

# LENT HUNGER CHALLENGE

Hunger Education and Advocacy Team

**SOUTHWESTERN  
PENNSYLVANIA  
SYNOD** EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN  
CHURCH IN AMERICA

*Then the king will say to those at his right hand, 'Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.' ... And the king will answer them, 'Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.'*

(Matthew 25:34-36, 40)

Our SWPA Synod Hunger Education and Advocacy Team is challenging you during Lent this year to think more about how we are taking care of "the least of these" by specifically focusing on the problem of hunger, how we contribute to it, and how we help to fight it. This is a Lenten discipline to take up which includes elements of the traditional Lenten disciplines: fasting, prayer, and almsgiving. Use these forty days to walk more closely with Jesus as we walk with our hungry neighbors.

Each week will have a new challenge (meat consumption, food waste, SNAP challenge, community gardens, and children's feeding programs) and related information to help us all reflect on several factors that contribute to the problem of hunger and actions we can take to help.

These can be done alongside of other hunger awareness or fundraising programs that you already engage in, such as the ELCA World Hunger 40 Days of Giving program. As you participate in these challenges, please share your experiences by posting on our Facebook Page (SWPA Synod Hunger Team) or emailing [hunger@swpasynod.org](mailto:hunger@swpasynod.org).

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**WEEK 1**

**LENT HUNGER CHALLENGE**

Read: Genesis 1:27-31

**Week 1 Challenge:**

Include meat in only three meals during the week. (Alternate challenge if this is too big a leap: go meatless on Mondays.)

We were created in the image of God and given responsibility by God to help care for all of Creation. While studies are not yet conclusive regarding consumption of no meat, studies have shown that meat consumption in moderation is better. Reduction in meat consumption may improve the effects of chronic diseases like cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes, and cancer.

Industrial facilities raise large numbers of farm animals such as pigs, chickens or cows in intensive, overcrowded confinement where their movements are extremely inhibited and they are treated poorly. But it doesn't have to be this way. There are alternative farming systems that treat animals with compassion and respect.

According to a report of the Agricultural Organization of the United Nations, production of livestock accounts for 30% of land use globally, and 70% of all agricultural land. The livestock industry is a major contributor to climate change, emitting 18 percent of total greenhouse gas emissions, which is higher than transportation. Current animal-based diets and population growth threaten sustainable use of natural resources.

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**WEEK 2**  
**LENT HUNGER CHALLENGE**

Read: Mark 4:2-9

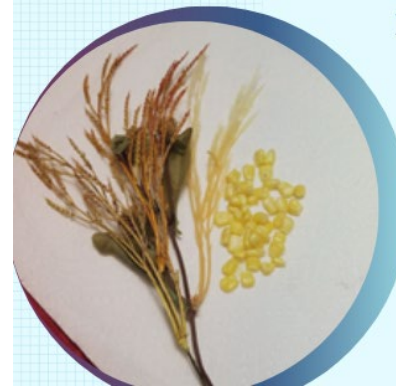
**Week 2 Challenge:**

**Measure your food waste.**

We must learn to be wise in food choices to eliminate waste. We live in a land of plenty, but still many people do not have enough food to sustain themselves. We waste so much food while others have virtually nothing with little thought.

Rules for this challenge:

1. Keep track of food that becomes uneatable in the refrigerator and is thrown away.
2. Keep track of food on your plates that you do not finish and discard.
3. Keep track of things that are bought on impulse which no one likes or plans to consume.
4. Notice when you purchase or prepare more food than is needed.
5. Keep track of leftovers from dinner banquets, funeral lunches, weddings and parties. This food can often be donated to Meals on Wheels or 412 Food Rescue.
6. Instead of putting waste in the garbage start a compost pile for biodegradable items.
7. Apply a value to your waste and donate that amount of money or time to your local food pantry or other venue for hunger relief.



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## WEEK 3

### LENT HUNGER CHALLENGE

Read: 1 Kings 17:8-16

#### **Week 3 Challenge:**

Eat on a SNAP budget for the week.

The SNAP Challenge helps to raise awareness of hunger and food insecurity in America. In Pennsylvania, the budget is \$6.45 per person, per day, which is the “average daily allowance” or \$45.15 per week per person.

**Track Your Spending.** Keep track of how much you spend on groceries throughout the week. If you eat out at all during the week, the money you spend on that must also come out of your SNAP budget.

**Don't Shop Your Pantry.** Any food you bought before starting the Challenge is off-limits. (You may use spice and condiments that you already have.) If you do use a pantry item, please deduct the cost of from your budget, i.e., if you use an egg you purchased last week, make sure you count the cost of the egg in your spending this week.

**Don't Take Freebies.** Accepting free food from family, friends, or coworkers isn't allowed, since freebies aren't always available to people living on SNAP. That means you can't let your friend treat you at Starbucks or take a doughnut at a workplace meeting. If you do accept any free food, you should deduct money from your budget for that as well.

1.8 million Pennsylvanians receive Supplemental Nutrition Assistance, yet it is not enough to provide three balanced meals a day. To see the statistics for your area, please visit [pittsburghfoodbank.org/learn/map-meal-gap](http://pittsburghfoodbank.org/learn/map-meal-gap)



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## WEEK 4

### LENT HUNGER CHALLENGE

“Even if I knew that tomorrow the world would go to pieces, I would still plant my apple tree.” –Martin Luther

#### **Week 4 Challenge:**

Consider planting a congregation sponsored community garden.

- build friendship and cooperation skills among congregation members of different ages and diverse backgrounds
- reach out to include the church's surrounding community
- let people learn by doing, ultimately holding in their hands the rewards of their labors
- instill in participants a deep respect for the wonders of God's creation
- fight hunger by providing fresh nutritious produce to food banks and shelters
- help combat climate change by decreasing the carbon footprint needed to transport produce by plane, truck, or ship.

Learn more from one of our Synod congregations with their own successful garden: the Community Garden at Oak Grove:  
<http://www.communitygardenatoakgrove.com/>

Our ELCA Social Statement, “Caring for Creation” (adopted in remind us that, “Meeting the needs of today's generations for food, clothing, and shelter requires a sound environment. Action to counter degradation, especially within this decade, is essential to the future of our children, and our children's children.” A congregational community garden is one way to plant seeds of hope for a happy, healthy tomorrow.



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**WEEK 5**  
**LENT HUNGER CHALLENGE**

Read: Luke 18:15-17

**Week 5 Challenge:**

Eat only what is included in a typical backpack for the weekend (as part of a children's backpack program).

This is similar to the following: Mac and cheese, soup, granola bar, shelf stable milk, cereal, canned fruit, raisins, dried beans or canned pasta, canned meat, and canned vegetables. Backpack programs are a way that schools, churches, and communities are working together to provide food for hungry children over the weekend, which supplements the meals they receive in school during the weekday. ELCA World Hunger has an excellent resource, the "Backpack Buddies Guide", which can be downloaded or ordered for free through the ELCA website: <https://elca.org/Resources/ELCA-World-Hunger#HungerEd>

Healthy meals are an essential component to learning and growing. Every day, nearly one million children in Pennsylvania receive nutritious meals through Federal School Nutrition Programs. You can learn more about all of these programs, including the statistics for your local school district, at [www.education.pa.gov](http://www.education.pa.gov) and clicking on "food and nutrition" under the "schools" tab in the main menu.

Because many of these programs are federally funded, it is important to engage in advocacy for their continued funding. Child nutrition advocacy can start with your local school board or district nutrition staff to find out more about their programs, how they are accessed, and how you can support them.



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