



Companion Bible Study for
Food Movements Unite



Presbyterian Hunger Program

The Authors

Written by Blair L. Buckley, Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary student interning with Compassion, Peace and Justice, and Andrew Kang Bartlett, PHP staff. May our reflections and actions contribute to God's vision for how we treat one another in all parts of the food system and how we steward God's glorious creation.

Additional copies of this guide are available as a download at www.pcusa.org/food

Introduction

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Food Movements Unite is a challenging, sometimes disturbing and ultimately hopeful book written by people who are working to enlarge and unite food justice movements in the United States and around the world. Part of the book's premise is that the globalized and industrialized food system is unjust, unsustainable and fundamentally broken. For example, in the first chapter Paul Nicholson presents a surprising statistic from the United Nations: "70% of the people in the world who are starving are farmers; 70% of these farmers are women." This means that 700 million people (490 million of them women) of the nearly 1 billion hungry people in the world are the producers themselves. This is not because they don't produce enough, but because droughts and floods, farm debts, and the low prices they get for crops have pushed them into abject poverty. The other major premise is that individuals, groups and alliances have been doing amazing things to turn the tables and build life-giving food and farming systems that can reduce hunger and poverty and can sustain a world that will feed our children and their descendants. As these efforts and groups unite into a broad-based movement, their power and effectiveness will grow so that this vision becomes reality.

Author videos are available online at www.foodmovementsunite.org.

Ways to Use the Guide

We suggest choosing one of three ways to proceed, depending on how much time you want to devote to the study: (1) your group reads the whole book and decides on an approach; (2) your group reads at least the readings outlined for six sessions; (3) your group reads at least the readings outlined for four sessions.

Here are some suggestions for group leaders and facilitators:

Prior to the First Session

- Invite a few people to help plan, do outreach, and coordinate the study group.
- Do ample outreach. Ask people who plan to participate to sign up and commit to buying a book.
- Order copies of the book and distribute them at the first session. Books are available at <http://www.foodfirst.org/en/Food+Movements+Unite>.
- Decide who will facilitate each session. Sharing this responsibility can provide variety and build leadership.

First Session

- Circular seating is usually the best way to foster dialogue. The facilitator should ensure that a small number of people don't dominate the discussion. Encourage people to raise their hands before speaking and ask people who have not spoken much if they want to add something.
- As part of introductions, ask a question or two about people's connection to food and farming. This is an important step to build community and trust, which will lay the foundation for better dialogue and action. Remember that people can talk longer than time allows for, so carefully monitor this, especially if it is a big group.
- Someone can give a brief introduction to the book. You can increase participation and share leadership by having information for someone to read or paraphrase. (See <http://www.foodfirst.org/en/Food+Movements+Unite>.)
- Review the summary of PC(USA) farm and agriculture policies (appendix 1).
- Before adjourning, review the plan for the next session (what chapters to read, when and where you will meet, plans for food if you will be eating together, who is facilitating, and so on).
- (Optional) If you have extra time during an additional gathering or perhaps over a meal, you might want to do one or more of the following:
 1. Continue getting to know one another and talk about people's experiences with food and farming. Big groups can break up into groups of three or four. Dialogue questions can be prepared beforehand and put on small handouts or written on a board. Some question ideas are offered in appendix 2.
 2. Watch and discuss a video. Appendix 3 lists suggested videos, many of which can be borrowed from Presbyterian Hunger Program's video library or borrowed from Netflix.
 3. Together read prayers and litanies about food, farming, hunger and justice. (See <http://3bl.me/4kxa92> from the PC(USA) global food crisis fast materials.)

The Rest of the Sessions

- Open with a prayer of your own or one from the fast materials.
- Someone can do a review of the readings, if desired, and then you can begin dialogue.
- If you have at least 90 minutes, it can be great to have speakers (from the group or from outside) on a related topic at one or more of the sessions. For example, you could invite a farmworker, farmer, food justice advocate, food chain worker (meat packer, processor, cook, restaurateur, fast-food employee), soup kitchen coordinator, or food policy council member.
- Share food or snacks or do a food-related activity such as canning or freezing fruits and vegetables.

Final Session

- Save some time toward the end of the session to have people talk about how they might join with food movement work locally. Discuss how local efforts connect with national and global food sovereignty. These can be individual commitments, small group steps or bold plans. The group can covenant to hold one another individually accountable in some way, or can discuss and commit to a group strategy. Follow-up gatherings might be necessary to further discuss and carry out action plans.

Dialoguing options include:

- Use the Bible study questions from the guide as the basis for dialogue. If your group is especially short on time, pick three or four of the suggested discussion questions.
- Develop your own questions and approach to dialogue. (One person or a small group could develop and propose the approach to the group.)
- Read “A Brief Orientation to Dialogue” about the difference between discussions and dialogues at <http://3bl.me/yadadm>.
- Consider using a Goethean conversation method (see <http://3bl.me/a2g69x>).

Options for Studying Food Movements Unite

I. Study Group Reads Entire Book

The group should discuss at the first meeting at what pace they want to read the book. They should also decide how to do the dialogues (see below). Sharing food or a meal at the gatherings is suggested.

II. Six-Session Study Group

- See previous suggestions for the first session.
- Participants read at least the six outlined readings prior to each session and can be encouraged to read the whole book.
- Use the six-session study guide.

III. Four-Session Study Group

- See previous suggestions for the first session.
- Participants read at least the four outlined readings prior to each session and can be encouraged to read the whole book.
- Use the four-session study guide.



Session 1

People should come having read the pages listed below. During introductions, ask people to say why they are interested in this topic. A two-minute summary of the book could be given based on the “Introduction” chapter. Give participants the handout on PC(USA)’s food and farming policy (appendix 1). People could start getting to know each other by responding to questions. Make up your own or choose from the questions in appendix 2.

READING

“Without Clarity on Parity, All You Get is Charity”—George Naylor (pages 35-41)

1) Head

Iowa corn farmer George Naylor asserts that farm policies, and more recently corporate agribusiness practices, have worked against family farmers. What are some examples Naylor provides?

2) Theological/Biblical

Read Jeremiah 32:6-15 aloud. In her commentary on this lectionary text, the Rev. Noelle Damico explains that during the time of the prophet Jeremiah, the richer were getting richer by making the poor poorer. The wealthiest families, under the leadership of the monarchies of both Judah and Israel, began to consolidate land to grow single crops to trade for foreign goods. As a result many families were forced to borrow from moneylenders at high interest rates, using their land as collateral. Many defaulted on these loans and lost their land. In this passage, where Jeremiah talks to King Zedekiah, the prophet insists that God is using the Babylonian invasion to rid Judah of corrupt leaders who have forsaken God’s covenant by exploiting their poor sisters and brothers. In the restoration of Judah that Jeremiah prophesies, covenantal land practices will be put back in place—land will be sold and bought and will be kept within the family, instead of being taken by greedy rulers and elite families.

What connections can you draw between the critiques Jeremiah makes in this passage and those made by George Naylor?

3) Heart

On page 41, Naylor cites ecologist E.O. Wilson and Frances Moore Lappé to make the case that food sovereignty, with democratic decision making and attention to economic fairness and environmental impacts, is “our only hope to eat well, and live within our ecological limits.” How do you feel about this?

4) Transformational

Naylor hopes that a unified food movement will lead the way in restoring democracy in economic systems. Given the forces working against this (such as agribusiness concentration and political influence), what could give such a movement enough power and numbers to succeed? What other groups and movements have common interests and goals?

5) Hands

What, if anything, does reading this make you want to do? Personally? With a group?



Session 2

READINGS

1. “Preface, Food Sovereignty: A Struggle for Convergence in Diversity”—Samir Amin
(pages ix-x)
2. “People Need Food Sovereignty” —João Pedro Stédile and Horácio Martins de Carvalho
(pages 21-27 until Brazil section)

1) Head

At the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization’s World Food Summit in 1996, La Via Campesina introduced the concept of food sovereignty. What is food sovereignty and how is it different from food security?

2) Theological/Biblical

Martin Luther King Jr. spoke about the “Beloved Community” where all children are included and affirmed. In what ways does the vision of food sovereignty compare to the Beloved Community and community consciousness? Are there ways it does not?

3) Heart

You may have heard that a frog that is put in a cauldron of boiling water leaps out, but a frog that is put in cold water which is then heated gradually will not perceive the danger and will boil to death. The U.S. food system, where one in seven people is chronically hungry, family farmers are systematically pushed off their land, food and farm workers are exploited, animals are mistreated, and millions are dying of diet-related illness, is the water slowly brought to boiling. If all this had happened suddenly, we would leap up and strongly oppose the changes. But it has become this bad gradually over decades. Do you feel as though you are a frog? Are we a society of frogs? Why or why not?

4) Transformational

Samir Amin (paragraph 4) places most U.S. family farmers in a relatively new economic position as subcontractors caught in a mass production model. This puts them in a marginalized position that potentially connects them and their interests to their Third World counterparts (peasant producers) and the growing underclass of consumers of “mass food” produced by the corporate agrifood industry worldwide. Does this prospect seem unlikely? Are you hopeful about food movements uniting in the United States and globally to produce positive change?

5) Hands

Many congregations run or support feeding programs that help to alleviate hunger. The United Nations cites the right to food as a basic human right (see <http://3bl.me/4r46yx> for more information). What kinds of actions are needed to ensure this economic right for people in our area and around the world?



Session 3

READING

“Women’s Autonomy and Food Sovereignty”—Miriam Nobre

1) Head

What are differences and similarities between typical feminist values of the Global North and those of the Global South, such as those described in this essay?

2) Theological/Biblical

Ellen F. Davis, professor of Bible and practical theology at Duke Divinity School, has an agrarian translation of Proverbs 31. She translates what is often known as the passage about the capable woman in Proverbs 31:15-17 as:

She rises while it is still night
and provides food for her household
and tasks for her servants-girls.
She considers a field and buys it;
With the fruit of her hands,
she plants a vineyard.
She girds herself with strength,
And makes her arms strong.

How does this Bible passage describe how women might be empowered through farming?

3) Heart

Are there things that women (and men) from the Global North can learn from women living in the Global South?

4) Transformational

Brainstorm practices that might give you a more intimate relationship with the food you eat. These could be new practices or things that you have had success with in the past. Challenge yourself to put one or two of these practices into action.

5) Hands

Are there ways that you can support the work of the World March of Women and their fight for food sovereignty? Are there advocacy issues or campaigns you are (or want to be) involved in that directly or indirectly support the efforts of people in the Global South to achieve food sovereignty?



Session 4

READINGS

1. “Survival Pending Revolution”—Raj Patel (pages 115-119)
2. “Beyond Voting With Your Fork”—Josh Viertel

1) Head

How do we make sure that our food movement work is “relevant to those with the least before it is relevant to those with the most”? (page 142).

2) Theological/Biblical

The Confession of 1967 from the PC(USA) Book of Confessions says that “God has created the peoples of the earth to be one universal family. In his reconciling love, he overcomes the barriers between brothers and breaks down every form of discrimination based on racial or ethnic difference, real or imaginary. The church is called to bring all men to receive and uphold one another as persons in all relationships of life: in employment, housing, education, leisure, marriage, family, church, and the exercise of political rights” (C67, 9.44).

How might the Slow Food movement be an act of reconciliation through Christ?

3) Heart

Reflect on a meaningful interaction with another person that challenged you and made you reconsider your assumptions about food or poverty, such as the example of Leah in pages 144-146. If you like, share this experience with the group.

4) Transformational

Do you understand yourself to be a “cofarmer,” as the essay suggests at the bottom of page 138? Reflect on the many ways you have been connected to food throughout your life. What are some changes you could make to better align your eating practices with your values?

5) Hands

Think of tangible ways you can use the pleasure of eating and the “power of the table” (page 147) to work for justice and to stand in solidarity with all people.



Session 5

READINGS

1. “The Restaurant Opportunities Center”—José Oliva
2. “Consciousness + Commitment = Change” —Lucas Benítez

1) Head

What are the injustices that many restaurant and farm workers face today? How does the Restaurant Opportunities Centers United (ROC) model from the “Restaurant Opportunities Center” chapter address these injustices for restaurant workers? How does the Coalition of Immokalee Workers’ (CIW) equation “Consciousness + Commitment = Change” help produce leaders who will confront and end injustice?

2) Theological/Biblical

Read the story of the apostles sharing their belongings in Acts 4:32-35. How does the apostles’ sharing their property allow them to testify to the power of Christ’s resurrection in their lives? How does this relate to the vision of “shared prosperity” (page 176 of the “Restaurant Opportunities Center” reading)?

3) Heart

José Oliva mentions that food has always been at the “center of my story and my people’s story” (page 173). Has food been an important part of your story, your family, or your identity? Reflect and consider sharing with the group.

4) Transformational

Reflect on an experience of consciousness-raising or education that laid the foundation for a transformation in your life. What was it about that experience that made such change possible?

5) Hands

With the group, brainstorm ways to adopt the Coalition of Immokalee Workers’ platform for change—which is described in the first half of page 167 of “Consciousness + Commitment = Change”—in your own context and community.



Session 6

READING

“Racism and Food Justice”—Brahm Ahmadi (page 155 to the end)

Reserve time for discussion and individual or collective next steps.

In the first part of the chapter, Brahm Ahmadi uses the case of Oakland to explain how the “entire structure of our economy” shifted to support “the new middle-class American Dream” based in the suburbs. “Explicit and implicit methods were used to ensure that the new suburbs would not include people of color.” Inner cities were underfunded and now “food deserts” are rampant in urban neighborhoods largely populated by people of color. (Food deserts are also common in rural areas because mom-and-pop groceries have closed due to the demise of family farms, increasing poverty, rural depopulation, and in some cases the building of big-box superstores.) Ahmadi asserts, beginning on page 155, that given the entrenched, systemic nature of the food crisis, it must be tackled from all angles.

1) Head

What has recently changed in the political landscape that provides new opportunities for addressing the food crisis in the United States? Why does Ahmadi warn about corporations taking advantage of this opportunity?

Solving structural problems in society requires hope, love and patience. What might be the advantages and, according to Ahmadi, the dangerous disadvantages of Michelle Obama’s goal of eradicating food deserts in only seven years?

2) Theological/Biblical

Read the story about Isaac’s birth and Sarah’s banishment of Hagar in Genesis 21. Keeping in mind that Hagar was an Egyptian slave, think about the role her Egyptian culture and practices played in the story, especially in relationship to food and power. How do the dynamics of race or ethnicity and power play out in our modern food system?

3) Heart

When you think about the problems of the food system, whether they be related to hunger, health, environment, farming, labor or community development, and when you consider the promise of a food justice movement, what do you feel passionate about doing?

4) Transformational

The food movement has been in its formative years for the last decade or so. How can communities increase their capacity to develop alternative food systems? What are some ways to economically sustain this work? How can we unite efforts?

5) Hands

Is there one thing (small or big) you will do to further justice and sustainability in the food system? Is there something you propose to do with this group or with another? How will you hold yourself and the group accountable?



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Session 4

READINGS

1. “Consciousness + Commitment = Change” Lucas Benítez
2. “Racism and Food Justice”—Brahm Ahmadi (page 155 to the end)

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1) Head

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4 Session Study

4) Transformational

Reflect on an experience of consciousness-raising or education that laid the foundation for a transformation in your life. What was it about that experience that made such change possible?

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Is there one thing (small or big) you will do to further justice and sustainability in the food system? Is there something you propose to do with this group or with another? How will you hold yourself and the group accountable?

Appendix 1. PC(USA) Farm and Agriculture Policies

Whenever the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) addresses the complex question of the nation's food and farm policies, we refer to a General Assembly faith conviction "that God our Creator has made the world for everyone, and desires that all shall have daily bread" (UPCUSA, Minutes, 1979, page 189). This underlying conviction of a right to food shapes convictions about agriculture and rural life in this country.

For almost half a century, General Assemblies have spoken strongly in support of "the family farm as basic to a sound agricultural economy" (PCUS, Minutes, 1947, page 198). They have called for policies that provide "reasonable price and income stability to American farmers ... at a level which gives incentive for full production" (UPCUSA, Minutes, 1976, page 504), "preserves prime land for agricultural purposes" (PCUS, Minutes, 1977, page 182), "and transforms agrarian structures in the interests of more justice for small farmers and landless farm laborers in other countries so that those countries can more adequately meet their own domestic food needs" (PCUS, Minutes, 1977, page 181).

In a 1985 statement, the General Assembly wrote, "we believe it is the responsibility and duty of the Federal government to enact a comprehensive, long-term food and fiber policy, with specific price, production and conservation goals designed to protect and enhance family-farm agriculture in the United States.

"We believe further that this nation must establish a strong system of sustainable agriculture and prevent the continuing concentration of land in the hands of a smaller and smaller number of owners" (Minutes, 1985, page 399).

Of particular concern has been the continuing loss of land by minority farmers. The 1983 General Assembly urged the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) "to develop and expand programs aimed at stopping the loss of land by black farmers" (Minutes, 1983, page 360).

Despite the general prosperity in the United States during the last few years, many small farmers and ranchers and their rural communities have faced difficult financial times. African-American farmers were finally given some redress by the USDA, but many believe it was too little, too late.

The 211th General Assembly (1999) adopted a resolution on the "Farm Crisis in America." It calls for advocating for the survival of family farmers, ranchers, and rural communities, including African-American and other racial ethnic farmers and farmworkers, by raising public and consumer awareness in congregations and presbyteries of the problems facing family agriculture and the individuals in those families. The resolution also requests that the PC(USA) advocate for and support trade policies that assure domestic food security for all nations and assure that no nation's agricultural producers have their product valued at a globally traded surplus price (Minutes, 1999).

The 214th General Assembly (2002) approved "We Are What We Eat: Recommendations and Report," which called on Presbyterians to influence the agricultural revolution by "pray[ing] for farmers/ranchers throughout the world, farm and agricultural workers, rural churches and communities, directors and employees of transnational corporations, lawmakers, rural churches and communities, directors and employees of transnational corporations, lawmakers, and for each of us as we make choices related to the food we produce, process, and consume." Recommendations included calling on the Presbyterian Washington Office to "alert Presbyterians about upcoming public policy related to the agricultural revolution and food production/

consumption and encourage members of the PC(USA) to contact legislators urging support of the family farmer/ranchers, farm and processing plant workers, and equitable world trade policy” (Minutes, 2002, pages 533-559).

The 2002 Assembly also addressed the issue of farmworker justice, “offer[ing] its prayers for the farm workers of Florida” and “call[ing] upon Presbyterians to endorse and support the national boycott of Taco Bell Restaurants and all Taco Bell products until Taco Bell, Six-L’s Corporation, and the Coalition of Immokalee Workers mutually agree to begin negotiations that can lead to resolution of inhumane working and living conditions.” (Minutes, 2002, page 571) On March 8, 2005, the Coalition of Immokalee Workers and Taco Bell Corporation reached a historic agreement that both concretely addresses farmworkers’ wages and working conditions and is the first step in moving the fast-food industry toward a new way of doing business that respects human rights.

Appendix 2. Small-Group Dialogue Questions

1. What did the food system look like two generations ago? What did families eat? What has changed since then?
2. What is your favorite comfort food? Why?
3. Should foods with genetically modified organism (GMO) ingredients be labeled? Why or why not?
4. Were your parents or grandparents or their parents farmers, fishers or ranchers?
5. Do you have any experience growing food?
6. Are there changes in the food system you would like to see?
7. Do you have any ideas on how to make good, healthy food affordable for people on a limited income?
8. What is a food desert?
9. Have you ever thought about becoming a farmer?
10. Is food too expensive in the United States?
11. Do farmers get a fair price for the food they produce?
12. What do you want to eat right now?
13. What do you wish you had not eaten today?

Appendix 3. Videos on Food and Farming, and on Food and Faith

Selected Videos in the Presbyterian Hunger Program Lending Library, Contact php@pcusa.org.

“Beyond Organic: The Vision of Fairview Gardens”	“Fast Food Nation”
“Big River (a King Corn companion)”	“Food Fight”
“Deconstructing Supper”	“Food for Thought”
“Dirt (The Movie)”	“Fresh”
“Food, Inc.”	GMOs & the Changing Face of Agriculture Series
“The Future of Food”	“Home Grown”
“Global Banquet: Politics of Food”	“Ingredients”
“Homecoming: Sometimes I Am Haunted by Memories of Red Dirt and Clay”	“Les glaneurs et la glaneuse”
“It’s Never Been My Turn”	“Lunch Line (The Movie)”
“Justice on the Table”	“The Meatrix” and sequels (shorts, online)
“King Corn”	“Nourish: Food + Community”
“Sweat Equity”	“Our Daily Bread”
“Strong Roots, Fragile Farms”	“The Real Dirt on Farmer John”
Globalization We Can Grasp videos from Accra	“Super Size Me”
Confession Covenanting for Justice, available at http://3bl.me/sbgndy	“Truck Farm”
Other Food Movies:	“What’s for Dinner?”
“The End of the Line”	“The World According to Monsanto”

Additional copies of this guide are available as a download
at www.pcusa.org/food

Connect with us:

Presbyterian Hunger Program

100 Witherspoon Street

Louisville, KY 40202

(800) 728-7228 ext. 5832 or (502) 569-5832

php@pcusa.org

PDS #25432-11-305



General Assembly Mission Council