

FOOD

Rich Living

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Rich Living:

Making sustainability integral to lives of faith



We live in a remarkable period of human history with standards of living and life expectancy higher than ever before. And yet, there is a lot of evidence that our levels of consumption are unsustainable. Our Western lifestyles are destructive to the systems that are vital for life on our planet.

Jesus stated that the greatest commandments were ‘to love God and love your neighbour’ (Matthew 22:37-39). However, consciously or unconsciously, we participate in a way of living that often contributes to the pollution of our atmosphere, the poisoning of our oceans and waterways, and the degradation of our land – this has a negative impact on our local and global human and non-human neighbours.

Pieter Bruegel the Elder’s 16th century painting depicting the *Tower of Babel* (Genesis 11:1-9) captures something of our current plight. In building a civilisation that strives to reach ‘into the heavens’ we have become more and more disconnected from the earth from which we are formed and upon which the tower’s structure is dependent!

But it doesn't have to be this way. Across the world, facing the challenges of ecological degradation, global climate change and growing economic inequality, communities are choosing alternative, more sustainable, ways to live.

Christians too, are to be agents of hope. Another 16th century painter, Paolo Veronese, offers a contrasting vision in his *The Wedding at Cana* (John 2:1-11). Jesus takes the elemental gift of water and utilises this for the purpose of a joy-filled community celebration (water into wine!). This is a picture of the 'life in abundance' that Jesus says he comes to offer (John 10:10).

At A Rocha, we believe that Christian faith communities have the potential to offer glimpses of authentic 'rich living' – living in sustainable ways that care for the long-term wellbeing of our broader communities, composed of human and non-human neighbours.

This booklet is one of five in the Rich Living series – *Climate Change, Water, Food, Transportation, Stuff & Waste*. Designed for small groups of participants, each booklet consists of four studies (45-90 minutes in length) incorporating information, Scripture readings, discussion questions and practical activities. It is our hope that this material will assist your community to reflect upon how you live and offer practical steps to make sustainability integral to your lives of faith.

Would you like to see how the Rich Living resources are shaping the lives and actions of others? You can share your photos, reflections and new practices at: www.facebook.com/groups/ARochaNZ.RichLiving/

We look forward to seeing the practical steps your community is taking towards sustainable – and genuinely rich – living.

Study 1 – Food : You are what you eat

‘Man [humanity] is what he eats.’

Ludwig Feuerbach, *Concerning Spiritualism and Materialism*, (1864)



Reflect & Discuss

- How much time each day do you spend thinking about food?
- How much time do you spend each day preparing, cooking and eating meals?
- What is your favourite meal?

The Contemporary Western Food Culture

In twenty-first century Western culture we appear a little confused about food. In our societies there are a smorgasbord of cooking programmes on television, yet many spend very little time in the kitchen. Our meals often consist of pre-prepared, packaged supermarket dinners, eating on the run from fast-food outlets, or dining out at restaurants. Likewise, while we seem obsessed with the nutritional value of our food and new diets are constantly being marketed, eating disorders are prevalent and obesity is reaching epidemic levels. Meanwhile, globally, the world produces more food than at any previous time in human history and yet 800 million people (one in nine of the global population) still suffer from malnutrition or undernutrition.

How do we make sense of this? How do we eat in ways that bring wellbeing to our own lives, and those of our human and non-human neighbours, and the planet? These are the questions we'll explore in this booklet. We believe that to be faithful in fulfilling the greatest commandments of loving God and loving our neighbours (Matthew 22:37-39) and to be good caretakers of the Earth (Gen 2:15) – which belongs to the LORD (Psalm 24:1) – requires thinking intentionally about our eating practices.

Eating: A Spiritual Activity?

While 19th century philosopher Ludwig Feuerbach was a materialist, his statement expresses a profound spiritual truth. Like all creatures, our physical existence is dependent on the consumption of material matter. It is this food which provides us with the essential nutrients we require for our bodies to function optimally: proteins, carbohydrates, fats, vitamins, minerals and water. And, at least for humans, food also has a religious and sacred quality.



There are approximately 613 commandments given by God to Israel and contained in the first five books of the Bible (Torah). Almost one third of these commandments relate to agriculture, horticulture, the treatment of livestock, the ceremonial use of food, and day to day general food consumption.

For all cultures and religions throughout human history, the tasks of hunting & killing, sowing & tending, harvesting & threshing, preparing & cooking, and eating itself, have been surrounded with rites and rituals. The Bible is full of stories about food ceremonies practised by ancient people and tales of shared meals. It begins with the creation of material matter: creatures and plants nourished by life-giving springs of water and animated by the breath of God's life-giving Spirit. Humans are then given a special responsibility to 'cultivate and keep'

the Garden (Genesis 1-2). The biblical narrative ends with a mirroring story: humanity gathered at a wedding banquet in a city-garden, where crystal clear, life-giving water nourishes abundant fruit trees (Revelation 21-22).



Reflect & Discuss

- Have you previously reflected upon the relationship between your food and faith?
- Have you heard a sermon, read a book, watched a video about food and faith?

- Do you think of eating food as a religious/spiritual activity? Why or why not? If you do, discuss what that means to you.



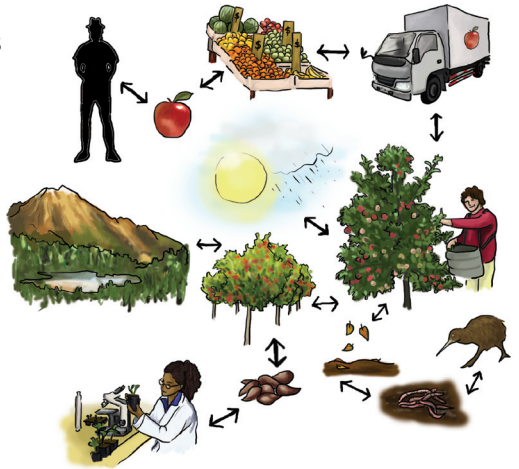
Activity: Brainstorm

As a group brainstorm and record all the stories from the Bible you know in which food plays a central role.

Food & Relationships

Like all of God’s creatures we consume food to live. This essential practice connects us with the larger web of life and is our primary way of connecting with God’s creation. When we eat an apple, whether conscious of it or not, we are participating in the great mystery of life. In multiple ways we are connected:

- to other creatures – worms and microbes creating soil-fertility and to pollinating insects and birds.
- to ancient geological processes that have shaped the land and developed the soil.
- to previous human communities who have cared for the land, nourished soil, and bred disease-resistant apple variations.
- to contemporary human communities – orchardists, wholesalers, retailers.
- to the global biosphere – the climate and rainfall which sustains the apple tree.



Activity: Food Web

Choose a single item of food and together create a diagram that illustrates the web of relationships that have contributed to this element that sustains you. Include past, present and future.

Sharing food with each other is also integral to human cultures. Just look at your own photos of important family events and see how often food features!



Activity: Food Memories

- Recall and share a recent memorable meal experience. What made this meal memorable?

Food as Gift and Sacrament

‘We depend upon other creatures and survive by their deaths. To live, we must daily break the body and shed the blood of Creation. When we do this knowingly, lovingly, skillfully, reverently, it is a sacrament. When we do it ignorantly, greedily, clumsily, destructively, it is a desecration. In such desecration we condemn ourselves to spiritual and moral loneliness, and others to want.’

Wendell Berry, *The Gift of Good Land: Further Essays Cultural and Agricultural* (Berkeley, CA: Counterpoint, 1981), 281.



Reflect & Discuss

- What emotions are invoked within you by Berry’s imagery of the ‘body and blood’ of Creation, upon which we depend for our existence?
- What does it mean to think of eating other beings in the Creation as a sacramental activity?



Activity: Read Scripture

Read Genesis 2:15-17 & 3:1-24.

Have one person read the passages out slowly. Focus on the significance of food within these narratives.

- What are the web of relationships that are described within these passages?
- How do the actions of humans with regard to food impact on this web of existing relationships? (especially 3:14-19)
- In Genesis 2:15-17, Yahweh freely gives to humanity the fruit from all trees within the garden – with the exception of one. How might this concept – of food as gift – frame our understanding and evaluation of human actions in 3:6?

*The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.
And the LORD God commanded the man, 'You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die.'*

Genesis 2:15-17 (NIV)

Food as a Commodity

Cooking shows have existed since the birth of television – and prior to this they were on radio. Cooking shows of the 1940s were focussed on promoting recipes that were friendly to the rationing reality of the war and post-war period.

As culture has changed so has the genre of television cooking shows. What does the style of contemporary cooking shows – in which people compete against others and the look and presentation of food and chefs are given prominence – tell us about contemporary societal attitudes towards food?

'We eat first with our eyes.'

Apicius – a 1st Century Roman gourmand





Reflect & Discuss

- Do you watch cooking programmes? How do you think these shape your attitude towards food?
- How many cookbooks do you have? How many of these do you use?
- Have you taken photos of food dishes to share with others via social media or blogged about a meal?
What was the motivation behind this?
- To what extent is food an object of desire that you idealize and fantasize about?



Activity: Food Motivation

- In each of the situations listed below, think about what meal you would eat. Why would you make this food choice?
 - Dinner by yourself at the end of a busy day?
 - Eating with friends and/or family to mark an important event?
 - A meal with others who have less financial resources than yourself?

Food Porn?

Every day, it feels as though we are being exposed to ever more appetizing (and typically high calorie) images of food, what some... call 'gastroporn' or 'food porn'.

Moreover, the shelves of the bookstores are increasingly sagging under the weight of all those cookbooks filled with high-definition and digitally-enhanced food images....

Many of us eat while mindlessly watching screens (TV, or smartphone), failing to focus our attention on the flavour experience.... The pleasure of seeing virtual food (the hunger for images, or 'digital grazing') while eating has in some sense superseded the pleasure of seeing the real thing.

C. Spence et al., *Brain and Cognition* 110 (2016) 53–63, [54 & 59].

- What are the factors you usually consider when purchasing food?
- Do you think you predominantly view food as a gift or a commodity?



Activity: Pray

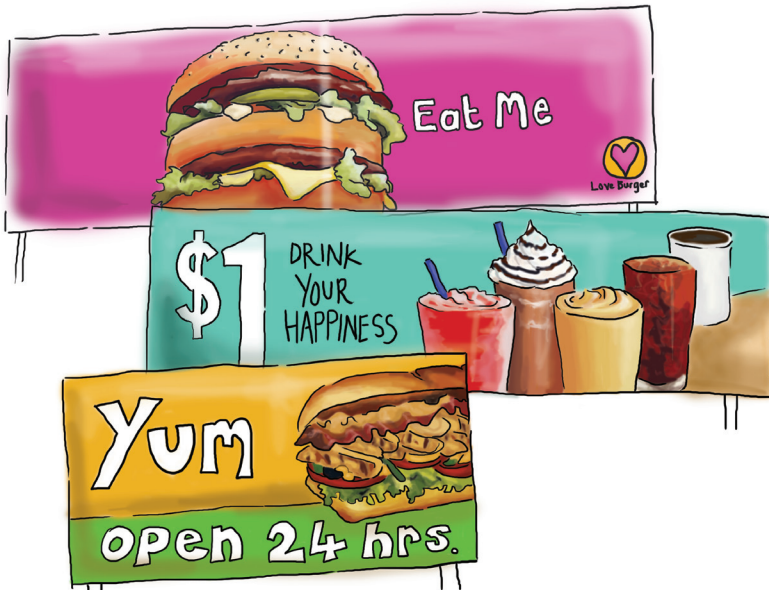
Spend a few moments in silence reflecting on how you view food. In response, offer short prayers of confession, thanksgiving etc.



Activity: Bringing it Home

This week take note of all the advertising you see for food: on billboards, on screen, in newspapers and magazines.

- How is food presented in these adverts?
- How do these adverts push us to see food only as a commodity? What food practices can we adopt to resist this?



Study 2 – The Modern Food System

‘The discovery of agriculture was the first big step toward a civilized life.’

Arthur Keith

In Study 1 we saw how eating food is not merely a biological necessity but also a deeply spiritual activity – connecting us to a web of relationships with fellow humans, other species, land, soil, water – and to the Creator God. We also explored how different ways of viewing food – as a sacrament, a gift, or a commodity – determines our actions. In this study we’ll turn our attention to the modern food system we are part of, exploring its tremendous productivity but also its negative impacts.



Reflect & Discuss

- Reflect on the food advertisements seen during the last week.



Agriculture – Re-shaping the Earth and Ourselves

Human agriculture is the single most powerful force shaping the earth since the glaciation of the last Ice age. Our earliest ancestors were hunters and gatherers. However, around 12,000–10,000 B.C. human cultures began to transition towards settled agricultural communities. Our ancestors employed specialised crop cultivation and irrigation. They cut down forests to create space for their domesticated plants and animals and started to selectively breed them. It wasn’t long before *homo sapiens* began to re-shape both the natural world itself and their understanding of their relationship with it.

The surplus of food produced by this first agricultural (Neolithic) revolution laid the foundations for population growth, the specialisation and division of labour and the emergence of trade. It also led to cultural developments

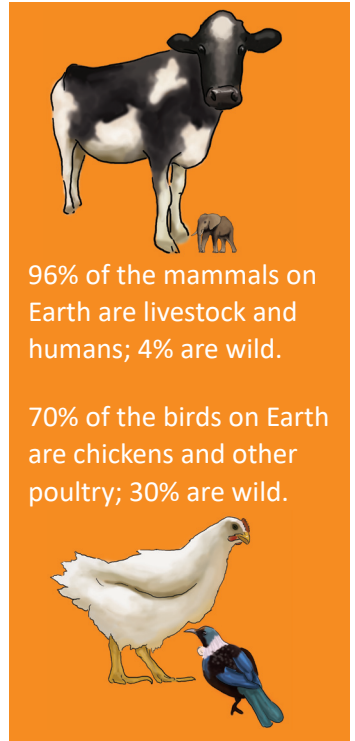
– the emergence of art, architecture, writing, mathematics, and astronomy. Larger populations meant new political forms, including centralised administration and hierarchical ideologies and societies.

While settled agriculture has transformed human culture and the land itself, we are not always as wise (sapient) as our species name suggests. Throughout history human civilisations have collapsed due to overshooting ecological limits. Irrigation techniques employed by the Mesopotamians eventually poisoned the soils. Similarly, the Mayan civilisation collapsed around the 8th or 9th century. Rapid deforestation exacerbated an already severe drought and contributed to erosion and soil depletion, leading to catastrophic crop failures.



Reflect & Discuss

- What other human societies have you heard about that collapsed, mainly due to degraded ecosystems?
- Do you think our modern food production methods are sustainable? Are there signs that we may also potentially face ecological collapse?



Industrialised Agriculture & the ‘Green Revolution’

For most of human history securing sufficient food to survive and flourish has been a difficult task involving considerable toil. Even today, any farmer will tell you that food production is a stressful vocation – contending with drought, flooding, pests and disease. Prior to the industrial revolution, farming in Western countries was largely small-scale and local. However, over the last two centuries, farming methods have changed radically due to hydraulic technology (the building of dams and canals), mechanization (machinery instead of labourers), and fossil fuels (access to faraway markets).

Post World War II has then witnessed one of the most amazing transformations within all human history – the ‘Green Revolution’. The development of high-yield, disease-resistant varieties of cereals, and the emergence of petro-chemical fertilisers has profoundly changed the pattern of farming. Human societies are now able to farm in areas of low rainfall, using less people-power and still gain much higher yields.

While the Green Revolution has bestowed enormous agricultural surpluses, it is now also evident that industrialised agriculture has disastrous impacts on waterways, lands and soils and on many of the other species that we share this planet with. *Modern industrialised human agriculture has become the largest driver of habitat destruction, biodiversity loss, and climate change.*

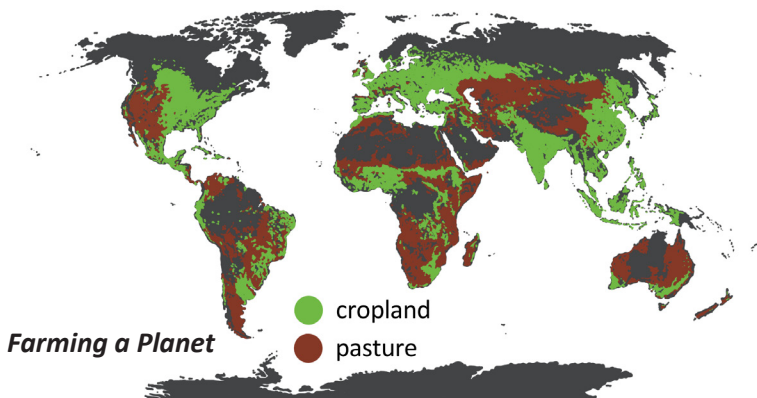
Today, for the vast majority of citizens in Western countries (particularly urban-dwellers), our food is typically:

- mass-produced on large-scale, industrial-style farms heavily dependent upon fertilisers, herbicides, pesticides, machinery and equipment (all utilising fossil fuels)

US biologist Norman Borlaug, a Lutheran of strong Christian faith and compassion, has been termed the ‘Father of the Green Revolution’. He committed his life to boosting food production to feed the growing human population and in 1970 was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for his role in saving billions from starvation.

‘Modern agriculture is the use of land to convert petroleum into food.’

Professor Albert Allen Bartlett



- transported large distances to warehouses and then supermarkets (again, requiring large amounts of fossil fuel)
- often extensively refined and modified
- over-packaged

Two examples illustrate how our dietary choices and modes of food production impact ecosystems – with consequences for our human and non-human neighbours.

Palm Oil

In the early 21st century, concerns in Western countries over a potential link between saturated fats and increasing rates of heart disease, and a desire to find alternatives to fossil fuels, led to an enormous increase in the production of palm oil – harvested from the processed fruit of oil palm trees. Used for cooking and in the production of bio-fuels, palm oil is also ubiquitous in modern-day processed foods and cosmetics.

Over the last two decades large areas of Southeast Asian tropical forests have been replaced by vast monoculture oil palm

- 40% of global land-use is for agriculture
- 16 million km² (equivalent to the continent of South America) = croplands (wheat, soybean, corn, and rice).
- 30 million km² (equivalent to the continent of Africa) = pasturelands.
- One half of the current human population lives in cities but the global agricultural footprint is 60 times larger than the global urban footprint.
- Humanity currently uses 50% of the available global freshwater supplies. 70% of this is used for agriculture.
- 18.7 million acres of forests are cleared annually (equivalent to 27 soccer fields every minute), mainly for cattle ranching (especially in the Amazon) or palm oil plantations (especially in Southeast Asia).
- 30% of Global Greenhouse Gas emissions (GHGs) stem from global food production activities (i.e. carbon dioxide from the burning of tropical forests; methane from livestock and rice; nitrous oxide from overuse of fertilisers, storing, transporting and refrigerating food).
- One-third of the world's arable land has been lost to soil erosion or pollution in the last 40 years and fertile soil is being lost at the rate of 24 billion tonnes a year. (It takes about 500 years to generate 2.5 cm of topsoil under normal agricultural conditions).
- Global research shows a dramatic collapse in bird populations – mainly due to the destruction of hedgerows and the extensive use of pesticides.

plantations. While providing employment and economic benefits, the establishment of these plantations has major environmental and social impacts:

- Loss of critical habitat for many endangered species, including Sumatran rhinoceros, Pygmy elephants, Sumatran and Bornean orangutans, and Sumatran tigers.
- Burning of virgin rainforest produces air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions. (Clearing of one hectare of peat forest can release up to 6,000 tons of carbon dioxide).
- Plantation development has led to the eviction of forest-dwelling peoples.
- Pollution of soil and waterways.



It's everywhere!

(Other names for Palm Oil)

Vegetable Oil, Vegetable Fat, Palm Kernel, Palm Kernel Oil, Palm Fruit Oil, Palmate, Palmitate, Palmolein, Glyceryl, Stearate, Stearic Acid, Elaeis Guineensis, Palmitic Acid, Palm Stearine, Palmitoyl Oxostearamide, Palmitoyl Tetrapeptide-3, Sodium Laureth Sulfate, Sodium Lauryl Sulfate, Sodium Kernelate, Sodium Palm Kernelate, Sodium Lauryl Lactylate/Sulphate, Hyrated Palm Glycerides, Etyl Palmitate, Octyl Palmitate, Palmityl Alcohol.



Watch

WWF International – Palm oil: how our consumer choices affect wildlife (2.09 mins)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w-1DQwaauwE>

TIME – Indonesia's Palm Oil Industry is Destroying More Than Forests (3.22 mins)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EDapJEZwQV4>



Activity: Read Scripture

Conflict over different ways of living on the land are not a new reality. Read Genesis 4:1–16

- A striking feature of this narrative is the way land is portrayed

- as both a helpless victim – forced to swallow Abel’s shed blood – and also a witness – opening its mouth to cry out to God.
- What are we forcing the land we inhabit to swallow?
 - What is this land saying to God?
- In the Ancient Near East when this narrative was written, food was an integral aspect of religious and community life. Food was sacrificed to God and then everybody shared in a communal feast.
 - How does this ancient context shed new light on Cain’s behaviour and God’s disapproval of it?
 - What are the web of relationships that are described within this passage? What are the consequences of Cain’s actions on this web of existing relationships? (4:10–14)

Fisheries

Modern industrialised fishing methods also have catastrophic ecological consequences. Over-fishing contributed to the collapse of the Peruvian coastal anchovy fishery in the 1970s and the cod fishery off the coast of Newfoundland, Canada in the early 1990s. There is strong agreement that the current global mode of fishing is unsustainable.



If fisheries decline this will impact those who work in the industry and affect the eating habits of hundreds of millions. Ultimately, over-fishing impacts the health of the whole ocean ecosystem.



Reflect & Discuss

How are we to balance the desire of developing countries to use land and the ocean to generate income through products for international markets, with the protection of tropical rainforests, marine life, threatened species and indigenous people? How, as a Western consumer, can you assist towards a win-win outcome?

Aotearoa – Farmyard of the South Pacific

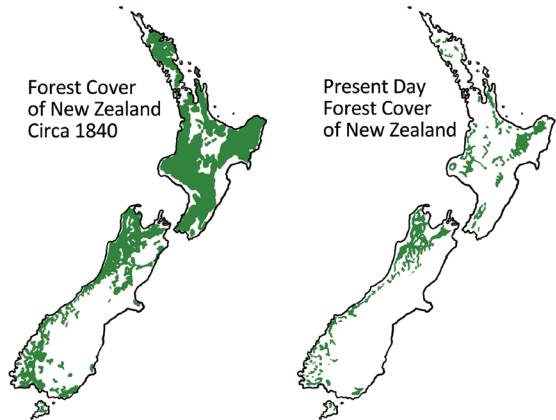
New Zealand is also enmeshed in the modern food system. Blessed with an abundant rainfall, a temperate climate and low population density, it's no surprise that since the late 19th century New Zealand's economy has been built upon our agricultural productivity. While Aotearoa New Zealand markets itself to the rest of the world as '100% Pure', the negative effects of modern methods of food production are still present. We'll look at two of these briefly below.

Land Modification

85% of NZ was forested prior to the arrival of humans. Since Pākehā arrived, this has dropped to approximately 56%. Almost 50% of our islands are still in natural land cover – tussock, native forest, rivers, lakes, snow, ice, and scrub – but 50% has been majorly modified for human use. *Close to 40% of New Zealand's land is now used for intensive pastoral use – dairy, sheep, beef and deer.*

Wetlands (including lakes and rivers) once occupied 20% of New Zealand's total land area. This figure is now 2%! 90% of the pre-human existing wetlands have been drained, with most transformed into farm

- Over 30% of the world's fisheries have been pushed beyond their biological limits.
- Some scientists believe that at current rates commercial fishing will have collapsed by 2050.
- Approximately three billion people rely on wild and farmed seafood as their primary source of protein.



'Industrial agriculture characteristically proceeds by single solutions to single problems: If you want the most money from your land this year, grow the crops for which the market price is highest.'

Wendell Berry, 'The 50-Year Farm Bill' in *The Atlantic*, (2012).

land. (See the *Water* booklet in the Rich Living series).

Large-scale land modification is currently occurring in the MacKenzie basin in inland Canterbury. Over the last decade giant circles of green pasture have popped up – standing out starkly against the surrounding desert-like landscape. Rising global dairy prices and access to irrigation have stimulated this shift from sheep farming to dairy farming. While good for the economy, many believe the fragile soils of the MacKenzie are unsuitable for dairy farming and note the loss of unique biodiversity. Also, as elsewhere in New Zealand, there is concern on the impact of dairy farming on water quality.

The Canterbury plains have also undergone a radical transformation over the last 25 years. Cereal crops surrounded by shelter belts and paddocks of sheep have given way to giant pivot irrigators and green pasture with dairy cows.

In 2016, NZ earned NZD\$6 billion from meat exports and NZD\$11.2 billion from dairy exports.

‘The Greek word *oikos* (eco-) means house or household, thus ‘ecology’ is the *logos* of the *oikos*, that is, the study of the household, and ‘economics’ is the *nomos* of the *oikos*, the law or the rules of the household....

[E]cology is the study of individuals and populations, communities and habitats, life systems and dynamics of the household, and of what is required for living well.

Economics is the study of how to respectfully care for and manage the earth so that the various requirements of the household are met and sustained, so that the household is hospitable for all its inhabitants. Ecology is the knowledge necessary for good home economics.’

Steven Bouma-Prediger and Brian Walsh, *Beyond Homelessness: Christian Faith in a Culture of Displacement* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 2008), 185-6.

Half of New Zealand’s GHG emissions come from agriculture

GHG emissions by sector, 2014



Note: Excluding emissions/removals from land use, land-use change and forestry.

Source: “Greenhouse gas emissions by source” *OECD Environment Statistics* (database)

Climate Change

49% of New Zealand’s GHG emissions come from agriculture – primarily methane from cattle and nitrous oxides from animal waste and fertilisers. So, while we’re producing food for export we are also contributing – albeit on a small-scale – to the problem of global climate change.



Reflect & Discuss

- Have you previously considered the relationship between the words ‘ecology’ and ‘economy’?
- How would conceiving of the whole earth as a single household affect your food choices?
- Do you think we take seriously the inconsistency between observing ecological limits and the emphasis on perpetual economic growth? (At a micro-personal level? At a macro-global scale?)

Western diets & waste

As well as an increasing dependence upon fossil-fuel (machinery and petro-chemical fertilisers and pesticides), modern agriculture and contemporary food production is also characterised by size. Bigger farms and plantations, bigger machinery



and ships, bigger inputs – water, fertilisers, herbicides, pesticides and antibiotics – bigger factories for processing, and larger yields. But is bigger always better? Some believe that modern, industrialised food production is essential to feed the growing human population (estimated to be 9 billion by 2040). This argument ignores two important factors:

Firstly, the resource-hungry nature of Western diets. On average, citizens of Western countries consume high amounts of meat and dairy. These food products use considerably more water and land and produce more GHG emissions than other diets. The world already produces more than enough grain to feed the planet, but much of this grain is used in Western countries to feed animals for human meat consumption.

Secondly, food waste. The argument for a further upscaling of intensive, industrialised food production also ignores the issue of food waste.



Watch

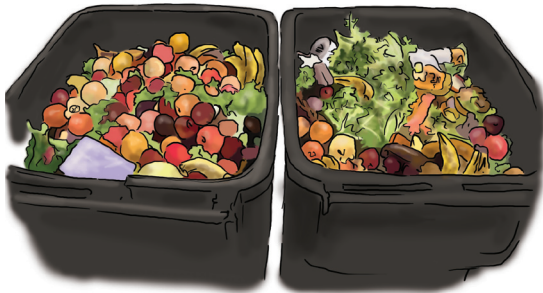
The global food waste scandal – Tristram Stuart (14.15 mins)
https://www.ted.com/talks/tristram_stuart_the_global_food_waste_scandal

tristram_stuart_the_global_food_waste_scandal



Reflect & Discuss

- Share the emotions this video evoked in you.
- How much food gets thrown away in your household each week?
- Why is this food discarded?



Activity: Read Scripture

Read Luke 12:13-34.
 In Jesus' 1st Century Palestine context – and still today – this

is a provocative parable. Historically,

- 77% of global farm land is used for grazing animals or for producing grain to feed livestock.
- Meat and dairy products contribute only 17% of global calorific supply and only 33% of global protein supply.

NZ Food Waste

NZ households:

- throw out NZD\$872 million worth of avoidable food waste per year in council kerbside bins.
- discard, on average, 79 kilograms of food waste per year.

Global Food Waste

- 1/3 of food produced for human consumption (1.3 billion tonnes) is wasted every year.
- Irrigation water used to grow food (that is then wasted) is sufficient for the domestic needs (200 litres per person per day) for 9 billion people.
- 10% of rich countries' GHG emissions come from growing food that is never eaten.

Israel had been a nation of smallholder farmers. The Roman imperial taxation system and food economy saw taxes paid to Rome and surplus food taken to feed the Roman Imperial army and to distribute to critical urban centres in the empire. The combined effects of these practices had forced most small farmers into debt. These debts resulted in many giving up their ancestral lands which were then acquired by wealthy large landowners.

- Jesus condemns the rich man both for his bumper crop and what would seem to us today as good stewardship – building larger barns for this surplus. Why do you think this is?
- Read Lev 19:9-10 and Deut 24:19-22. How do these verses help us understand Jesus' parable?
- How does knowledge of the 1st century context help us understand Jesus' warning: that this fate awaits for 'those who store up treasures for themselves but are not rich toward God'?
- What do you think it means today to be 'rich towards God'?

Emerging Alternatives

Growing discomfort about modern farming practices is leading many to explore alternative ways of farming. These new – but often old – ways of farming are less dependent upon fossil fuels (i.e. less machinery, petro-chemical fertilisers and pesticides) and seek to create an agricultural system that imitates the diversity of a natural ecosystem – replacing monoculture and single species farming with multiple crops and animal species. In seeking to farm in ways that are life-giving for all – farm workers, the animals, and the broader ecosystem – some farms in New Zealand blend old and new techniques: an organic dairy farm with a robotic milking shed!



Watch

The Regenerators: A better way to farm (11:29 mins)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OKMM2b6srlg>



Reflect & Discuss

- What emotions and thoughts did this video evoke? Discuss.



Activity: Meet a Local Farmer

It is likely that you have a farmer in your faith community or congregation, or someone in your group has a farmer friend.

Arrange a tour of their farm.

Ask them to share with you:

- how they relate their faith to their vocation as farmers.
- the challenge they face in ensuring the long-term sustainability of their farming.
- the practices they employ to ensure the long-term sustainability of their farming.
- wisdom they have found from farming the land.



Activity: Food Waste Audit

This week intentionally record the food waste in your household. Arrange also to do a food waste audit at your church building.

- Why does this food get discarded?
- How much food (weight) gets discarded?
- Where does this food waste go? What proportion goes into a rubbish bin? Compost, Bokashi bin, or worm farm? To feed pigs? chickens?
- What measures could you introduce at home and church to lower or eliminate food waste? Plan to introduce these measures.

‘The soil is the great connector of lives, the source and destination of all. It is the healer and restorer and resurrector, by which disease passes into health, age into youth, death into life. Without proper care for it we can have no community, because without proper care for it we can have no life.’

Wendell Berry, *The Unsettling of America: Culture and Agriculture* (1977).



Activity: Reflect & Pray

Many listeners of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7) would have been poor, landless peasants. They relied on hiring themselves as day-labourers to larger farms owned by the wealthy to purchase food for the day. Sound familiar? In this context, with no financial savings (and often debts), the prayer Jesus' teaches them is profound:

*Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
And forgive us our debts,
as we also have forgiven our debtors.
And lead us not into temptation,
But deliver us from the evil one.*

Matthew 6:9-13 (NIV)

- Have you ever experienced genuine hunger or had concerns around accessing sufficient food?
- How would it feel to live in a household where you were regularly in that situation?

Many in the world still live in situations similar to those who were first taught this prayer. Be mindful of them and all life on Earth, loved by the Father, as you conclude by saying together the Lord's Prayer.

Study 3 – *What* then should we eat? Conscientious Consumption

How priceless is your unfailing love, O God! People take refuge in the shadow of your wings. They feast on the abundance of your house; you give them drink from your river of delights. For with you is the fountain of life; in your light we see light.

Psalms 36:7-9 (NIV)

Previously we've seen how the modern industrial food system has significant negative ecological effects and is unsustainable in its current mode. In contemporary Western culture, food is often viewed as a wastable commodity rather than a gift and we forget that our food choices have consequences for others. In this study we'll explore how we might eat more consciously of the community of creation that we are part of.



Reflect & Discuss

- Discuss your experiences from your food waste audit at home and your church.

- 31% of NZ adults (aged 15+) are obese.
- Diabetes is one of NZ's fastest growing chronic diseases – 7% have diabetes and another 25.5% have been diagnosed with pre-diabetes.
- The leading cause of death in NZ - with 33% - is cardiovascular disease.
- Dietary choices and lack of physical exercise are two of the major contributory factors to diabetes and cardiovascular disease.

Healthy Food, Healthy Societies

For many decades scientists have explored the relationship between diet and health. Though reaching a range of conclusions, there is strong consensus to back-up what we already know intuitively – that physical and mental health is affected by what we eat. While the healthiest diet for each person depends on a range of factors – individual metabolism, intolerances – eating whole, unprocessed food and reducing our intake of packaged and processed foods is generally far better for our health.



Reflect & Discuss

- What are the factors you usually consider when purchasing food?
- Do questions of sustainability – the wellbeing of other human and non-human species and the health of ecosystems – currently influence your food purchasing?

In our commodified food culture, dietary choices are often determined by cost, taste, speed, nutrition and health.

- What questions should we ask if we're seeking to make sustainable and life-giving food choices? Brainstorm and record these.



How does your food measure up?

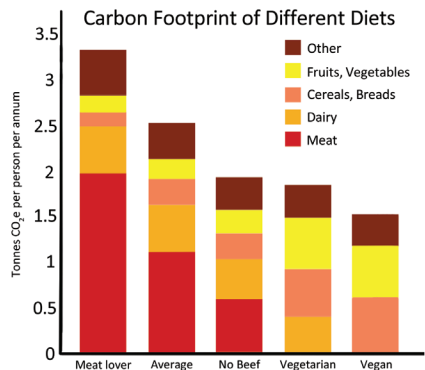
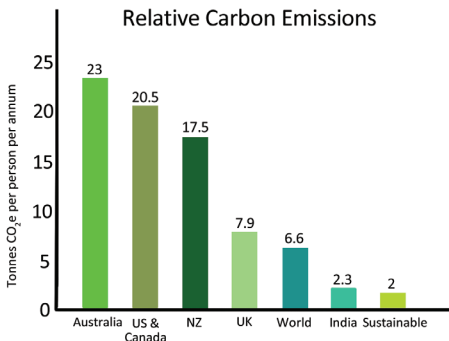
Below are three factors to consider in making sustainable and life-giving food choices.

Carbon Footprint

We noted earlier that almost 30% of global GHG emissions are linked to food production.

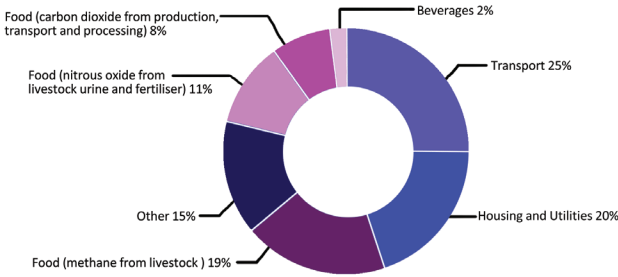
The size of our individual carbon footprint is highly influenced by our food choices.

CO₂e = carbon dioxide equivalent. A measurement of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases such as methane and nitrous oxide.



40% of average NZ household GHG emissions are related to food.

Composition of average household emissions



If the world is to stay below a 2°C temperature rise, then globally we need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Allocating the global budget of CO₂e equally between the world’s current 7.7 billion people, gives each person an annual CO₂e allowance of 2 tonnes. **For most Westerners, our eating alone takes us over this allowance!**

Water Footprint

Currently 70% of global freshwater use is for food production. Freshwater resources are under growing pressures (see *Water* booklet). It’s important therefore to consider how much water goes into our food products. Check out:

<http://waterfootprint.org/en/resources/interactive-tools/product-gallery/>

<http://waterfootprint.org/en/resources/interactive-tools/personal-water-footprint-calculator/personal-calculator-extended/>

Animal Welfare

Research by animal behavioural scientists is highlighting the essential similarities between

According to a recent Oxford University study, New Zealanders are the biggest meat-eaters in the world – 127kg per person per year! (cp. USA 118kg; Canada 92kg; France 89kg; UK 83kg.)



1000 litres of water to produce a 1 litre of milk.

95% of New Zealand’s milk is exported as milk powder.

Coal-fired boilers produce the energy to evaporate the water – thus producing milk powder and also generating GHG emissions.



4900 litres of water to produce 340 grams of steak (beef).

humans and other creatures. In the West there is a growing awareness that even when domestic animals exist for human consumption, this does not negate their basic dignity. Some questions to consider when (or if) eating meat:

- Has this animal had a good life? (i.e. Has this chicken been able to live free from cruelty? What is its life expectancy? Quality of life?)
- Has this animal had a pain-free death?

Those who do what is right take good care of their animals. But the kindest acts of those who do wrong are mean.

Proverbs 12:10
(NIRV)

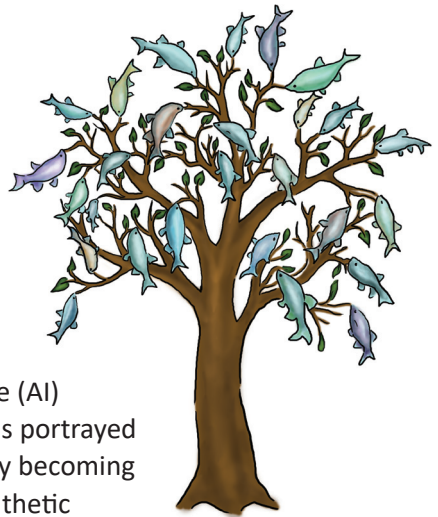


Reflect & Discuss

- How familiar are you with the life and death of the animals which feed you?
- Work together to familiarise yourself to these realities. (Use the internet, visit a local farm or converse with a local farmer).

Future Food

Faced with the global ecological and climate crisis and seeking to address growing animal welfare concerns, some global food companies are birthing a high-tech, ‘clean-food’ industry. Advances in tissue engineering, synthetic and molecular biology, gene editing and artificial intelligence (AI) means that protein-based food substances, as portrayed in science-fiction futuristic movies are already becoming a reality. Companies are making cultured/synthetic meat from either plant-based protein or animal cells in laboratories. This artificial meat looks and tastes like meat but uses only a fraction of the current land and water inputs used to produce meat and generates considerably less GHG emissions. Other companies are making fish fillets from stem cells, while others are using legumes or yeast and brewing technology to produce milk.



Vertical farming is another innovation emerging in many Western cities. This form of indoor food production often involves converting vacant buildings into giant hydroponic-style farms. These urban farms use no soil and also use less water and produce less GHG emissions than conventional outdoor farming. Also, being close to the city, food arrives fresher!

- 1.3 billion humans could be fed by the grain and soybeans eaten by U.S. livestock.
- 30 million km² = pasture land (mainly for beef/dairy production).
- Pork and poultry require up to five times less feed to produce a kg of protein than a cow, a sheep, or a goat.



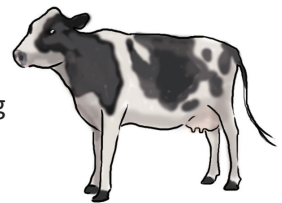
Reflect & Discuss

- How do you feel about the creation of artificial/synthetic food?
- Does the potential to lower GHG emissions make it more likely that you would personally buy into high-tech food solutions?
- How might this emerging food technology reshape our understanding of food?
- Do you think such food technology will help or hinder our attitudes and behaviour towards food, animals and creation as a whole?

'If cattle were their own nation, they would be the world's third-largest emitter of greenhouse gases.'

Paul Hawken, *Drawdown: The Most Comprehensive Plan Ever Proposed to Reverse Global Warming*, (Penguin, 2017), 39.

With all this knowledge about our food, how might we respond? Below we'll look at some of the potential ingredients of a diet designed to bring health and wellbeing to us personally and the whole household of creation.



Low-Carbon Diet

A growing number of Christians believe that the most appropriate response to the ecological ill-effects of the contemporary industrialised global food economy is to embrace a vegetarian or vegan diet.



Reflect & Discuss

- If you are already a vegetarian or vegan share how this dietary choice is linked to your faith?

- For those not vegetarian or vegan, would you consider changing? Why? Why not?
- Do you think that all Christians should be encouraged to have a vegetarian or vegan diet? Why? Why not?

Regardless of whether one becomes a strict vegetarian or vegan, simply shifting some of your diet away from meat and dairy products towards cereals or in-season fruit and vegetables is a very effective way to begin to shrink your food-based carbon footprint. Join others in becoming a reducetarian!

Local & In-Season

For much of history our diets were determined by the food products that could be harvested, hunted and/or grown in the immediate area. Fossil fuels have changed how we grow our food and increased the distances we can transport food. Now, in the depths of winter, one can enjoy a banana (fairtrade, of course) – hailing from Ecuador, while in a northern hemisphere winter, NZ apples can be eaten. Our palates have become used to eating a wide range of foods regardless of whether they are indigenous or in-season. Currently the global food economy relies on large amounts of fossil fuels to refrigerate and transport food across vast distances. One possible response as a conscientious consumer would be to eat locally and in-season.

Sounds possible for you? Here are some benefits of such a diet:

- Lower carbon footprint (due to less transportation of food product).
- Form direct relationships with food producers (farmers, orchardists) rather than to faceless global food-chains.
- Increased ability to make assessments of food sourced locally (welfare

'No one can make ecological good sense for the planet. Everyone can make ecological good sense locally, if the affection, the scale, the knowledge, the tools, and the skills are right. The right scale in work gives power to affection. When one works beyond the reach of one's love for the place one is working in and for the things and creatures one is working with and among, then destruction inevitably results. An adequate local culture, among other things, keeps work within the reach of love.'

Wendell Berry, 'Out of your Car, Off your Horse: Twenty-Seven propositions about global thinking and the sustainability of cities' in *The Atlantic*, (1991).

of animals and staff, sustainability of farming practices, pesticide use).

- Support of local farmers rather than global transnational corporations.
- Less risk of slavery and exploitation in the supply chain from garden to table.
- Local eating is in-season eating, which increases ecological awareness.



Activity

- Assess how much of your current diet is sourced locally.
- Is there a local farmers' market, or small-scale farmers' co-operative or community-supported agriculture project in your town? Visit as a group.

Consumer Certification & Ethical Standards

While we've seen many of the downsides of our contemporary global food system, there are also global initiatives that seek to ensure food production is sustainable and brings flourishing to all – workers, creatures and ecosystems. Fairtrade is one of a number of certifications that has become mainstream in the global food economy. Initially primarily concerned with the rights and fair payments to the producers of staple food crops (coffee, chocolate, sugar and bananas), many Fairtrade products are produced by small farmers or co-operatives whose practices are more ecologically-friendly and sustainable. The Fairtrade label has developed high environmental standards and over a third of smallholders and plantations with Fairtrade accreditation are organic certified.

A number of certifications now exist to measure the sustainability of palm oil. World Wildlife Fund International has been actively involved in the creation of one of these.



Watch

How can palm oil be more sustainable? The Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil and WWF's role in it. (6.30 mins)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0Lev1mnonUM>

Closer to home, each year Forest and Bird NZ releases a Best Fish Guide to help consumers ensure that the fish they are purchasing is being caught in a sustainable manner.

Check out: <http://bestfishguide.org.nz/>



Activity: Consumer Power

Does your local café serve organic fairtrade coffee? If not, ask them to do so. Keep asking each time you visit.

Likewise, ask your local supermarket to ensure they supply fairtrade and ecologically certified food products.

Grow your own

In the past most New Zealand suburban houses had a vegetable plot. But the ‘speeding up’ of life and the reducing of property sizes means less people now grow their own food. However, growing one’s own food is, arguably, one of the signs of authentic ‘rich living’ – providing multiple benefits for the grower and the planet:



- An opportunity to be outside and reconnect with soil and creation (especially important for children and those in urban contexts).
- Exercise (health benefits).
- Home-grown food has a lower carbon footprint.
- Adds bio-diversity to an urban environment.
- Nothing beats the pleasure & satisfaction of a home-grown meal!

Short of space? Even urban-dwellers can grow their own food. Check out: <http://www.tuigarden.co.nz/howtoguide/square-metre-gardening-guide>



Reflect & Discuss

- Do you use any of the certifications above (or others) when purchasing food? If so, share which ones.
- Are the tea and coffee served at your church Fairtrade certified?
- Do you grow your own vegetables? If not, why not?
- Discuss the genuine obstacles that stand in the way of home food production. Brainstorm together how you could overcome these obstacles.
- Share with each other your combined food-growing knowledge.



Activity: Food Tracking

This week choose two typical food items from your grocery shop. Trace this food product back to its origins. Questions to consider:

- Where does it originate from? What (and whose) land was it grown on?
- What are the ingredients and where did each of those come from?
- Who did the labour to produce this food?
- What is the quality of life of this worker? (wage, working conditions, hours of work, safety)
- How was it grown, extracted or made? (Sustainable use of water? land?)
- How processed is the food? / What does the processing of this food involve?
- How far did it travel to reach your cupboard/fridge? How was it transported?
- How is it packaged? What happens with the packaging? Is it reusable or recyclable?
- What is the nutritional value of the food you are eating?



Activity: Food & Forgiveness

At the heart of eating is communion. To be in true communion with others involves giving and receiving forgiveness – remember

the Lord's Prayer? Throughout the biblical narrative and in many cultures sharing food is often integral to the action of forgiveness and reconciliation.

Re-enact John 21:1-19.

Head down to a local lake or beach and share the process of cooking and eating food. Read the passage and reflect on Peter's relationship with Jesus (refer to John 18).

- In what ways might your own eating habits lessen communion with others – humans, other species, creation, God?
- Curate a time of reflection and then join in the prayer of confession.
- Receive Christ's forgiveness and like Peter, accept Jesus' command to 'follow him' into a new future.
- Share together your intended future food commitments.

Prayer of Confession

For our part in the breaking of the relationship between people and the land as production chains become longer and more unfamiliar,

Dear Lord, we are sorry.

Help us to remember your great love.

For our part in the breaking of the relationship between people and place as we become less and less aware of where and how our food is produced,

Dear Lord, we are sorry.

Help us to remember your great love.

For our part in the breaking of the relationship between people and the natural world as we have increased specialisation and demanded food out of season,

Dear Lord, we are sorry.

Help us to remember your great love.

For our part in the breaking of the relationship between people and livestock as the poor conditions of animals in factory farms are overlooked,

Dear Lord, we are sorry.

Help us to remember your great love.

May the living Lord Jesus, who came to earth to reconcile all relationships in creation and to restore the broken, grant us full forgiveness and the power to effect positive change.

Amen.

Study 4 – How then should we eat? Eating for Relationships

'I am the bread that gives life! No one who comes to me will ever be hungry. No one who has faith in me will ever be thirsty.'

John 6:35 (CEV)

Thus far we've seen how eating in contemporary Western culture has lost its sacred nature. When food is reduced to a commodity our eating destroys the community of creation. But it doesn't have to be this way. Faithful eating can be a sign of hope – as we participate in the abundant, rich living that Jesus promises (John 10:10) and assist others in reconnecting with creation and the loving Creator. In Study 3 we looked at some of the ingredients of a sustainable diet. Below we'll see how our posture and practices can help us to eat in ways that enhance relationships. We'll also explore ways that congregations can integrate sustainable food practices into their corporate lives.



Reflect & Discuss

- Discuss your findings from your food tracking activity.



Reflect & Discuss

Describe the nature of eating in your home:

- What specific practices or etiquette/manners exist? (e.g. saying grace; serving and eating at a table; who eats first/last; who serves; noise or silence; what you do when you finish eating; presence of strangers; presence of creatures).
- What is the origins of these practices and manners?
- What is the reason behind these guidelines, prohibitions, restrictions, encouragements?
- How much time does each meal take?

Plates and Postures

Often with ethical issues the temptation is to formulate a universal list of dos and don'ts. But this is difficult in any area, let alone one as complex as food!

We believe that sustainable food choices are best encouraged not by slavishly following dietary prescriptions but by thinking about (1) how we view food (already discussed) and (2) our posture. Below we'll reflect on four postures, each with an accompanying practice.

Eating with Gratitude – Saying Grace

Reclaiming a Eucharistic understanding of eating may help us to eat in ways which honour the community of creation. A starting point for developing an attitude of gratitude is the practice of saying grace before each meal.

Eucharist (thanksgiving, grateful) is from *eukharistos* (Greek): *eu* 'well' + *kharizesthai* 'offer graciously' (from *kharis* 'grace').

'When we offer thanks for food we remember as best as we can the many memberships that constitute and fortify our lives, and note that these memberships have their life as a grace received. We remember so we can pledge ourselves to the celebration, maintenance, and nurture of the creatures and processes that nourish us.... [W]hen we remember truly we commit ourselves to the re-remembering of organisms and communities that have been dis-membered by our greed and carelessness. We seek the health of wholeness and interdependence that comes from diverse creatures living in dynamic and vital relationships with each other. Thanksgiving thus becomes a political and economic act that unites us in solidarity with creation. It confirms our status as creatures among others.'

Norman Wirzba, *Food and Faith: A Theology of Eating*, (Cambridge University Press, 2011), 202.



Reflect & Discuss

- Do you say grace before each meal? Why? Why not?
- Do you say grace in public contexts too? Why? Why not?
- Share graces you know with each other.

Eating Reflectively – Taking Time

Eating quickly is one of the characteristics of contemporary Western society. People speak of ‘fuelling up’ and we sometimes spend less time eating a meal than we do putting fuel into our vehicles. But if food is a gift and eating not a mundane chore but a relational activity, then the whole process – preparation, cooking, eating – requires intentional attentiveness.

This requires time! The Slow Food Movement is one expression of this (<https://www.slowfood.com>).

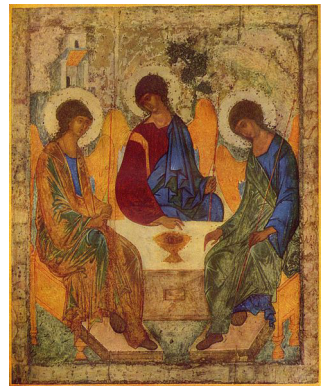


Reflect & Discuss

- How would slowing down the process of preparing, cooking and eating change the way you think about and act in relation to food?

Eating Communally and Hospitality

Food is a communal act. Eating mindfully we are joined with others, with the soil, and with the Creator. Hospitality and the sharing of food are central to the Christian tradition. Abraham, the father of monotheism, provides a meal for three divine visitors (the Trinity) in Genesis 18, and table hospitality features prominently in the Gospels. Indeed, wining and dining with others is such an integral part of Jesus’ ministry – wedding feasts, meals with prominent societal members and social outcasts, hosting giant outdoor picnics – that he is accused of being a ‘glutton and a drunkard’ (Matt 11:19 & Luke 7:34). It is the action of welcoming a stranger to a meal which ‘opened the eyes’ of two of Jesus’ disciples to the resurrected Christ (Luke 24:13-35), and the early Church is explicitly instructed to welcome strangers (Rom 12:13; Heb 13:1-2).





Activity: Scripture & Imagination

The Feeding of the 5000 was clearly memorable and significant, being the only miracle of Jesus that appears in all four gospels.

- Read Matthew 14:13-21 aloud, slowly and clearly three times. During each reading imaginatively enter the story in the shoes of a different character – Jesus; the disciples; the crowd.
 - What do you hear? What do you see? What do you smell?
 - Describe the atmosphere.
 - What are you physically feeling?
 - What are your emotions and how do they change during the story?
- After each reading sit in silence for 2-3 minutes. After the third reading, sit in silence for 5 minutes and listen for God's still small voice.
- If you choose – discuss.



Reflect & Discuss



- Early believers regularly shared meals with each other. How regularly does your community of faith / congregation have a shared meal together?
 - How regularly do you find yourself eating with a stranger?
- Who contributes to the cooking in your household? At church? Who is excluded? Why?
- Are there any specific policies, requirements and guidelines that shape the practices of food purchasing, preparation and eating in your faith community / congregation?

Fasting

From Christianity's origins, fasting was an integral practice. It still has an important role today in shaping our food values and actions.

- Fasting reminds us of our dependence upon God's grace – expressed in the abundance of creation.
- Fasting as lament – mourning for the damage that the modern food system wreaks.
- Fasting can be repentance – an act of sorrow and confession for the way in which our personal food choices dismember communion and destroy creation.
- Fasting in solidarity with the 800 million who suffer from malnutrition – thus developing our empathy for others who hunger.
- Fasting as a discipline of restraint that helps us become self-aware of how powerful and controlling our appetites are.
- Fasting accompanying actions of justice and compassion.
- Fasting as a form of spiritual struggle against the forces in the world which are grace-denying and which work against God's project of abundant life for all.

*This is the kind of fast day I'm after:
to break the chains of injustice,
get rid of exploitation in the workplace,
free the oppressed, cancel debts.
What I'm interested in seeing you do is:
sharing your food with the hungry,
inviting the homeless poor into your homes,
putting clothes on the shivering ill-clad,
being available to your own families.
Do this and the lights will turn on,
and your lives will turn around at once.
Your righteousness will pave your way.
The God of glory will secure your passage.
Then when you pray, God will answer.
You'll call out for help and I'll say, 'Here I am.'*

Isaiah 58:6-9 (The Message)



Reflect & Discuss

- In Genesis 3:6 it is voracious appetite and desire which leads to the taking and eating of forbidden fruit. The LORD commands Cain to 'master this desire' (Gen 4:7) and his failure to do so

results in murder and the poisoning of land.

- In what way does your appetite control or dictate your life?
- Share with each other your experiences of fasting.



Activity

During the upcoming week commit as a group to fasting for a period of time. Devote this time usually spent preparing and eating to one or more of the activities below:



- volunteer at a soup-kitchen, foodbank or city mission, or food rescue initiative.
- write a letter to local or national politicians concerning land management, water quality, or another environmental issue.
- put aside the saved food from the fasted meals and donate it to the local foodbank or City Mission.
- research more about sustainable and ethical food choices.
- prepare a proposal for how your congregation could reduce its food waste; eat more sustainably and ethically; incorporate the eating of food into its corporate life and missional activities.

Churches and Food – Seeds of Hope

How might our eating practices as community of believers be a witness to God’s abundant life? How might food become an integral aspect of a church’s life, worship and mission? Below we’ll explore a few suggestions:

- **Policy**
Many churches already have policies around food. Usually these focus on food hygiene & safety. Work with those responsible for food policy in your church and encourage them to integrate

They followed a daily discipline of worship in the Temple followed by meals at home, every meal a celebration, exuberant and joyful, as they praised God. People in general liked what they saw. Every day their number grew as God added those who were saved.

Acts 2:46-47 (The Message)

sustainable food practices. Consider:

- Food waste
- Food purchased for church activities (sustainably produced, organic, local, low-carbon, fair trade)
- Packaging (see the *Rich Living Stuff & Waste* booklet)
- ***Picnics & Pot-Lucks***
Consider having a church service – annually or more regularly – in an outdoor setting. Integrate practical creation-care and conservation activities and a shared picnic into the service.
- ***Pasture & Produce in Pews***
Many churches are rediscovering the importance of services linked to the agricultural calendar – e.g. Harvest Sunday and the Blessing of the Animals on St Francis of Assisi feast day (Oct 4th). The fertility of the land and the wellbeing of animals are intertwined with our lives, and ultimately, all are dependent upon God’s sustaining grace. It’s appropriate therefore to gather together to seek God’s blessing.
- ***Pray***
Pray regularly for those who produce your food – particularly for food producers in your congregation.
- ***Practise Fasting***
As a congregation integrate fasting into your lives or worship. Use these times to reflect, pray and act on food issues.

*You take care of the earth
and send rain
to help the soil
grow all kinds of crops.
Your rivers never run dry,
and you prepare the earth
to produce much grain.
You water all of its fields
and level the lumpy ground.
You send showers of rain
to soften the soil
and help the plants sprout.
Wherever your footsteps
touch the earth,
a rich harvest is gathered.
Desert pastures blossom,
and mountains celebrate.
Meadows are filled
with sheep and goats;
valleys overflow with grain
and echo with joyful songs.*

Psalm 65:9-13 (CEV)



- **Projects – Community Gardens and Food Rescue**

In the last decade community gardens have sprouted up all around New Zealand and globally. As well as social, educational, physical, and ecological benefits, community gardens also enable mission. In New Zealand, fewer people are familiar with Christianity and many have never entered a church. Potential benefits of a community garden on church property:

- Uses potentially underutilised land in urban environments where space is often limited.
- Is an easy first step for assisting a church to develop an ecological awareness.
- Establishes relationships with others over a shared common human task.
- Gardening is an equalising activity allowing mutual learning and sharing of knowledge regardless of backgrounds.
- Produce can be utilised within the church community, for church activities and distributed to those in the church or local community.



Watch: Kaibosh Food Rescue

(1.13mins)

<http://www.kaibosh.org.nz/about-us/>

There are a range of food rescue initiatives around NZ.

See: <http://www.kaibosh.org.nz/about-us/food-rescue-in-nz/>



Reflect & Discuss

- Is there a community garden or food rescue initiative in your community? Is your congregation involved in it?
- If these don't exist, could your church be involved in starting such an initiative?



Activity: Putting it into Practice

Spend time reflecting upon the last four weeks.

- What have you found most challenging?
- What have you found most inspiring?
- Reflect upon any practical ideas above. Which of these can be put into practice in your faith community?
- Share other possible initiatives and communal actions.



Activity

Share Communion/Eucharist with each other and close with the blessing below.

*Jesus said: 'My food is to do the will of him
who sent me and to finish his work'.
May we also be sent out as the body of Christ
to fulfil the Lord's purposes here on earth,
for the blessing of the whole of creation and
for his future glory.
Amen.*



Activity: Into the Future

For further resources around Food & Faith see:
<http://atyourservice.arocha.org/en/just-food/>

For more information on food terms and principles see:
<http://www.pbs.org/food/features/lexicon-of-sustainability-episodes/>

There are four other booklets in the Rich Living series that reflect on the themes of Climate Change, Food, Transportation, Stuff & Waste. If you've enjoyed this booklet, order the others and continue the journey together.



The existing Western lifestyle is unsustainable – our consumption habits impact on the wellbeing of our human and non-human neighbours. But Christian faith communities have the potential to be agents of hope.

This booklet is one of five in the Rich Living series (*Climate Change, Water, Food, Transportation, Stuff & Waste*). Designed for small groups, each booklet consists of four studies designed to assist communities make sustainability integral to their lives of faith.