



WEEK ONE

"So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. ²⁸God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth." ²⁹God said, "See, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food. ³⁰And to every beast of the earth, and to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food." And it was so. ³¹God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day." (Genesis 1:27-31, NRSV)

YOUR CHALLENGE THIS WEEK: 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 does not 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.



WEEK TWO

²He began to teach them many things in parables, and in his teaching he said to them: ³"Listen! A sower went out to sow. ⁴And as he sowed, some seed fell on the path, and the birds came and ate it up. ⁵Other seed fell on rocky ground, where it did not have much soil, and it sprang up quickly, since it had no depth of soil. ⁶And when the sun rose, it was scorched; and since it had no root, it withered away. ⁷Other seed fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked it, and it yielded no grain. ⁸Other seed fell into good soil and brought forth grain, growing up and increasing and yielding thirty and sixty and a hundredfold." ⁹And he said, "Let anyone with ears to hear listen!" (Mark 4:2-9)

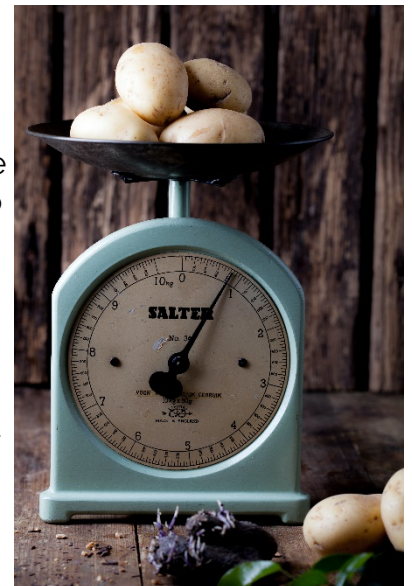
YOUR CHALLENGE THIS WEEK: Measure your food waste.

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 are careless and wasteful and are hurting others in the world, all who are created in the image of God.

The seed is the word of God. Those that fall by the wayside hear but are tempted by evil to wander away and many come to poor endings. Think about this in respect to food. 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. Instead of putting waste in the garbage start a compost pile for biodegradable items.
6. 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.





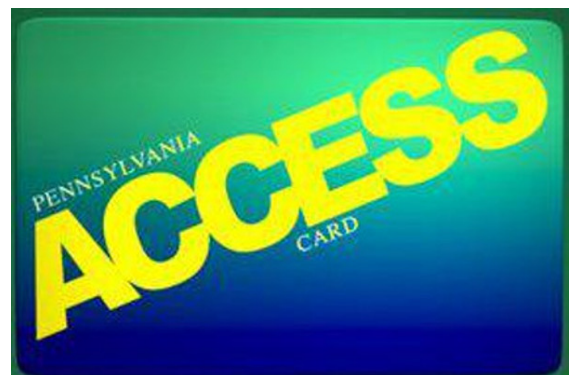
WEEK THREE

⁸Then the word of the Lord came to him, saying, ⁹Go now to Zarephath, which belongs to Sidon, and live there; for I have commanded a widow there to feed you." ¹⁰So he set out and went to Zarephath. When he came to the gate of the town, a widow was there gathering sticks; he called to her and said, "Bring me a little water in a vessel, so that I may drink." ¹¹As she was going to bring it, he called to her and said, "Bring me a morsel of bread in your hand." ¹²But she said, "As the Lord your God lives, I have nothing baked, only a handful of meal in a jar, and a little oil in a jug; I am now gathering a couple of sticks, so that I may go home and prepare it for myself and my son, that we may eat it, and die." ¹³Elijah said to her, "Do not be afraid; go and do as you have said; but first make me a little cake of it and bring it to me, and afterwards make something for yourself and your son. ¹⁴For thus says the Lord the God of Israel: The jar of meal will not be emptied and the jug of oil will not fail until the day that the Lord sends rain on the earth." ¹⁵She went and did as Elijah said, so that she as well as he and her household ate for many days. ¹⁶The jar of meal was not emptied, neither did the jug of oil fail, according to the word of the Lord that he spoke by Elijah. (1 Kings 17:8-16)

YOUR CHALLENGE THIS WEEK:

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. 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 <https://www.pittsburghfoodbank.org/learn/map-meal-gap/>



Here are the rules: If \$6.45 per person per day is too restrictive for you, choose another amount. Whatever budget you choose, it has to cover all your food and drink for the week. Specifically, this means the following:

Track Your Spending. Keep track of how much you spend on groceries throughout the week. If you get delivery or take out from a restaurant 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 spices and condiments that you already have.) If you do use a pantry item, please deduct the cost 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 your workplace. If you do accept any free food, you should deduct money from your budget for that as well.

A great resource for recipes is Good and Cheap: <https://cookbooks.leannebrown.com/good-and-cheap.pdf>



WEEK FOUR

Martin Luther had a deep and profound respect for creation, pondering that, "If you could understand a single grain of wheat you would die of wonder!" A church sponsored community garden lets those working it see and feel the miracles of plant germination and growth. Finding hope for issues like climate change that loom over us today, Luther likewise stated, "Even if I knew that tomorrow the world would go to pieces, I would still plant my apple tree."

YOUR CHALLENGE THIS WEEK: Consider planting a congregation sponsored community garden.

This is a congregational project that can...

- 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.



Ideas to get started: Designate a plot on church grounds suitable for planting. Call upon gardeners in your congregation for their expertise as to preparing the soil and purchasing organic seeds or starter plants. Emphasize the importance of pollinators such as honey bees, native bees, and butterflies. Encourage all people to maintain the garden, watering it and keeping it free of invasive plants. Harvest time can be a joy for all, delivering the precious produce where it is most needed. And don't forget to set aside a compost area for unusable produce, returning to the earth nutrients that can feed your garden in the coming years.

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: Vision, Hope and Justice" (adopted in 1993) continues to remind us that, "In our ministry, we learn about the extent of the environmental

crisis, its complexities, and the suffering it entails. 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.

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. You can also sign up for e-advocacy alerts at <https://elca.org/advocacy> and <https://www.lutheranadvocacy.org/get-involved/actionnet/>. LAMPa also has a wealth of information and resources at <https://www.lutheranadvocacy.org/resources/hunger-resources-2/>.