them in class)
- » Visit one of the following websites:
 - › The Adult Education Center of the Catholic Campaign for Human Development — take a tour of Poverty USA and try the Poverty Quiz (www.usccb.org/cchd/povertyusa/edcenter/aded_activity.shtml)
 - › Hunger Task Force — watch the “Faces of Hunger Movie” (www.hungertaskforce.org/Education/index.html)
- » Make a note of any news stories you read, see, or hear during the week that have to do with poverty and hunger in the U.S.

Thank the participants for coming, and encourage them to come to the following sessions, where they can learn more about the causes of and solutions to hunger in their community.

End with the closing litany. Post the sheet with the words where the class can see it, and ask them to read it responsively.

Closing Litany

Psalm 146:5-9 (NRSV)

One: Happy are those whose help is the God of Jacob,

Many: whose hope is in the Lord their God,

One: who made heaven and earth,

Many: the sea, and all that is in them;

One: who keeps faith for ever;

Many: who executes justice for the oppressed; who gives food to the hungry.

One: The Lord sets the prisoners free;

Many: the Lord opens the eyes of the blind.

One: The Lord lifts up those who are bowed down;

Many: the Lord loves the righteous.

One: The Lord watches over the strangers;

Many: he upholds the orphan and the widow, but the way of the wicked he brings to ruin.



Session 2 » Why Are Our Neighbors Hungry?

Goal

To understand hunger and food insecurity as systemic problems that must be addressed through public policy as well as through emergency food relief.

Materials Needed

The opening prayer (p. 4), copied onto a large sheet of large sheet of paper (Re-use from last session; before class begins, post it where everyone can read it)

Bibles for those who did not bring their own

Copies of the following (found in the back of this study guide):

- » Income Inequality in Wisconsin chart (one copy – re-use from last session), p. 50
- » Handout #5, “Family Budget” (three copies), p. 35
- » Handout #6, “Causes of Hunger” (for everyone), pp. 36-37
- » Handout #7, “Community-Based Food and Nutrition Assistance” (for everyone), pp. 38-39
- » Handout #8, “State and Federal Nutrition and Other Assistance Programs” (for everyone), pp. 40-41
- » Case Study #2 (for everyone), p. 47

Something large to write on (a large newsprint pad and easel, large sheets of butcher paper and masking tape, or a writing board) with markers or chalk

Copied onto large sheets of paper:

- » The discussion questions (p. 11)
- » The quotation from the Wisconsin Council of Churches’ “Statement on Economic Justice (see p. 13)

The closing litany (p. 9) copied onto a large sheet of paper (re-use from last session)

Introduction

5 minutes

Have everyone read the opening prayer in unison.

Last session, we learned that one out of every eleven households in Wisconsin is food insecure – that is, hungry or at risk of hunger. We also learned that hunger has serious consequences, especially for children’s health and mental development. (You may pass out copies of Handouts #2 and #4 to anyone who was not able to attend the first session.) Hunger is a serious problem in our community, and the purpose of this study is to help us find ways to contribute to solving it. But if we are to do so, we have to understand the roots of the problem. *Why are so many of our neighbors hungry?*

Scripture Study: Hunger and Injustice

15 minutes

Ask one or two members of the class to read aloud the following passages from their Bibles while the others follow along: (Isaiah 5:8-9, Isaiah 10:1-4)

Leader’s Introduction

Read the following paragraphs or put the ideas in your own words:

Session 2 » Why Are Our Neighbors Hungry?

Hungry people need food. But according to these passages, they need something else: Justice. “Justice” means more than catching and punishing criminals. It refers to the way in which a society is organized and operates to give each person what is due to him or her, to respect his or her rights. If this does not happen, the result is injustice. A society in which people do not receive what is due them, where their rights are not respected, is an unjust society.

As we see in these readings, the Bible connects justice with respecting the rights of the most vulnerable (widows and orphans), the poor, and the needy. The Prophets of the Old Testament — Isaiah, Amos, Micah, and many others — cried out against the injustices of their time. They saw how the powerful exploited the weak and the rich oppressed the poor. Those with political and economic power were able to use that power for their own advantage at the expense of those who were less powerful — often in ways that were “perfectly legal.” The weaker members of the community often lost their land — their home and means of livelihood — while the rich and powerful amassed huge estates. Those who had fallen on hard economic times and could not repay their debts might have to sell themselves into virtual slavery in order to get what they needed to live.

Hold up the chart on income inequality in Wisconsin. As we saw in the last session, the gap between the rich and the poor in our state is growing wider: The average income of the richest Wisconsin households increased by almost 50% in the last two decades, while the average income of the poorest households increased by less than 15%. There are great differences between the economy and society of ancient Israel and those of our own time. In any time and place, the causes of hunger and poverty are complex. But poverty and hunger are still closely linked, and raise important questions of justice. Personal choices — good and bad — are important, but factors outside individuals’ control can limit their ability to provide for themselves and their families.

Group Discussion

If there are more than 8 people in the class, divide into smaller groups of 4-5 people. Put up the large sheet of newsprint with the following questions for them to discuss.

1. What do Isaiah’s words imply about God’s response to:
 - a. Relationships between the rich and poor, powerful and vulnerable today?
 - b. The laws and business practices in our own communities?
2. What are the most important causes of hunger today? Are they within, or beyond, individuals’ control?

If you have divided the class into small groups for discussion, ask each group for their answers to the first part of question #2 about the causes of hunger. Write their answers on the newsprint pad (or whatever you are using). If not, write the answers as they are given.

Case Study #2

15 minutes, optional

If you have time to do the case study during the session, hand out copies now. Give participants time to read, reflect and write on their own or in pairs or small groups. Then discuss the questions as a group.

If you don’t have time during the session, hand out the case study at the end of the session as “homework.”

Session 2 » Why Are Our Neighbors Hungry?

Exercise: Family Budget

15 minutes

Set the Stage

Divide the class into three groups. Give each group a copy of Handout #5, “Family Budget” (p.35). Read aloud, or have them read, the introductory paragraph. Briefly review the list of expenses. Assign each group one of the scenarios listed at the bottom of the sheet. Give each group ten minutes or so to come up with an alternative budget to deal with the situation presented in their scenario.

- 1. Have each group report on its adjusted budget. What items did they cut, and why? What did they keep, and why? How might those cuts affect the family?*
- 2. Where could the family go for help? Make a list on the newsprint pad (or whatever you are using). Why might they be reluctant to go to a food pantry, or to apply for benefits such as Food Stamps? What obstacles might stand in the way of their getting the help they need?*

Handout: Causes of Hunger

15 minutes

Leader’s Introduction

Distribute Handout #6, “Causes of Hunger” (pp. 36-37). Start with the side of the page showing how “low income” and “high expenses” result in hunger and food insecurity.

- » Explain that this diagram summarizes what we’ve learned from the budgeting exercise – that when people’s income can’t keep up with the cost of living, they may decide that food is the one place where they can economize.*
- » Briefly review the two main factors resulting in low household income – unemployment and insufficient (low-wage, part-time, or seasonal) employment – and then the four expense categories shown – housing, transportation, child care, and health care. If there is time, you can go into more detail or invite participants to make their own observations about these factors.*

Turn to the side with the “Barriers to Food Security” diagram.

- » Review the information under “Lack of Income.” Note that lack of income is only one factor that contributes to people being hungry or food insecure.*
- » Review the information under the four headings – “Lack of Access,” “Lack of Knowledge,” “Lack of Participation,” and “Additional Barriers.”*
- » If there is time, ask the class if they have their own observations to make about any of these barriers, or if they can think of others.*

Additional causes of hunger and food insecurity you can mention include: Physical and mental challenges: age, physical disability, injury, mental illness, cognitive deficits, alcoholism, drug addiction; Family circumstances: divorce, death of spouse, incarcerated parent or spouse; domestic violence, single parenthood, not receiving child support; Personal history and circumstances: reentering community after imprisonment; not completing high school; being a veteran, being homeless; Natural and social circumstances: natural disasters; jobs without benefits; losing retirement plan or investments; absent or poorly funded safety net programs.

Session 2 » Why Are Our Neighbors Hungry?

Exercise

15 minutes, optional

This exercise is to help the class place a family's or individual's struggle for food security in a larger social context. On a blackboard or flip chart, draw a series of three concentric circles (see diagram below). Write "HUNGER" in the center circle. Ask the class:

1. What are some of the factors in a family's life that may cause them to be hungry or food insecure? (If they need prompting, remind them of those that were brought up by the budget worksheet exercise, or listed on the "Causes of Hunger" handout). Write them in the first ring from the center. Then ask:
2. How might these problems, or the means to overcome them, be affected by what is happening in the wider society? What are some economic or political circumstances that can affect a family's ability to reach food security? Write those in the outermost ring. (See the following diagram as an example only — there are many more or other factors and conditions that could be mentioned).

Conclusion

10 minutes

Post the newsprint with the following passage from the Wisconsin Council of Churches' "Statement on Economic Justice" and ask someone to read it aloud:

The plain fact of the matter is that since God provides all that we need and yet there are people who do not have enough to eat or drink or a safe place to sleep, then we can only conclude that there are some who have too much and who have not adequately shared what they have been given.

(For the full statement, go to www.wichurches.org/board/statements/index.html or contact the Council.)

Ask participants:

1. In light of what we have learned in this session, how do you react to this statement?
2. What can we, who have enough or more than enough, do to help ensure that all have enough? Does "sharing" mean only individual acts of charity, or can it also involve community action and public policy (that is, state and national legislation and government programs)?

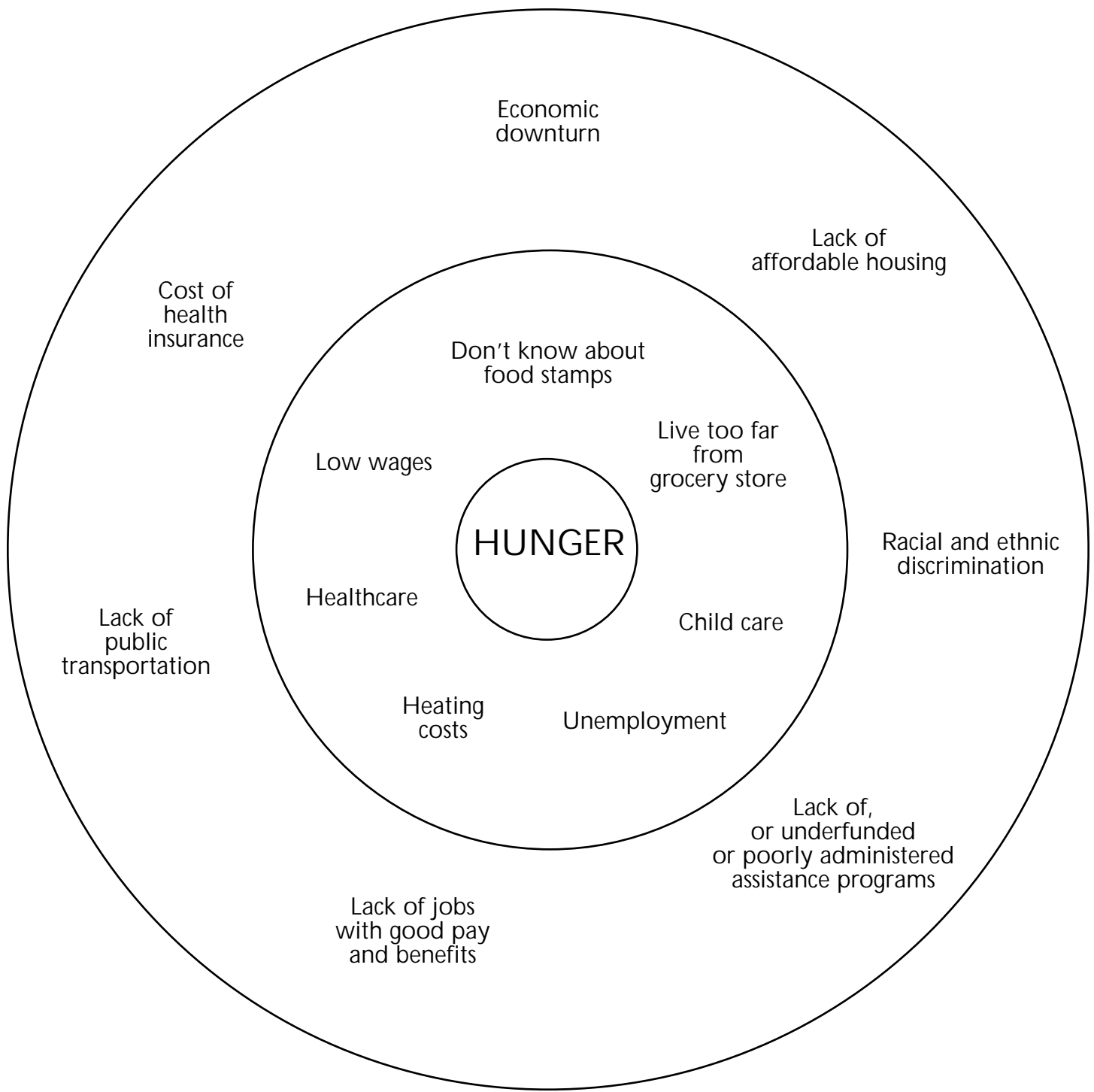
As "Homework," distribute copies of Handouts #7, "Community-Based Food and Nutrition Assistance," (pp. 38-39) and #8, "State and Federal Nutrition and Other Assistance Programs" (pp. 40-41) and ask participants to review these and bring them to the next session. Also encourage each member of the class to do one of the following:

- » Complete the case study (if you did not use it in class)
- » Visit the website of the San Francisco Food Bank (www.sffoodbank.org/hunger101_online.html) and take "Hunger 101" — an online simulation of what it is like to be a hungry person looking for food.
- » Spend some time with the local telephone directory, looking for organizations or agencies to which the family in their budget exercise might turn for help. Call to find out what services they offer, and what a person would have to do to apply.

Post the closing litany (from the first session, p. 9) and have the class read it responsively (with a different leader from the previous session).

Thank participants for coming, and invite them to return for the following session, which will look at ways to ensure that all our neighbors have enough to eat.

Session 2 » Why Are Our Neighbors Hungry?



Session 3 » What Can Be Done About Hunger?



Goal

To be aware of the main governmental and community programs that respond to hunger in Wisconsin, and the need for both public policy and direct service.

Materials Needed

The opening prayer (p. 4), copied onto a large sheet of paper (Re-use from the first session; before class, post it where everyone can read it)

Bibles for those who did not bring their own.

Something large to write on in front of the class (a large newsprint pad and easel, large sheets of butcher paper and masking tape, or a writing board) with markers or chalk

Copied onto large sheets of paper:

- » The definitions of “Justice” and “Charity” given below
- » The heading, “Biblical Responses to Hunger” with two columns beneath, labeled “Justice” and “Charity”
- » The quotations for the group discussion on p. 17 (optional)
- » The heading, “Responses to Hunger Today,” with the same two columns headed “Charity” and “Justice” (if you will be doing the optional exercise on p. 16)

Copies of the following (found in the back of this study guide):

- » Handout #7, “Community-Based Food and Nutrition Assistance” (pp. 38-39) and Handout #8, “State and Federal Assistance Programs” (pp. 40-41) (a few copies for newcomers and those who did not bring their copies from last session)
- » Case Study #3 (for everyone), p. 48
- » County profiles for “homework” (for everyone; see the “Conclusion” to this session)

Slips for the “Needs and Responses” exercise. Make one single-sided copy of each page (pp. 51-52) on different colored paper and cut along the lines.

The closing litany (p. 9) copied onto a large sheet of paper (re-use from last session)

Introduction

5 minutes

Have the class read the opening prayer in unison. Tell the class:

In the first session of this study, we learned about the extent of hunger in Wisconsin and its effect on people. Last session, we learned about some of the barriers to an assured supply of food that many families face — lack of sufficient income to meet their other living expenses; lack of ready access to affordable, nutritious food; lack of knowledge about efficient food purchasing and how to handle and store food safely; and lack of participation in food assistance programs. *(You may pass out copies of Handouts #2 and #4 from the first session and Handout #6 from the second session to anyone who was not able to attend one or both sessions.)*

In this session we will take a further step toward taking action to respond to hunger in our community, by learning about what forms of assistance to hungry and food-insecure people are available.

Session 3 » What Can Be Done About Hunger?

Discussion: Individual Solutions to Hunger?

10 minutes, optional

(If there are more than 8-10 people in the class, form small groups of 4-5 persons to discuss the question, and reconvene to have the groups share their responses.)

Ask participants: What would you do if you were unemployed for a long period of time, or had a job that didn't pay enough to live on? How would you try to avoid hunger for yourself or your children? If anyone in the group is, or has been, in that position and is comfortable talking about it, they may offer to talk about some of their coping strategies — but don't press anyone to talk about their experiences. Note the responses (in brief form) on the flip chart or blackboard.

Here are some examples you can use to prompt or fill out the discussion:

- » Borrow food or money from friends or relatives
- » Borrow money from a “payday loan” operation
- » Beg money for food from strangers
- » Put off paying non-food bills (rent, heat and other utilities, medical, etc.)
- » Live out of a car or homeless shelter in order to save on rent money
- » Move to a cheaper place to live
- » Skip meals
- » Rely more on cheap but filling foods such as pasta
- » Plant a vegetable garden
- » Go back to school or take classes to qualify for a better job
- » Work an additional job or work additional hours
- » Visit a food pantry
- » Apply for an assistance program such as Food Stamps or school breakfast

When you have a list of eight to a dozen ideas, ask:

1. What are the advantages or disadvantages of each strategy?
2. Which of these strategies are the least viable? The most viable?
3. For the more viable strategies, what obstacles might a person encounter in trying to act on them? (Remember that many households consist of one parent and one or more pre-school age children.)

Charity and Justice: Biblical Responses to Hunger

20 minutes

Set the Stage

Post the pieces of paper with the definitions of “charity” and “justice” at the front of the class, and read them aloud:

Charity: A short-term, voluntary, individual response to people's immediate needs.

Justice: A structural, community response to meet on-going needs; legally mandated responsibilities toward other persons.

Post the paper headed “Biblical Responses to Hunger” at the front of the class where you can write on it.

Session 3 » What Can Be Done About Hunger?

Leader's Introduction

Once you are sure the class members have a good understanding of the distinction between these two definitions, tell the class:

The books of Exodus, Leviticus and Deuteronomy tell how, after God had liberated the Hebrew people from slavery in Egypt, God instructed them on how they were to live and organize their society in the Promised Land. The Israelites were mostly farmers, and each family group was assigned a portion of the land as theirs to farm to support themselves. But over time, those who did poorly might have to sell their land – or even themselves, as slaves – to their neighbors who had been more successful. We will now read some passages from these books of the Bible about how God told ancient Israel to respond to hunger and other forms of need.

Reading and Group Discussion

Have members of the class take turns reading aloud the following passages from their Bibles. After each reading, discuss which column best fits the response described. Write the passage citation (abbreviated book name and chapter and verse numbers) in one column or the other – or both, if there is no agreement or a passage seems to fit both.

Alternatively, you could divide the class into two or more small groups or pairs, and give each group one or more passages to discuss among themselves for five or ten minutes. Then, have each group report and write the chapter citations in the appropriate columns.

Lending: Deuteronomy 15:7-8, 10-11

Year of Jubilee: Leviticus 25:8-12

Tithes: Deuteronomy 26:12-13

Debt Remission: Deuteronomy 15:1-2

Gleaning: Leviticus 19:9-10

Sabbatical year: Exodus 23:10-11

Leader's Commentary

Comment on these passages by reading the following paragraph, or restating it in your own words:

While these laws were for a particular ancient nation, they address fundamental, universal human needs for a decent life and participation in community. They guard against human failings of greed and exploitation as well as sloth and irresponsibility. The laws may not be applicable to our situation — and some (like the Jubilee) may not have been put into practice, but they express basic values of justice and responsibility, and the recognition that these values must be safeguarded by institutional frameworks as well as by spontaneous acts of individual charity.

Group Discussion

10 minutes, optional

Post the sheet of paper with the following quotations and have the class pair off to discuss their reactions to them.

1. "The poor you will always have with you." (Compare Mark 14:7 and Deuteronomy 15:11) (Class members should look up both passages)
2. "Justice is love operating at a distance." – Joseph Sittler

Reconvene the whole group and offer an opportunity for people to report on their discussions.

Session 3 » What Can Be Done About Hunger?

Regarding question #1, you can point out that although this quotation is commonly used to argue that efforts to eradicate poverty are futile, both passages actually emphasize helping the poor.

For question #2, the context may help draw out the meaning of the quote: “Real love grasps the hand that need holds out. And these needs cry out from millions I will never meet. Justice is love operating at a distance. When, for instance, my church tells me that millions of people are starving and that it is my duty to show my love for them by a helping action, I become aware of the trans-individual meaning of love. I cannot have affection in any immediate sense for two million persons. Love exercised in that context is an act of the acknowledgment of the neighbor in his [or her] need, and my love takes the trans-personal form of distributed food.” (From “An Open Letter,” *Currents in Theology and Mission*, October 1984).

Responses to Hunger Today

15 minutes, optional

Set the Stage

Start a new chart, “Responses to Hunger Today,” with the same two columns headed “Charity” and “Justice.” Distribute copies of handouts #7, “Community-Based Food and Nutrition Assistance” (pp. 38-39) and #8 “State and Federal Assistance Programs” (pp. 40-41) to anyone who did not bring theirs to class.

Group Discussion

Ask:

- 1. What different ways are there for relieving hunger in Wisconsin today? What categories do these different ways fall under? Assign each idea to one column or the other.*
- 2. What strengths and limitations do you see in each category of response?*
- 3. What would be the result of taking only one or the other approach to hunger?*
- 4. Do you think communities can or should rely on one approach primarily or exclusively? Or are they connected or complementary in some way?*

Case Study #3

15 minutes, optional

If you have time to do the case study during the session, hand out copies now. Give participants time to read, reflect and write on their own or in pairs or small groups. Then discuss the questions as a group.

If you don't have time during the session, hand out the case study at the end of the session as “homework.”

Exercise: Needs and Responses

20 minutes

The purpose of this exercise is to show the variety of kinds of problems and solutions that are involved in hunger issues, how the different sectors of society are dependent on each other, and how each can contribute to reducing hunger. While each sector can respond, none of them alone can provide “the solution.” Solving the problem of hunger requires all of them to work together.

Session 3 » What Can Be Done About Hunger?

Set the Stage

1. Before class, make one copy each of pages 51 (needs) and 52 (responses) on different colored sheets of paper, and cut the sheets on dotted lines.
2. Divide the class into four groups: (1) Hungry and food insecure persons; (2) Direct service hunger relief projects (food pantries, soup kitchens, etc.); (3) Churches, businesses and community service organizations; and (4) Local, State and Federal Government. Distribute the corresponding “need” and “response” slips to each group (the appropriate group number is on each slip)

The Process

1. Have the members of group (1) start reading their “need” slips one by one to the entire group. After each slip is read, ask if anyone in another group has a “response” slip that they think can address that need. If so, they should read the “response” slip aloud and give it to the person with the “need.” After the members of group (1) have read about half their “need” slips, rotate through the other groups, repeating the process with their “need” slips. Once groups (2), (3), and (4) have read all their “need” slips, group (1) can finish reading theirs.
2. As the exercise proceeds, responses can be “recycled” or used more than once; someone who has received a “response” slip from someone else can give it to a person in their own or another group if it is appropriate to that person’s “need.”
3. If no “response” to a “need” is forthcoming, set aside the need slip. At the end of the exercise, read it again – someone may realize that they have a good “response.” If not, do a short brainstorming session to think about what could be done about the problem.
4. When everyone has had a chance to read their own “need” slips, or time runs out, the exercise ends.

Group Discussion

Ask participants:

1. What were your reactions to the exercise? What did you learn?
2. Were there relevant responses that were not mentioned? Were there responses that you think were inappropriate or inadequate to the need? Were there needs that were not mentioned?
3. Do you know of any specific examples of any of these responses in your congregation, or community? Have you been personally involved in any? (*Ask class members not to disclose any sensitive personal information about others without their permission.*)
4. What role can churches play in some of these responses to hunger?

Conclude by bringing up (or reinforcing, if they have been brought up in discussion) the points made in the introduction to this exercise.

Conclusion

5 minutes

As “Homework,” Hand out copies of “Hunger Close to Home” and “Making Ends Meet” profiles for your county from the UW Extension to study before the next session (see “Resources” in the Session IV lesson plan). If affordable housing and employment are particular concerns in your community, you may want to hand out the “Affordable Housing” or “Workforce Profile” for your county as well.

Also encourage each member of the class to do one of the following:

Session 3 » What Can Be Done About Hunger?

- » Complete the case study (if you did not use it in class)
- » Find out more about federal assistance programs by downloading Wisconsin Connections, which gives one-page summaries of each program with information about benefits, eligibility, and how to apply. Go to: www.uwex.edu/ces/connection/.
- » Try out the ACCESS website (www.access.wisconsin.gov), an internet tool that provides a quick and easy way for people in Wisconsin to get answers to questions about health and nutrition programs.

Post the closing litany (from the first session, p. 9) and have the class read it responsively (with a different leader from the previous session).

Thank the participants for coming, and invite them to return for the next session. Tell them about the guest speaker who will speak about hunger issues and initiatives in your community.

Session 4 » Hunger in Our Community



Goal

For this session, you will invite a local expert, or experts, on hunger in your community to help your group to find out what is needed to more adequately address hunger and food insecurity problems in your community. This assessment of community needs provides an essential knowledge base for the action plan you will develop in the next session.

Materials Needed

Opening prayer and closing litany (p. 4 and p. 9), written on large sheets of paper (Re-use from the first session; before class, post them where everyone can read them)

Something large to write notes on that can be posted in front of the class next session – a large newsprint pad or sheets of butcher paper – and a marker

Handout #9, “Public Policy Advocacy” (copies for everyone), pp. 42-43.

Whom to Invite

You may already know someone in your area to invite, but for help in identifying appropriate local resource people, you can contact:

- » Your County Extension Office – check the county government pages of your phone book or the University of Wisconsin Extension website at www.uwex.edu/locations/. Ask for the Family Living Educator or Nutrition Coordinator. This person may be able to come speak with your group, or can refer you to a representative from a local hunger council.
- » Community Action Agencies (CAAs) – contact the Wisconsin Community Action Program Association at 608/244-0745 or wiscap@charterinternet.net, or visit www.wiscap.org to get the name of the CAA for your area. CAAs provide food and technical support to food pantries in their regions.
- » The coordinator of your local food pantry.
- » Wisconsin Council of Churches – contact Peter Bakken, Coordinator for Public Policy at 608/837-3108 or bakken@wichurches.org

Visit the “Hunger Resources” section of the Wisconsin Council of Churches website (www.wichurches.org) for further assistance in finding a speaker in your area.

Different people will bring different kinds of expertise. In addition to the above, you may wish to consider county health and human services workers, directors of local food pantries or regional Second Harvest or independent food banks, WIC (Women, Infants and Children assistance program) Offices, or other community service organizations, or sociology or economics faculty from a local college or university.

Session Structure

Organize the conversation as best fits the guests and the group. Refer to the list of “Questions to Consider” on p. 22 to help you in discussing with the presenter and the class the topics to be covered. The opening prayer (p. 4) and the closing litany (p. 9) help set a context. Allow enough time for your group to ask all of their questions.

Session 4 » Hunger in Our Community

The session concludes with an exercise to brainstorm a list of priority community needs. Have someone take notes on large sheets of newsprint for reference in the next session to help carry insights forward.

Questions to Consider

There is nothing necessarily technical about a needs assessment, though it can include as much data about your region as you want and can find. You might ask your guest or guests to help you explore the following questions:

1. How large an area do we want to look at? Does it make sense to look at food security needs in our county, city, or town, or just one neighborhood?
2. How many people in our area are hungry or food insecure? Who are they? What factors seem to be the most responsible for hunger and food insecurity in your community?
3. Are nutrition assistance programs, such as food stamps, school breakfast and WIC, available and accessible in your community? Are there eligible families in your community who do not participate in these programs, or do not receive other assistance such as Medicaid, energy assistance, or earned income tax credits? Do low-income people in your community face barriers to using these programs? Are there obstacles to applying (such as limited hours or inconvenient locations), or do some households need more information or assistance in applying? Are there enough computer workstations in community locations where families can apply online? Are there local or county resource guides listing available programs?
4. What retail sources of food (supermarkets, convenience stores, farmers' markets, food coops) are available in your area? How accessible and affordable are they for low-income people? What variety and quality of food do they offer? Is there a need for a supermarket to offer lower prices and greater variety?
5. What sources of emergency or supplemental food are there in your community? How extensively are they used? Are they adequate to the community's needs? Do they need more funding or food, or greater community support?
6. Is locally produced food available through farmer's markets, community-supported agriculture, or community gardens? Are these sources accessible to low-income people? How many families grow home gardens and preserve produce? Do families lack supplies or education to begin home gardening and canning?
7. What is the level of awareness about hunger in your community? Who else is concerned about the issue? What sorts of resistance might local anti-hunger initiatives encounter?
8. How informed are elected officials (local, state, federal) regarding hunger in your community and key policy issues that affect it?

Brainstorming Community Needs

5 minutes

After the guest presentation, label a fresh sheet of newspaper "Community Needs." Ask participants to spend five minutes naming what they see as the three or four most important food security needs of their community. Think about both the needs of hungry and food insecure people in your area, and about the needs

Session 4 » Hunger in Our Community

or shortcomings of existing programs and service providers. Save this sheet for reference for the next session.

Homework

As homework, distribute copies of Handout #9, “Public Policy Advocacy” (pp. 42-43) to read before the next session.

Also encourage class members to do one of the following:

- » Bring a donation (nonperishable food or money) to your local food pantry. Visit with the staff or volunteers about what they do and how they perceive the community’s need for their services.
- » Visit your local library for books to help you learn more about hunger issues.
- » Visit the “Public Policy” links on the “Hunger Resources” page of the Wisconsin Council of Churches’ website (The web address, www.wichurches.org, is given on the “Public Policy Advocacy” handout).

Resources

For Data on Your County:

Useful printouts with statistical information about hunger, poverty and employment in your county (with comparisons to Wisconsin as a whole) can be downloaded from the University of Wisconsin – Extension website.

The following include general background information on the topic, as well as county-specific information and comparisons to the state as a whole.

- » For a “Hunger Close to Home” printout for your county, including the population in poverty, Food Stamp participation, and self-sufficiency wage information, go to: www.uwex.edu/ces/flp/demographics/hunger/index.cfm
- » For a “Making Ends Meet” printout profiling poverty in your county, with poverty rate, median earnings, housing affordability, and unemployment rate, go to: www.uwex.edu/ces/flp/demographics/endsmeet/index.cfm
- » For an “Affordable Housing” printout for your county, with statistics on the cost of renting or owning a home, go to www.uwex.edu/ces/flp/demographics/housing/index.cfm

You can obtain a one-page profile of food security indicators for your county, including economic and demographic indicators, availability and participation in federal nutrition assistance programs, and information on food production and marketing:

- » For a one-page standard profile of go to: www.uwex.edu/ces/flp/cfs/standard.cfm
- » To produce a customized report, go to: www.uwex.edu/ces/flp/cfs/index2.cfm

A “Workforce Profile” including data on population, employment, wages and income, etc. for your county can be downloaded from the Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development website: dwd.wisconsin.gov/oea/cp_pdf/cp_mainx.htm

Session 4 » Hunger in Our Community

For More Information about Doing a Community Food Security Assessment

The United States Department of Agriculture's "Community Food Security Assessment Toolkit" (E-FAN No. (02-013) 166 pp, July 2002) provides an extensive and detailed guide to help you collect and analyze information and use it to evaluate your community. While the guide goes well beyond what you can or need to do for this session, it can help you to understand what questions to ask and why. The guide can be found at: www.ers.usda.gov/publications/efan02013/, or it can be ordered by calling the USDA Order Desk at 1-800-999-6779.

Session 5 » Taking Action Against Hunger



In advance of this session, you should have some idea of how the awareness, concern, knowledge and motivation resulting from these sessions can be harnessed in order to act on the ideas generated during the brainstorming exercises in this session. Is there an existing committee that can pick up on these ideas and make use of additional volunteers to implement them? Does a new committee or task force need to be formed?

*Following this session, the next steps may involve convening a new committee or putting items on the agenda of an existing committee, making contacts with others in the congregation or community, and gathering more information. Your group might already be prepared to start organizing some specific actions, such as conducting a food drive, recruiting food pantry volunteers, or setting up a table on Sunday morning with materials for writing letters to legislators. Other ideas may involve further, more intensive information gathering and planning – but this session should lead to a definite plan to begin that process **now**.*

Goal

To move beyond studying the problem of hunger in the local community to becoming actively engaged in doing something about it.

Materials Needed

The opening prayer (p. 4), copied onto a large sheet of large sheet of paper (Re-use from first session; before class begins, post it where everyone can read it)

Sign-up sheets — One or more pads of lined paper (or lined paper on a clipboard) with columns marked “name,” “phone number,” “e-mail,” and “project”

Notes from previous session (before class begins, post them where everyone can read them), including the “Community Needs” sheet

A large newsprint pad (with easel or other stand) — use the kind that can be torn off the pad and stuck to a wall after they are filled out (or use masking tape to post them) — and different colored markers. Write headings on five of the sheets:

- » “Our Gifts”
- » “Obstacles”
- » “Potential Partners”
- » “Next Steps”

Be sure to have additional sheets available in case you need them.

Copies of:

- » Handout #10, “Twenty Ways to Get Started” (for everyone), p. 44
- » Handout #11, “Closing Litany” (for everyone), p. 45
- » Case Study #4, p. 49

Session 5 » Taking Action Against Hunger

Introduction: Direct Service and Advocacy

5 minutes

Begin with the opening prayer, as in previous sessions.

Tell the group that the purpose of this session is to do some brainstorming about where to go from here, based on what has been learned in the preceding four sessions. Start the sign-up sheet circulating through the class. Depending on how you expect to follow up this series with action, tell the class to write down their names and contact information if they might be interested in joining or forming a committee to follow through on the action ideas generated in this session, or if they would be willing to help in any way. They should leave the “Project” column blank for now.

Read the following, or put it in your own words:

It is important to keep in mind two broad types of actions that congregations and other community groups can take in response to hunger: direct service, and public policy advocacy.

Direct Service activities are helping activities that can be undertaken by groups, essentially on their own initiative. These can include operating food pantries or meal sites, providing job training or literacy education, rehabbing and weatherproofing buildings, setting up free health clinics, etc.

Public Policy Advocacy means persuading legislators, government officials, businesses, organizations, and the general public to enact or support laws and regulations that will serve the common good of the whole society, especially the well-being of the most vulnerable among us. This can include lobbying for increased funding for nutrition programs or for changes in regulations that can make them more effective, urging employers to offer living wages and adequate health benefits for their employees, and writing letters and op-eds to local papers or holding community forums to raise awareness about community food security issues.

Both types of action are necessary. Direct service engages citizens in actively meeting the needs of their neighbors. Public policy advocacy can mobilize resources that are beyond what any business or voluntary group can muster on its own. Direct service can provide immediate relief, while public policy can aim at long-term solutions that attack root causes of hunger.

Case Study #4

15 minutes, optional

If you have time to do the case study during the session, hand out copies now. Give participants time to read, reflect and write on their own or in pairs or small groups. Then discuss the questions as a group.

If you don't have time during the session, hand out the case study at the end of the session as “homework.”

Brainstorming

50 minutes total

If you have more than an hour, you can expand the time taken for this exercise accordingly

Challenges

10 minutes

Put up, or turn the flip chart to, the sheet labeled “Challenges.” Ask what sorts of resistance, obstructions, weaknesses, or lack of resources – both within the congregation and the community and the wider environment – may make it difficult to put those resources to work to meet hungry neighbors’ needs. Such obstacles can include attitudes and beliefs, conflicts of interest and competing priorities, problems with relationships, rules and policies, etc. When finished, post the sheet(s) on the wall.

Our Gifts

10 minutes

Put up, or turn the flip chart to, the sheet labeled “Our Gifts.” Ask what assets and resources your congregation (or congregations) and its members have that might be used to help meet community needs. These can include not only financial assets, physical resources, and “time and talents,” but also relationships and motivation. For example:

- » Financial resources
- » Building space and location for a pantry or meal site
- » Land for a community garden
- » Volunteers to help at pantries or meal sites, organize food drives, etc.
- » Persons who are, or have contacts, in agriculture, retail, restaurant or other food-related business
- » Persons with special skills or knowledge in nutrition, personal finances, energy conservation, etc.
- » Volunteers who can write to legislators, meet with local officials and community leaders, submit letters or op-ed pieces to newspapers, etc.
- » Persons who belong to, or have relationships with, populations in the community who are most vulnerable to hunger

When finished, post the sheet(s) on the wall.

Potential Partners

5 minutes

Put up, or turn the flip chart to, the sheet labeled “Potential Partners.” Ask people to name other congregations, organizations, or groups who might collaborate on your anti-hunger efforts. List them (and the persons to be contacted, if known) on the newsprint. When finished, post the sheet(s) on the wall.

Next Steps

15 minutes

Talk about the difference between two types of responses to hunger by reading the following, or restating it in your own words:

We’re now ready to start to develop our own response to the problem of hunger in our community.

- » Our responses to hunger can address the symptoms by providing food to hungry people (emergency or supplemental food from pantries and meal sites; child nutrition programs, food stamps, WIC Program, etc.);

Session 5 » Taking Action Against Hunger

- » Our responses can also address root causes of hunger (community economic development that provides jobs that pay a living wage; affordable housing, health care and child care; quality education and job training and re-training, etc.)

Both are necessary: Hungry people need food *now*, but if the root causes are not addressed, people will continue to be food insecure and there will be a continuing need for emergency and supplemental food.

Put up, or turn the flip chart to, the sheet labeled “Next Steps.”

Ask participants to come up with some ideas for next steps. Encourage a mix of ideas that:

- » Address root causes as well as symptoms.
- » Involve both direct service and advocacy.
- » Includes both short-term and long-range activities. Short-term activities engage people in concrete actions that provide a more immediate feeling of accomplishment. Long-range activities can make lasting contributions to the community and bring participants to deeper levels of awareness and involvement.

You can distribute Handout #10, “Twenty Ways to Get Started” sheet, (p. 44) but encourage participants to come up with their own ideas as well.

After the sheet has been filled, prioritize the top three or four ideas. (If you have used more than one sheet for this list, be sure all are posted where the class can see them.) Go through the list and ask for a show of hands for each idea, and tally the responses next to each. (Use a bright-colored marker different from the one used to write the list). Ask each person to vote for no more than 3 ideas.

After the priorities have been set, ask those who signed the volunteer sheet which of the priority “next steps” they would like to work on, and note that in the “project” column. Ask if anyone who hasn’t signed the volunteer sheet would like to add their name now.

Conclusion

5 minutes

How you wrap up depends on the structure for moving these ideas forward. If there is an existing committee to take on these tasks, then you can tell the group that you will forward the ideas and the list of volunteers to the committee. If a new committee or task force needs to be formed, then you will need to contact the volunteers to set up a first meeting to explore these ideas further and to develop strategies and action plans.

Whatever the case, let everyone know that the conclusion of this study/action series is the beginning, not the end, and that all are encouraged to act on what they’ve learned. Thank everyone for coming to the class: their interest and participation has set the stage for the initiatives that will follow.

Closing Litany

5 minutes

Distribute copies of Handout #11, “Closing Litany” (p. 45). Assign the parts of “Leader 1” and “Leader 2” (if you did not do so earlier). The rest of the class is divided in half (right side/left side) to read the parts of “Group 1” and “Group 2”.

Handout #1 » Hunger in Wisconsin Quiz

1. Which of the following statements is not from the Bible?
 - a. God helps those who help themselves.
 - b. Those who are generous are blessed, for they share their bread with the poor.
 - c. Those who mock the poor insult their Maker.
 - d. Whoever is kind to the poor, lends to the Lord.
 - e. Do not love sleep, or else you will come to poverty; open your eyes, and you will have plenty of bread.
 - f. Speak out for those who cannot speak, defend the rights of the poor and needy.
 - g. Oppressing the poor in order to enrich oneself, and giving to the rich, will lead only to loss.
2. During 2004, requests for emergency food assistance by families—children and their parents—increased an average of 13 percent in major U.S. cities.
 True False
3. Which of the following groups make up the largest segment of people who are hungry in Milwaukee County?
 Elderly Children Low-income working families
4. In Wisconsin, hunger is only a problem in Milwaukee.
 True False
5. At a typical church food pantry in Milwaukee, clients receive a bag of food that will feed them for how long?
 2-3 days 5 days 10 days
6. Programs such as Food Stamps, the Women, Infants and Children (WIC) program, and school breakfast and lunch programs provide food for many low-income people, decreasing their need for emergency food.
 True False
7. In Wisconsin, hunger is caused by poverty and food availability.
 True False
8. Wisconsin ranks first in the nation in the percentage of low income children who participate in federally-funded school breakfast programs.
 True False
9. Congregations can do which of the following to help alleviate hunger? (circle as many as apply)
 - a. remember the hungry in prayer and worship
 - b. organize a food pantry, or provide volunteers to another pantry in town
 - c. volunteer at a local soup kitchen
 - d. assist low income families to move out of poverty: help find good jobs, job training, decent housing, transportation, and quality child care
 - e. advocate for public programs like Food Stamps and School Breakfast

Handout #1 » Hunger in Wisconsin Quiz

Answers

1. Quote (a) is from Benjamin Franklin. (In a recent poll, 75% of Americans identified this quote as being from the Bible.) All the other quotes are from the Book of Proverbs: b. 22:9; c. 17:5; d. 19:17; e. 20:13; f. 31:8-9 (abridged); g. 22:16.
2. True. (U.S. Conference of Mayors, 2004)
3. Children. (Hunger Task Force, Milwaukee)
4. False. While hunger is most problematic in central city neighborhoods, it still exists in metropolitan and rural areas. (University of Wisconsin, Wisconsin Food Security Project, 2004)
5. 2-3 days. (Wisconsin Food Security Consortium, 2000)
6. True. (United States Department of Agriculture, 2004)
7. True. Lack of resources, coupled with food availability (such as lack of transportation and grocery outlets) cause many people to be hungry. (Institute for Research on Poverty-UW Madison, 2003)
8. False. Actually, Wisconsin ranks dead last. (Food Research and Action Center, 2005)
9. All are actions congregations can take to respond to hunger in their communities.

Handout #2 » Who is Hungry in Wisconsin?

Definitions

Food Security: Access to enough food at all times for an active and healthy life. Nutritious and safe foods are readily available, and can be obtained in socially acceptable ways (for example, without resorting to emergency food supplies, scavenging, or stealing.)

Food Insecurity: A household is hungry or at risk of hunger. Families may worry about not having enough food. They may lower the quality of their meals or skip meals. Adults, and even children, may go without eating.

Hunger: The uneasy or painful sensation caused by a lack of food. Over time, hunger may result in malnutrition.

Malnutrition: A condition resulting from consuming too little or too much of a nutrient. Malnutrition can harm physical and mental health.

How Many People are Food Insecure?



one in eleven Wisconsin households are food insecure

- » **In Wisconsin, 9% of households** are food insecure (compared to 11.4% of US households).
- » **In Wisconsin, 540,000 people** live in households that are food insecure.



one in thirty-six Wisconsin households experience hunger

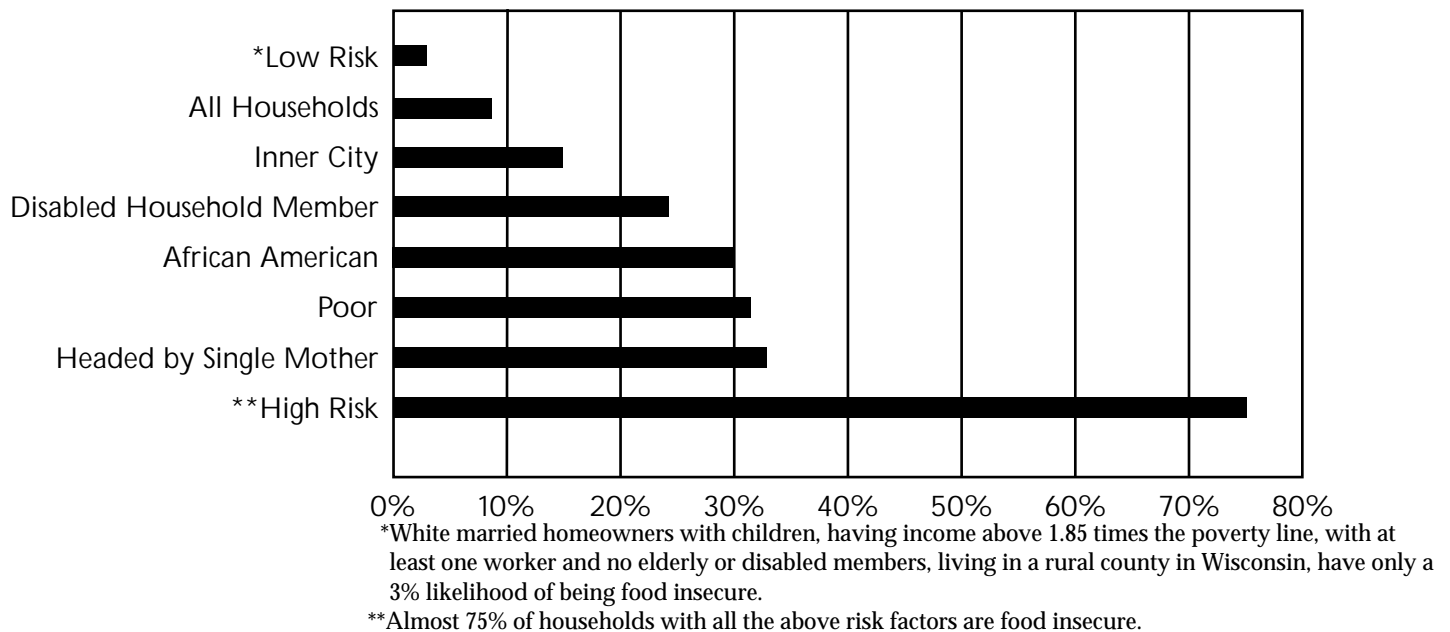
- » **In Wisconsin, 2.8% of households** experience hunger (compared to 3.6% of US households)

Handout #2 » Who is Hungry in Wisconsin?

Who is at Risk of Food Insecurity?

- » **Children.** Households with children experience food insecurity at more than double the rate of households without children.
- » **Single mothers.** 33% of households headed by single mothers are food insecure.
- » **The poor.** 31% of poor households are food insecure.
- » **African Americans.** 30% of households headed by African Americans are food insecure.
- » **The disabled.** 24% of households in which somebody is disabled are food insecure.
- » **Inner city-dwellers.** 15% of households in central cities are food insecure.

Food Insecurity among Wisconsin Households, 1996-2000



Who Else is Food Insecure in Wisconsin?

- » **The non-poor.** 65% of food-insecure households in Wisconsin have incomes above the poverty line.
- » **The employed.** Almost 75% of food-insecure households in Wisconsin have at least one worker. More than half have a full-time worker.
- » **Rural folks.** Food insecurity in Wisconsin's rural areas (7.5%) is less than that in the inner city (15%) but higher than that in other metropolitan areas (5%).

Sources:

U.S. Department of Agriculture, "Household Food Security in the United States, 2004."
University of Wisconsin Extension, "Food Security – A Summary of Research, February 2005."
Judi Bartfeld and Cecile David, University of Wisconsin-Madison, "Food Insecurity in Wisconsin, 1996-2000."

Part 1: Definitions

- » Have you heard “food security” or “food insecurity” used in this way before? How do the definitions help you to imagine what it would be like to live in a household that is “food insecure”? How does it make you feel to think of yourself as either “food secure” or “food insecure”?
- » How are “hunger” and “food insecurity” different but related?

Part 2: How many people are food insecure? How many households experience hunger?

- » What surprises you about these statistics?
- » How would you compare hunger and food security in your own community to these statistics? Give reasons or examples to support your understanding of the food security situation in your community.

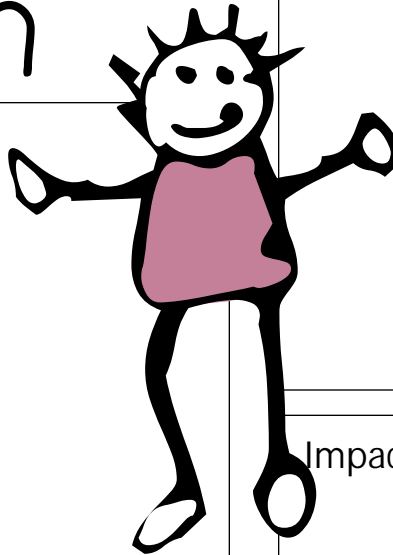
Part 3: Who is at risk of food insecurity in Wisconsin? Who else is food insecure in Wisconsin?

- » What surprises you about the groups at risk or the related statistics?
- » What do you think of the contrast between the “high risk” and “low risk” groups?
- » Note that, while low-income households are especially at risk of hunger, not all food insecure households are poor, and not all poor households are food insecure. What reasons can you think of for this? Does that change your image of who the “hungry people” are?

Children

Impacts on Behavior

- » Aggression
- » Destructive behaviors
- » Hyperactivity
- » Irritability
- » Anxiety
- » Passivity and withdrawal
- » Difficulty getting along
- » More need for special services
- » Poorer mental health
- » Behavioral disorders
- » Depression and suicide



Impacts on Learning

- » More absences, tardiness, suspensions
- » Less ready and able to learn
- » Impaired cognitive functioning and development
- » Fatigue and difficulty concentrating
- » Lower test scores and poorer school achievement
- » Repeating a grade
- » Difficulty grasping basic skills

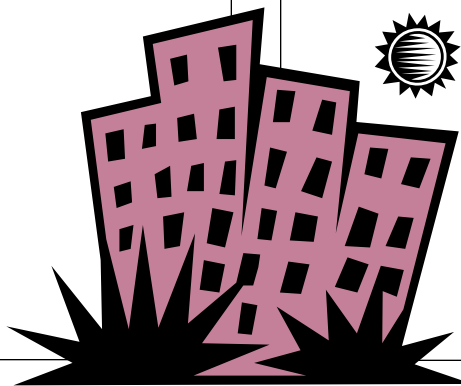
Impacts on Health

- » Poorer overall health
- » Sick more often:
Sore throats, colds, stomach-aches, headaches, fatigue, ear infections
- » Iron deficiency anemia
- » More frequent doctor visits and hospitalization
- » Low height for age
- » Low birth weight

Others

Impacts on Adults

- » For the elderly, hunger and malnutrition can make chronic and acute diseases worse and speed the onset of degenerative diseases.
- » Obesity can result when families rely on less expensive, less nutritious, high-calorie foods to stave off feelings of hunger.



Impacts on the Community

- » Higher rates of school failure
- » Poorer returns on educational investments
- » Weakened workforce productivity
- » Increased health care costs
- » Lost knowledge, brainpower, and productivity

Sources:

Center on Hunger and Poverty, Brandeis University. "The Consequences of Hunger and Food Insecurity for Children: Evidence from Recent Scientific Studies." June 2002. www.centeronhunger.org/pdf/ConsequencesofHunger.pdf; Food Research and Action Center, "Health Consequences of Hunger," www.frac.org/html/hunger_in_the_us/health.html

Handout #5 » A Family Budget

A Family Budget

This is a budget for a family of four in Milwaukee County (two parents with one pre-schooler and one school-age child). Both parents are working and earning \$6.50 (minimum wage). Look at your monthly expenses below. You are fortunate that you have state subsidized childcare and family to help take care of your children, and you have health insurance provided through your job. Imagine that you are the mother or father in the family. Like many parents, you will have to make decisions about how to spend your money. Using the scenarios listed below, rework your family budget to compensate for events that happen in your life. Remember that you must pay rent (otherwise you become homeless). You also have no retirement or savings.

Expenses	Current Budget	YOUR Adjusted Budget
Rent for 2-bedroom apartment	\$ 650.00	
Phone (no long distance)	35.00	
Electricity / Gas	60.00	
Water	15.00	
2 Bus Passes	105.00	
Medical Care	0.00	
Clothing	60.00	
Subsidized Child Care	200.00	
Groceries	450.00	
Personal Care, Cleaning Supplies, School Supplies	50.00	
Entertainment / Vacation	0.00	
Total Expenses	\$ 1625.00	
Monthly Income (after taxes)	1665.00	
Left over	\$ 40.00	

- Scenario #1 Your youngest child gets sick and you take him/her to the doctor. The co-pay on the doctor visit, tests, and medications cost around \$150 dollars. How will you pay the medical bill?
- Scenario #2 Your mother gets very sick. You need to care for her so you have to miss 4 days of work. This means that you lose \$304 this month.
- Scenario #3 You experience a cold snap and your electricity bill goes up by \$75 dollars. How will you pay the bill this month?

BARRIERS TO FOOD SECURITY

Lack of Income

Poverty and hunger are closely linked. Nearly 1/3 (31%) of poor families in Wisconsin are food insecure.

But even people with moderate or high incomes can experience hunger and food insecurity if their income drops during part of the year, or if they encounter higher expenses from an uninsured illness, accident, or loss.

Lack of Access

Some rural and inner city residents have difficulty getting to a grocery store that is far from where they live. They may rely on more expensive, lower-quality food from nearby convenience stores.

Lack of Knowledge

Some people may not have the knowledge or skills to prepare nutritious meals on a limited budget. Or, they may not know how to handle and store food safely.

Lack of Participation

Some people may be eligible for food and other assistance programs, but don't participate because:

- » They are unaware of or confused about the programs that are available;
- » It too difficult to apply – the forms are too long or too hard to understand, the application site is hard to get to, or the application site is not open on evenings or weekends;
- » Some programs, such as School Breakfast, may not be available where they live.

Additional Barriers

Lack of personal, family, or community resources due to: age; disability; divorce or death of spouse; lack of education; homelessness; loss of job benefits; or absence of social support programs.

Handout #6 » Causes of Hunger

Unemployment

Some people can't find work for various reasons, including recessions, age, disability, or homelessness.

In 2004, Wisconsin's unemployment rate was 5.0%. It was 16.4% for African-Americans, and 10.3% for Hispanics¹

Insufficient Employment

Many jobs do not generate enough income to lift a family out of poverty.

Almost ¾ of food-insecure households in Wisconsin have at least one worker. More than half have a full time worker.²

LOW INCOME

HUNGER & FOOD INSECURITY

When families do not have enough income to cover all their expenses, they may choose to eat less food — or eat cheaper, less nutritious food — rather than be homeless, or go without heat and electricity.

HIGH EXPENSES

Housing

Housing costs have risen much faster than income for lower-income households.³

The federal standard for affordable housing is 30% of income, but low-income families often pay more.⁵

Health Care

Health care and health insurance costs keep climbing.

More than 25% of Wisconsin residents under the age of 65 were without health insurance for all or part of 2002-03.⁴

Child Care

Workers with young children often need to pay for child care.

One year of day care for one child can cost a full-time worker more than tuition at the UW-Madison.³

Transportation

Families may need a vehicle to get to work or go grocery shopping.

It costs money to own and maintain a reliable vehicle. Many areas of Wisconsin lack adequate public transportation.³

¹Center on Wisconsin Strategy, "The State of Working Wisconsin: Update 2005," p. 3.

²University of Wisconsin Extension, "Food Security - A Summary of Research, February 2005.

³Wisconsin Community Action Program, "Poverty Matters: Facing Poverty in Wisconsin." (2005)

⁴Families USA, "Wisconsinites without Health Insurance," 2004.

⁵National Low Income Housing Coalition, "Out of Reach," 2005.

Handout #7 » Community-Based Food and Nutrition Assistance

Community organizations help hungry & food-insecure person in many ways:

Outreach

Connecting people to assistance programs provides substantial long-term help.

- » Making referrals so more low-income families receive federal help like FoodShare (food stamps), WIC, School Breakfast, Summer Food & Elderly Meals. Also referrals to health care, energy assistance, housing and tax credits programs because they help family budgets.
- » Providing computer workstations where families can check eligibility or apply for programs using the ACCESS website (www.access.wi.gov). Assisting people in using the website.
- » Creating or distributing resource guidebooks (like *Wisconsin Connections*) to help households and food providers to know what programs are available (www.uwex.edu/ces/connections).

Food Distribution

Giving people food helps to meet a household's immediate needs.

- » Providing emergency supplies of free groceries through a local food pantry. Some offer culturally appropriate food for Hmong or Hispanic families.
- » Providing hot meals for low-income people at a meal site ("soup kitchen").
- » Delivering food to homebound persons. Local "Meals-on-Wheels" deliver meals to seniors, and food pantries sometimes deliver boxes of groceries to people's homes.
- » Serving meals to kids (summer/after-school) and seniors.
- » Supporting a "food bank" which serves as a central collection point for large amounts of donated and purchased food. Food is given to pantries for free or at very low cost.

Food Collection

Collecting food from community sources helps families have more to eat.

- » Organizing food drives to collect nonperishable food for pantries or fund-raisers to buy food. Partnerships are often with schools, churches, civic or community groups, or letter carriers.
- » Encouraging home gardeners to plant extra rows of produce to donate to a food pantry.
- » Collecting unharvested crops from farmers' fields or surplus produce from farmers' markets.
- » Collecting prepared foods from bakeries, restaurants, cafeterias, or conferences for meal sites.

Food Sources

Increasing access to healthy, low cost food through normal channels is also important.

- » Establishing or expanding community gardens so people can raise their own food. Distributing packets of seeds with brochures on gardening and canning so pantry clients can start gardens.
- » Starting or expanding voucher programs so families can buy nutritious produce at local farmers markets. This also generates revenue for farmers who may be low-income themselves.

Handout #7 » Community-Based Food and Nutrition Assistance

- » Subsidizing the purchase of shares in a Community Supported Agriculture farm also adds fresh, high-quality produce to diets of low-income households while helping support farmers.
- » Working with a local Chamber of Commerce to bring a supermarket to an underserved area.
- » Promoting the food-buying club SHARE to save money, or starting a SHARE distribution site.
- » Starting a campaign to collect grocery store gift cards so pantries can help families to shop at retail food stores.

Education

Knowledge is one of the most powerful weapons against hunger.

- » Arranging for nutrition education to help pantry clients make the most of their resources. This can include cooking, menu planning, shopping, gardening, preserving food, and budgeting.
- » Conducting a community education or media campaign to increase awareness of local hunger issues and programs, and encourage donations, volunteers, and public policy advocacy.

Source:

Jonathan Bader, "A Summary of Wisconsin's Community Based Hunger Prevention Grants Program 1995-1999," Wisconsin Community Action Program Association. Revised and updated.

Nutrition Programs

- » The FoodShare Program (formerly Food Stamps) provides food assistance to eligible households by means of a plastic debit card that can be used like cash to buy food at grocery stores. Over 340,000 Wisconsin citizens use FoodShare each month to stretch their food budgets. Participating households receive an average of \$175 per month.
- » WIC provides food and nutrition services to pregnant women, new mothers, infants and young children. Over one third of all pregnant women in Wisconsin and nearly one quarter of infants and preschool children participate. The value of a monthly food package averages \$50 per person & \$120 for infants.
- » School Lunch & Breakfast. The National School Lunch Program is available in nearly every public school and in many private schools in Wisconsin. The School Breakfast Program is available in about one-third of public schools and some private schools. While both programs serve students at all income levels, children in low to moderate income households can qualify for free or reduced price meals. Last year 190,000 children received free or reduced-price School Lunch each day and over 42,000 students ate free or reduced-price School Breakfast. The combined value is about \$75 per month per student.
- » Elderly Nutrition Programs provide seniors with low-cost, nutritious meals as well as opportunities to socialize with others. There are two programs to meet the differing needs of elderly persons - Congregate Meals and Home Delivered Meals. An estimated 70,000 seniors in Wisconsin participate in Elderly Nutrition Programs each year.
- » The Wisconsin Nutrition Education Program (WNEP) helps low income families and individuals choose healthful diets, prepare food safely, and become more food secure. There are currently WNEP projects in 59 Wisconsin counties.
- » Food Buying Clubs can provide significant discounts on food, saving customers up to 40% compared to retail food prices. The two food buying clubs in Wisconsin serve almost 10,000 households each month.

Health Insurance

- » Medical Assistance (Medicaid) guarantees health care coverage to elderly & disabled persons, pregnant women, children, and adult caretakers of children who qualify for services. Income and asset limits vary. Each month Medicaid provides quality health care coverage to over 500,000 people in Wisconsin.
- » BadgerCare provides free or low-cost health coverage to uninsured working families with children. You may be eligible if you meet income limits, have no health insurance, and don't have access to insurance through your or your spouse's job. Even if your employer has a health plan you could still qualify if it does not meet the state's standard. Over 114,000 people participate in BadgerCare.
- » Healthy Start increases access to Medicaid health care coverage for pregnant women, infants, and children. Families with health insurance may apply. More than 100,000 people receive health care coverage through Healthy Start.
- » Medicare is the nation's health insurance program for people age 65 or older, for some people with disabilities under 65, and for people with End-Stage Renal Disease. Medicare provides coverage for inpatient and outpatient care, doctors' services, diagnostic tests, medical transportation and other services. Over 750,000 people in Wisconsin receive Medicare coverage.

Handout #8 » State and Federal Assistance Programs

Energy Assistance

- » Home Energy Plus Program. Wisconsin helps qualifying households pay their energy bills and reduce the amount of energy they use through the Wisconsin Home Energy Assistance Program (WHEAP) and Weatherization Assistance. They pay some energy costs, weatherize homes, and help in a heating or energy crisis. Over 100,000 households receive energy assistance each year. Bill payment assistance averaged over \$413 per household.

Child Care

- » Wisconsin Shares Child Care pays a portion of child care costs for working families with limited income. Families choose their own providers. Wisconsin Shares helps over 29,000 families with child care expenses, paying a monthly average of \$800 per household.

Economic Support and Job Assistance

- » Child Support. If your children live with you most of the time and their other parent lives elsewhere, the non-resident parent may be required to pay child support to help with the expenses of raising your children. Your county Child Support Agency (CSA) provides many services, including getting child support for your children. Last year CSAs provided enforcement services to 352,000 Wisconsin households who received an average of \$144 per month in child support payments.
- » W-2 provides a wide range of employment and training services to help limited income parents find and keep jobs. W-2 provides monthly cash payments to eligible custodial parents for participating in subsidized work-experience positions that prepare them for regular employment. W-2 can also provide case management services to any eligible parents — including non-custodial and minor parents — and can help families access many other types of assistance. Each month W-2 helps over 14,000 families move toward greater self-sufficiency.
- » Supplemental Security Income provides cash assistance to low-income persons who are elderly, or persons of any age who are blind or disabled. Last year over 95,000 Wisconsin residents received monthly SSI payments, which can be as high as \$628 for an individual and as much as \$949 for a couple.
- » **Unemployment Insurance** provides temporary cash assistance to qualified unemployed workers who are looking for a job. Benefits are based on past earnings, not on current income. In 2003 an average of 117,000 people each month received unemployment compensation. Benefits averaged \$229 per week.

Tax Credits

- » The Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) lowers taxes and provides cash back to low and moderate income workers. There are two related programs — the federal EITC and the Wisconsin EITC. In tax year 2001 over 189,000 tax filers claimed both credits. Households averaged more than \$2000 in combined state and federal credits.
- » The Homestead Credit is a Wisconsin tax benefit for low and moderate income renters and homeowners. It can lower your state income taxes, and provides cash back if your income is too low to pay taxes. In 2001, over 204,000 tax filers in Wisconsin claimed the Homestead Credit which averaged \$487 per household.

Handout #9 » Public Policy Advocacy

Speak out for those who cannot speak . . . defend the rights of the poor and needy. – Proverbs 31:8-9

What is public policy advocacy?

Public Policy is the way we govern our communities through laws and administrative rules. *Public Policy Advocacy* is a way of loving our neighbors as ourselves by helping shape public policy in ways that will affect their lives for the better.

What is an advocate?

An *Advocate* is anyone who cares enough about the good of his or her community and its members to speak up on their behalf. An advocate does not have to be an “expert” or a “political activist,” only someone who takes seriously the rights and responsibilities of citizenship. An advocate learns about issues affecting the community and expresses his or her views and concerns to the appropriate policy makers, building relationships with them through regular contact.

Why should I be an advocate?

Being an advocate means being:

- » A **good steward** of the gift of citizenship in a democracy;
- » A **faithful witness** to God’s will for a just, peaceful, and healthy world;
- » A **loving neighbor** to those whose lives are impacted by public policies – especially the most vulnerable among us.

How can I be an advocate?

Most public policy advocacy involves telling elected officials about your support for, or opposition to, a specific piece of legislation. This can be done by letter or e-mail, or at an office visit or a public hearing.

Find out who your legislators are and how to contact them:

To find the name and contact information for your representatives in the Wisconsin Legislature and the U.S. Congress, go to www.legis.state.wi.us/waml and enter your address, or call the legislative hotline, 1-800-362-9472. Most legislators have little interest in the views of non-constituents.

Write a letter to your state or federal legislator:

- » *Be Personal* – a handwritten letter receives much more attention than a form letter or card.
- » *Be Concise* – Limit your letter to one or two paragraphs.
- » *Be Specific* – State clearly what you want your legislator to do on a single topic or bill.
- » *Be Polite* – Be respectful, even when you strongly disagree.
- » *Give a Reason* – Say what motivates you to write, and/or support your position with a fact.

Handout #9 » Public Policy Advocacy

- » *Identify Yourself* – Include your name and address on both the envelope and in your letter.
- » *Follow up* – for example, express thanks or disappointment for the way your legislator voted.

Send an e-mail to your legislator:

- » Your legislator's website may include a form you can fill out to send an e-mail.
- » Follow the same guidelines as for letters, and include your name and mailing address.

Visit with your legislator or a staff member:

A visit with the appropriate member of your legislator's staff is usually easier to arrange. You can meet them at their office in the U.S. or State Capitol, or in their home district.

- » Plan ahead – Familiarize yourself with the issue and the legislator's views.
- » Make an appointment – Tell them the purpose of the meeting and who will be attending.
- » Be prompt, patient, and flexible – legislators have busy schedules
- » Be prepared – Bring supporting information, and a concise fact sheet to leave behind.
- » Don't forget the "Ask" – Make a specific request to the legislator and note the response.
- » Keep in mind that every visit is a step in developing a long-term relationship..
- » Make notes to help you or others to prepare for future contacts.
- » Send a thank-you letter reviewing the meeting, and any additional information requested.

Offer Testimony at a Public Hearing:

The Wisconsin Legislature holds public hearings at which citizens may respond to pending legislation. You can register to testify for or against the bill or to provide information without taking a position. You can also register for or against the bill without testifying. If you want to testify:

- » Be prepared – Identify your key points and anticipate counterarguments from the other side.
- » Do your homework on the backgrounds and views of the committee members
- » Bring about 25 copies of your testimony to give to the committee staff and reporters.
- » Limit yourself to 5 to 10 minutes. Use vivid examples, stories, or exhibits.
- » Be polite, but don't be let yourself be intimidated or diverted. Thank the committee.

For a longer version of this guide and other Public Policy Advocacy resources, visit www.wichurches.org.

Handout #10 » Twenty Ways to Get Started

- 1 Organize a letter-writing campaign in your church or group of churches to tell local, state, or national government officials of your concern about hunger in your community.
- 2 Plan and promote a food drive in your congregation, its neighborhood, or in a group of congregations.
- 3 Organize a field trip for members of your congregation — or your church's youth group — to visit a local food assistance program to see how it works and whom it helps.
- 4 Take up a special collection for a local food assistance program.
- 5 Plan a special worship service on the theme of hunger, including a special offering of nonperishable food items or money for a local food assistance program, and/or an opportunity to write letters. Hold it around National Hunger Awareness Day (see www.hungerday.org) or Bread for the World's Lobby Day (see www.bread.org).
- 6 Organize a community forum or series of forums to discuss how to increase food security in your community. Invite local experts to speak.
- 7 Convene a group to do a more thorough community food security analysis. Collaborate with other churches and local service and advocacy organizations.
- 8 Participate in a local CROP walk to raise funds to fight hunger. (www.cwscrop.org/wisconsin/)
- 9 Have members of your congregation (and/or your church's youth group) participate in a "30-hour famine" (see www.30hourfamine.org).
- 10 Produce a series of bulletin inserts or church newsletter articles about the extent, effects, causes, and solutions to hunger in your community.
- 11 Submit letters to the editor, or an op-ed piece, to your local newspaper on the problem of hunger in your community.
- 12 Find out what volunteer opportunities there are at local food service organizations, and recruit volunteers from your congregation. Post sign-up sheets and offer transportation for volunteers to and from the site.
- 13 Set up a special bulletin board or display area at a prominent place in your church with information about hunger and food assistance programs in your community.
- 14 Investigate the possibility of your church serving as a meal site for a senior, after school, or summer nutrition program.
- 15 Turn part of your church grounds into a community garden where low-income people can raise their own produce. Start a program where experienced gardeners can work with children after school and weekends to learn about gardening and how to prepare meals with fresh produce.
- 16 Arrange for a small group to meet with your state legislators or congresspersons when they are in your district, to talk about hunger and poverty issues in your community.
- 17 Find out when a state legislative committee will be holding a hearing on a proposal having to do with hunger or a related issue (poverty, health care, housing, etc.), and offer testimony on behalf of the interests of low-income people.
- 18 Attend a candidates' forum and ask those who are running for office how they would address food security issues in your community.
- 19 Offer a poverty or hunger simulation exercise for your congregation or community group.
- 20 Join the Wisconsin Council of Churches Public Policy Advocacy Network (call 608-837-3108 or e-mail advocacy@wichurches.org)

Don't let yourself be limited by these ideas! They are only a sampling of what can be done. Think deeply about your community and your congregation, and you may come up with some fresh and original ideas that take advantage of the uniqueness of your situation.

For contact and resource information to help you act on these ideas, visit the "Hunger Resources Section" of the Council's website, www.wichurches.org.

Handout #11 » Closing Litany

From Matthew 25:31-46

- Leader 1 When the Son of Man comes in his glory, he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, and he will put the sheep at his right hand and the goats at the left.
- Leader 2 Then the king will say to those at his right hand, "Come, . . . inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me."
- Group 1 (Right side) Then the righteous will answer him, "Lord, when did we see you hungry and give you food, or thirsty and give you something to drink? And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and give you clothing? And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?"
- Leader 2 And the king will answer them, "Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me."
- Leader 1 Then he will say to those at his left hand, "Depart from me, for I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not give me clothing, sick and in prison and you did not visit me."
- Group 2 (Left side) Then they also will answer, "Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not take care of you?"
- Leader 1 Then he will answer them, "Truly I tell you, just as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me."
- Leader 2 Let us pray:
- All Gracious God, you have given us many and various gifts with which to serve you and to care for one another: gifts of time and energy, gifts of skills and talents, gifts of material goods and personal relationships.
- You have given us the gift of citizenship in a democracy, where we have the freedom and responsibility to speak out on behalf of public policies that are responsible, just, and compassionate.
- Grant us the strength and wisdom to put these gifts to work in our community, so that those who are hungry may receive their daily bread, and that your will may be done on earth as it is in heaven. Amen.

Case Study for Session 1 » Hunger on Our Doorstep



CASE STUDY #1

The Hagen Family

The Hagen family lives in a small town in rural Wisconsin. There have been many farm failures in the area in the past couple of decades, and the town has lost most of its businesses. Mr. Hagen wasn't able to find work in town, so he has to commute to a town twenty miles away to his job, which pays more than minimum wage but not enough to lift them out of poverty. Mrs. Hagen stays home to take care of their toddler. She also helps her elderly mother-in-law, who lives in the same town, with housework, meals, and doctor visits. Their one vehicle is a beat-up old car that gets poor mileage and breaks down regularly, which Mr. Hagen uses to get to work. Their two school-age children eat cereal for breakfast at home, but are hungry after their hour-long bus ride to school, where they can get a reduced price lunch, but not breakfast. They receive Food Stamps, but the country store in town where they can get groceries has a limited selection and little fresh produce. It is relatively expensive, owing to high delivery costs and low sales volume, but they can seldom make it to the supermarket in the nearest city. The local food pantry in a neighboring community provides them a box of groceries twice a month, which usually lasts them 2-3 days.

1. What particular challenges do the members of the Hagen family face because they live in a rural community?
2. Where might they turn for help? How could a local congregation help the Hagens and other members of the community who are also facing food insecurity?
3. What resources are the Hagens able to access? What political or economic developments might threaten – or lead to improvements in – those resources and benefits?
4. How would you feel if you were Mr. Hagen? Mrs. Hagen? One of the older Hagen children? What do you think you would pray for if you were in their situation?

Case Study for Session 2 » Hunger on Our Doorstep



CASE STUDY #2

Brenda and her children

Brenda is a single mother living with two children, ages 5 and 2, and is a member of your congregation. She works part-time at a megastore for \$6.50 an hour. Her abusive and unemployed ex-husband moved out last month, leaving her with no money, no family health insurance, no child support, and a pile of overdue bills. She has no relatives in the area. She has been evicted from her apartment because she can't pay the rent and has to move — but has nowhere to go. She has an old car — but no gas. She missed work all last week because she had to stay home with her sick 2-year old, and her daughter has been complaining of a toothache. She has ten dollars and only a little food in the house. Winter is coming, and the children have outgrown their winter jackets.

1. Make a list of the family's needs. Which are emergency needs? Which are long-term?
2. How does the community lose when the problems of families like Brenda's are not addressed? How does the community benefit when they are?
3. Put yourself in Brenda's place. Imagine her lying awake in bed at night, praying. Write down a prayer you think she might be saying.

Case Study for Session 3 » Hunger on Our Doorstep



CASE STUDY #3

Badgerville Food Pantry

The Badgerville, Wisconsin Food Pantry got its start in the late 1980's in the basement of a Methodist church, after clergy in the area noticed a marked increase in the number of people coming to them for money to buy food. But the space was limited, and elderly and disabled clients had a hard time negotiating the stairs. After several moves, the pantry found quarters in what used to be a small warehouse. The pantry has strong support from area businesses, churches, schools and civic organizations. Over 3000 clients are served each month. Still, it is sometimes a struggle to cover the costs of maintaining the pantry — rent, utilities, staff salaries, insurance, maintenance, etc. — and to keep enough volunteers and food on hand to serve those in need.

Recently the pantry switched to a “client choice” approach. This allows people to choose their own food, rather than handing them a box of pre-selected groceries. The clients now have a greater sense of self-determination and there is less waste of unwanted food. “Birthday Kits” — with cake mix, frosting, candles, balloons, and small gifts — are given to families who can't afford much in the way of celebrations. At Christmastime, poor families are able to pick out toys for their children. The pantry offers nutrition education and personal and financial counseling services. A computer with internet hookup is available at the pantry so that clients can use the ACCESS website to help them determine their eligibility for Food Share (Wisconsin's Food Stamps program).

The Director of the pantry says, “It is sometimes discouraging to think about how many years we have been in operation and yet the problem of hunger hasn't gone away — and may even be increasing. But I take comfort knowing we've been a blessing to so many, and we have been blessed in return.”

1. In what ways does this pantry show its respect for those who use it? What other practices would be important for treating the pantry's clients with dignity?
2. Why do you think the pantry makes a point of helping clients access government assistance programs?
3. How do you respond to the director's statement? Why do you think the problem of hunger has not gone away? In what ways might the pantry workers have been blessed by those they serve?
4. What kind of support can area businesses and churches give to a food pantry?

Case Study for Session 4 » Hunger on Our Doorstep

PHOTO: SHARON CEKADA



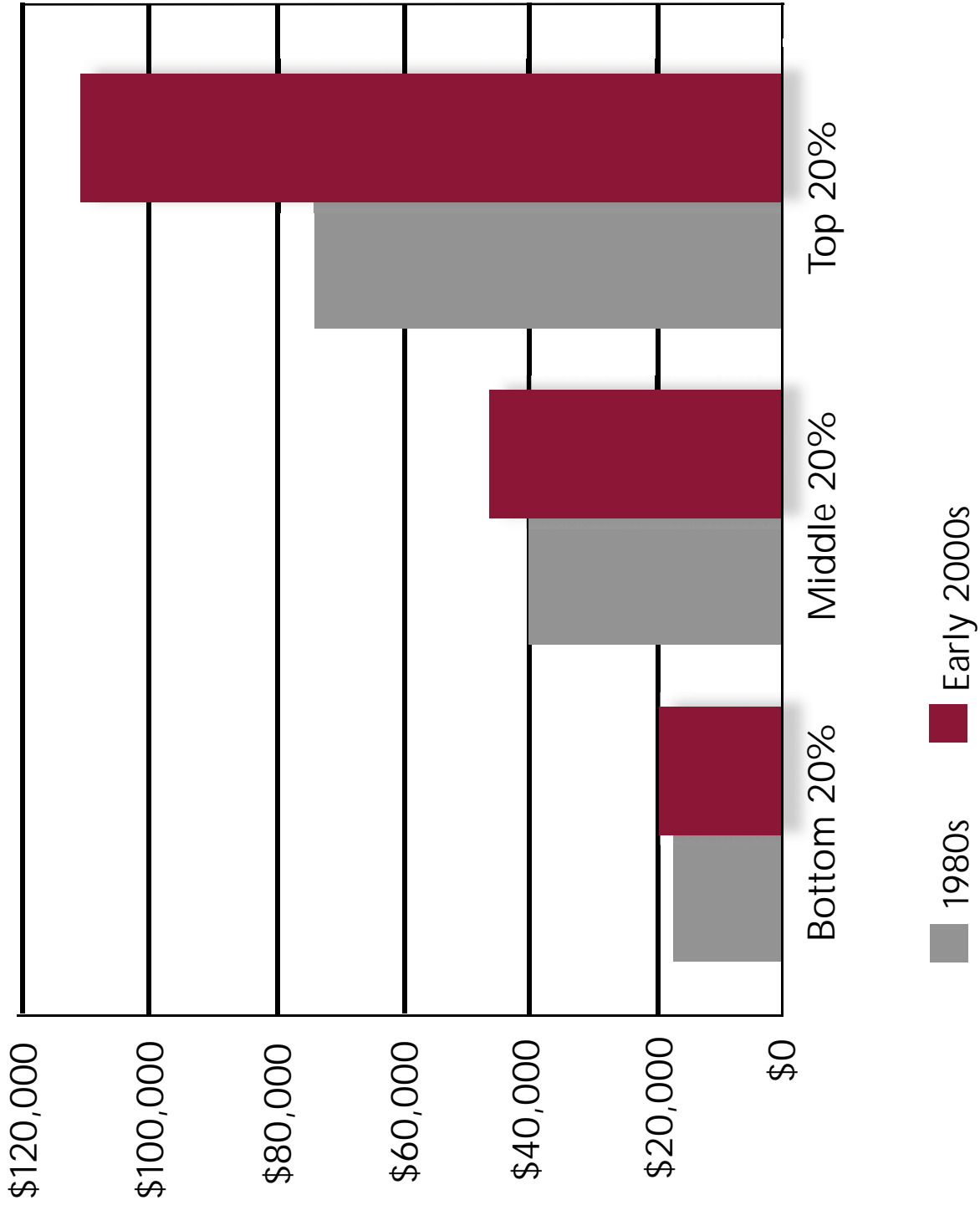
CASE STUDY #4

The Xiong Family

The Xiong family are recent Hmong immigrants living in a city in central Wisconsin. They were sponsored by a church in another community, where they settled initially, but they moved here to be with other members of their extended family. Their four children quickly learned English in school, but the language has been a struggle for the mother and father, who also worry that the family will lose its traditional religion and customs. When the father was unemployed for several months, they made use of a food pantry near their neighborhood, but the boxes of groceries they were given were unfamiliar and culturally foreign to them. Back in Laos, the Xiong family farmed, but where they live now they do not even have a garden plot. They would like to raise vegetables to sell at the weekly farmer's market in town, but have no idea where to begin.

1. What factors contribute to the Xiongs' food insecurity? What obstacles to receiving assistance do they confront?
2. What could be done to help the Xiongs become more self-sufficient? Who in the community could provide additional resources and opportunities?
3. What could a congregation do to help the Xiongs and others in similar situations? How could a congregation address those factors in the larger context that affect their food security?
4. What would be the benefits to the community of helping families like the Xiongs?

Average Income by Family Income Group



Need and Response Exercise: "Need" Slips

Copy this page onto one color paper and the next page onto a different color. Cut the slips apart on the dotted lines.

There is no food in the house and my children are hungry. [1]

I need to find a job so I can support myself and my children. [1]

We can't buy good, fresh produce in our neighborhood. [1]

We need a food pantry but don't have anywhere to put it. [2]

I'm embarrassed to go to the food pantry, and I can't choose the food my family likes or that meets their dietary needs. [1]

Our food pantry is running out of food. [2]

After paying my rent, there isn't enough money left over for food. [1]

Our food pantry can't be open more than a few days a month because of lack of staff. [2]

My children go hungry during the summer because they don't get school meals. [1]

People in our community don't think we have a hunger problem here, or don't know what can be done about it. [2]

I'm going to have a baby but I'm worried that I can't provide good nutrition before or after its born. [1]

Our schools can't maintain good learning environments because of children who are disruptive or can't concentrate because they are hungry. [3]

I want to know how to give my family a healthy diet on our very tight budget. [1]

We're seeing more health problems among older people because they are having difficulty preparing or affording nutritious meals. [3]

We can't afford health insurance, and I don't know how I can pay our medical bills and still buy food. [1]

Members of our church and community would like to help, but we don't know what to do. [3]

I have to pay so much for heat this winter we sometimes don't have enough for food. [1]

I don't vote for programs to help low-income people because my constituents don't care about them. [4]

I want to work full-time, but I can't afford to pay someone to take care of my children. [1]

I don't vote for spending on hunger programs because I don't think there are any hungry people in my district. [4]

Need and Response Exercise: "Response" Slips

I can tell other people who need food where they can find a food pantry or free meal site. [1]	Our food pantry provides hungry people with a bag of food once or twice a month. [2]
I can volunteer to help out at the food pantry until I can find a full-time job. [1]	Our organization has set up a community garden for low-income people to grow their own produce. [2]
I can write to elected officials to tell them what food and nutrition assistance programs have meant to me and my family. [1]	Someone from our local anti-hunger organization or emergency food provider can speak to a church or community group. [2]
Our company can provide healthcare benefits for all our employees. [3]	Wisconsin Works (W-2) helps parents with limited income and assets to find and keep jobs. [4]
Our church has some extra space that we'd like to put to good use for the community. [3]	School Lunch and Breakfast programs provide children with free and reduced-price meals. [4]
Our community's churches, organizations, and businesses can organize a food drive. [3]	Elderly Nutrition Programs can deliver meals to an individual's home, or serve meals to seniors at a community center. [4]
We can write letters to the editor about hunger problems and solutions in our community. [3]	The Wisconsin Nutrition Education Program teaches how to choose healthy diets and prepare food safely. [4]
We can encourage businesses to employ residents of low-income communities in jobs that pay a living wage. [3]	BadgerCare and Medicaid provide health coverage for low-income people. [4]
We can work to promote and develop affordable low-income housing in our community. [3]	Wisconsin Home Energy Assistance Program and Weatherization Assistance can pay a portion of household energy costs or provide help to weatherize homes. [4]
Our church can encourage members to write letters and make visits to their elected official to tell them about hunger in our community. [3]	Wisconsin Shares Child Care subsidizes child-care for low-income workers. [4]
Our community's churches, businesses, and service organizations can recruit food pantry volunteers. [3]	WIC (Women, Infants and Children) provides food and nutrition services to pregnant women, new mothers, infants and young children. [4]
Summer food programs provide meals to low-income children when they are not in school. [3]	The Food Stamp Program provides a plastic debit card that can be used at grocery stores. [4]

Evaluation Form

Please help us to track how this resource has been used, support those who use it, and improve on future study-action guides by completing and returning this form to: Hunger on Our Doorstep, Wisconsin Council of Churches, 750 Windsor Street, Suite 301, Sun Prairie WI 53590. Fax: (608)837-3038

1. What format did you use for the sessions? (Sunday mornings, weekend retreats, etc.) _____

2. Who participated? (members of one church, several congregations of different denominations, etc.) _____

3. Who was your guest speaker (Session IV)? _____

4. What priority actions did your group decide to do? _____

5. Overall, was this study guide informative and helpful to you and your group? Why, or why not? _____

Evaluation Form

6. Additional Comments _____

Your Contact Information:

Your Name _____
Address _____
Phone Number and E-mail _____

Your Church or the Organization sponsoring this study:

Name _____
Address _____
Phone Number and E-mail _____

Name and contact information for class participants who wish to be added to the Wisconsin Council of Churches Advocacy network (use additional sheets if necessary).

Name	Phone	Email	Mailing address
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____

Thank you for your input!

Publicize your workshop

You can copy or scan these three announcements to promote your workshop in bulletins, newsletters, or with posters. Add details in the white space provided:

1. Dates, times and place of sessions
2. How to sign up, with deadline (If advance registration is required)
3. Whom to contact for more information

To match the font, use Book Antiqua or Maiandra GD. For a color version of these ads, see www.wichurches.org.

In our community, there are people who are hungry or who struggle to feed their families. Who are they? Why are they hungry? What can we do to help?

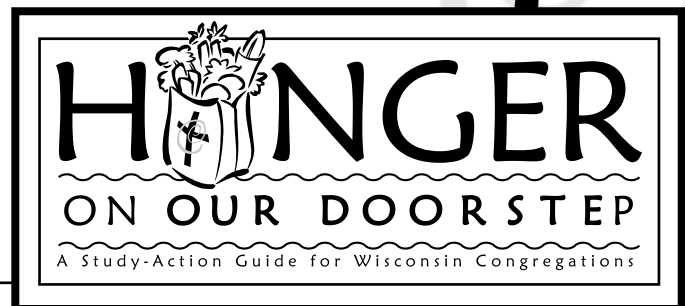
Come and learn with us

as we explore this problem using a new study-action curriculum from the Wisconsin Council of Churches. We will hear about what is being done about hunger in our own communities and find ways to put our faith to work on behalf of our neighbors who are in need.



In our community, there are people who are hungry or who struggle to feed their families. Who are they? Why are they hungry? What can we do to help?

Come and learn with us as we explore this problem using a new study-action curriculum from the Wisconsin Council of Churches. We will hear about what is being done about hunger in our own communities and find ways to put our faith to work on behalf of our neighbors who are in need.



In our community, there are people who are hungry or who struggle to feed their families.

Who are they?

Why are they hungry?

What can we do to help?

Come and learn with us

as we explore this problem using a new study-action curriculum from the Wisconsin Council of Churches. We will hear about what is being done about hunger in our own communities and find ways to put our faith to work on behalf of our neighbors who are in need.



H  **NGER**
ON OUR DOORSTEP
A Study-Action Guide for Wisconsin Congregations

Why should congregations care about hunger in their communities?

Food is one of the most basic human needs.

Yet there are many people in our communities who do not have enough to eat, or who worry about where their next meal is coming from. Lack of money to buy food is the main reason. Even working parents must sometimes make hard choices about whether to buy food, pay for medical care, or pay the rent. Sometimes they go without food themselves in order that their children may eat.

Without dependable access to food for a safe and nutritious diet, no one can lead a happy and productive life. Hungry or undernourished children have difficulty learning, and their health suffers. Adults who don't get enough of the right foods to eat are stressed, dispirited, and unproductive. When individuals go hungry, the community bears the burden of lost human potential.

It is not God's will that people suffer hunger. God "has filled the hungry with good things" (Luke 1:53) and Jesus had compassion on the hungry crowd (Matthew 15:32). We are to pray for our daily bread (Matthew 6:11). Caring for the poor and feeding the hungry is a basic responsibility of God's people (see, for example, Proverbs 22:9).

Today, Christians, and others, are finding ways to care for hungry members of their own community by direct service programs such as food pantries, soup kitchens, and community gardens.

Christians also care for their neighbors through public policy advocacy. This advocacy is not a matter of being for or against a political party or candidate. It is speaking (or writing) to those in positions of power and authority in support of policies that will promote the good of the community and *all* its members.

Eliminating hunger in our communities requires actions on many different fronts, by many different means. We hope this study-action guide will help your congregation begin or strengthen its own response to hunger on our doorstep.

750 Windsor Street, Suite 301
Sun Prairie, WI 53590

Phone (608) 837-3108

Fax (608) 837-3038

Web site www.wichurches.org

E-mail wcoc@wichurches.org