

The 2013 Lenten Compact

Fasting For Feasting

Sharing Your Food with the Hungry

What is a “Compact”?

A compact is a covenantal agreement among a group of people. Those who voluntarily enter a compact bind themselves to a set of guidelines and standards for the purpose of accomplishing personal and corporate goals.

A Communal Fast

Lent is often considered a personal time to fast, focus ourselves on God, and reflect on the idols that we have been told we cannot live without. Like each Lenten season, we are calling for a communal fast that focuses us not only on our relationship to God, but also on our relationship to “food” in our lives, our communities, our nation and our world. We are calling our church to a true fast – one that is not just the act of denying oneself of something – but a fast that creates justice and reconciliation, by breaking the yokes that bind us and the yokes that bind our neighbors.

In Isaiah 58, specifically verses 6-7, the Lord makes clear what a true fast should accomplish:

*“Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke? Is it not **to share your food with the hungry** and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter— when you see the naked, to clothe him, and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood?”*

This Lent, we will recognize our need for food for health and survival while also recognizing that many people in our nation and around the world do not have access to quality food and are going hungry. Many are literally starving to death.

Why a “Compact for Hunger?”

You’ve heard it said, “You are what you eat.” What we eat literally becomes a part of us. So, what happens when people don’t have enough food? What happens when people only have access to food that has little nutritional value? Food is fundamental to our health, life expectancy and overall well-being. From the womb on, every person needs nutritious food to fully develop. Yet, we live in a world of extremes: where some starve while others grossly over-indulge. Some have no access to food and go hungry while others have an unending selection. How well a person eats is based on what one can afford. The poor eat poorly and suffer. Nutritious food is often out of reach.



Despite the abundance of food, almost 1 billion people in the world (1 in 7) live in hunger—most of them in Africa and Asia. Under-nutrition accounts for over 5 million deaths among children each year (source: worldhunger.org). In the United States, despite programs like Women Infants and Children (WIC) and the Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP), 9.6 million Americans experience hunger on a regular basis, skipping meals or eating too little (source: worldhunger.org). Poverty and hunger go hand in hand nationally and globally.

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, households making \$20,000 /year spent around 32% of their income on food while those making \$46,000 /year spent just 12% of their income on food. The government budget for SNAP benefits to assist qualifying families has remained stagnant since 2011 and there are many calls for cuts in the program to as a part of balancing the federal budget. Coupled with the rising cost of food, families living on income below the federal poverty line (\$23,000 for a family of four) will be forced to spend an even greater percentage of their income to feed themselves. And they will often be forced to choose food that has less nutrition or go hungry. We do not believe that hunger (for any reason) mirrors God’s kingdom values.

God is concerned about food. One of God’s first creative acts assures an ongoing food supply (Genesis 1:11-12) and gives fruit and vegetation to the birds, animals and humans for food (Genesis 1:29-30). In the Torah, the “gleaning laws” (See Deuteronomy 24:19-20 and Leviticus 19:9-10) ensure that everyone has access to food no matter what their income or status. In the New Testament, several of Jesus’ miracles provide abundance of food for those who are hungry (Matthew 14:15-21) and the provision of food for the hungry is part of the basis for entrance into the Kingdom (Matthew 25:31-36). The writings of the Apostles also reflect concern for feeding the hungry (see James 2:14-16). Conversely, the withholding of food is symptomatic of evil and wickedness (Isaiah 32:6).



As followers of Jesus, we are called to “live out” the values of the Kingdom of God. In the Kingdom, hunger is absent, nutritious food is accessible, and people neither lack it nor idolize it. **We will “fast” to ensure that others have ongoing access to food of the best quality in the appropriate quantity for their needs.**

**STARTING WEDNESDAY, FEBRAURY 13th, 2013, AND CONTINUING THROUGH GOOD FRIDAY,
MARCH 29, 2013**

We will FAST to FEED the Hungry

We suggest you live by the following guideline during Lent:

Voluntarily limit your weekly food budget to no more than \$63.35 for each person in your household. This budget represents the average weekly spending for those households living below the poverty line.

Why eat on no more than \$63.35 per week per person?

You may already be one of the many Americans eating on \$63.35 a week. Maybe you are eating on less. However, there is a good chance you are one of 80% of Americans who spend more than that on food each week. There are two goals to the Compact: First, we want to recover a right relationship to food for ourselves and our families. For example, this may mean eating less, eating better, eating more nutritiously and less compulsively, or eating for sustenance and not for pleasure or other emotions. The second is to improve our awareness of our food system. This may mean better understanding food scarcity, food access, food deserts, food advertizing and quality of the food.

For those who are spending more than \$63.35 a week on food, the Compact may free up resources in your budget to help others who lack food or who lack the income to make the food choices they would like to make. For those who are eating on \$63.35 or less, this collective process may give you space to discuss what you sacrifice in order to eat on that budget, the effect that has on you and to educate others on what a more equitable food system would assure you.

This process may challenge you to consider how food scarcity and/or food insecurity force families into making choices that may be destructive to themselves and their families. In this newfound knowledge and awareness, we will be more compassionate and more willing to pursue action to alleviate hunger, advocate for food security for those, even those among us, who cannot currently afford nutritious food choices and to advocate for justice within the food systems - from farm, to store, to table.

How To Participate:

Step 1:

As a household, total your spending on food in the month of January 2013. Be sure to include any money you spent eating out. And don't forget the coffee, beverage or snack purchases, online coupon purchases (for meal deals) and school lunches (if purchased). Divide your total by 4 to calculate your weekly food/beverage budget. (If you cannot track January, keep track during the first week of February to calculate your weekly budget.)



Step 2

Divide the total from Step 1 by the number of people in your household. If the amount is greater than \$63.35 per person per week, decide as a household how you could reduce your food costs per week. You may decide to eliminate your visits to Dunkin' Donuts coffee or reduce eating out (or ordering in) during Lent. You may decide to eat less “prepared” food. You may “give up” desserts or decide to eat only what is on sale at the grocery store. **If your baseline is less than \$63.35 per person per week, we do not suggest that you reduce your budget further.** We do not want anyone to compromise his or her health during Lent. However, we encourage you to reflect on how your current budget impacts your choices and look for possible ways to shift your spending toward healthier food choices.

Step 3

Multiply \$63.35 by the number of people in your household. Then multiply the total by 6 (the number of weeks during Lent). The final total is your suggested available Food Budget for Lent. Place the amount on the attached Food Spending Log.

Step 4

Using the Food Spending Log, keep a running total of your food purchases through Lent. And remember that going out to eat and drink is to be included in your food budget.

Step 5

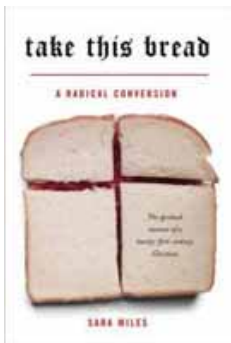
Decide together how you will allocate money you save during Lent to help feed the hungry. We encourage you to contribute ingredients or give a donation to support our meals for the homeless/hungry in February and March. You may decide to give a donation to the Chicago Food Depository at the end of Lent. You may decide to purchase food for a local food pantry. You may decide to give a gift to an organization that is working to end hunger locally or globally like "Bread for the World", "Growing Power", or "Food for the Poor." Come up with your own creative ideas.

Other Ways to Participate in our Fast to Feast

To make this Compact even more meaningful, we encourage you to take the following additional steps:

- **Get your "Bible Bread"**

Each day, a Scripture related to food and hunger along with a question or two to help you reflect on the passage will be posted at www.compact2013.wordpress.com. If you don't have online access, paper copies will be available at the church each Sunday.



- **Read a Good Book**

We're recommending the book, *Take This Bread: A Radical Conversion* by Sara Miles. It is the memoir of an unlikely convert who experiences transformation through communion and embarks on feeding the hungry in San Francisco. For those who choose to read the book, there will be time for discussion at "Eventide" each Wednesday starting February 20. You can order your book through the church by February 3.

- **Keep a Journal or a Blog**

Write about your experience and what you are learning about God and yourself and your relationship to food and those who are hungry.

- **Watch a Food Movie**

There are lots of great documentaries about the complex system of food production and distribution in the US—from the seeds we sow in the ground to the junk we put in our mouths. Invite someone to your house and watch "Food, Inc.", "King Corn", "Dirt: The Movie", "Super Size Me" or "The Real Dirt on Farmer John". Most are available on Netflix or online. We may even schedule a movie night at the church.



- **Try New Recipes**

A great resource for affordable nutritious meals is "More-With-Less: A World Community Cookbook" produced by the Mennonite Central Committee. Or if you know a great recipe that is affordable and nutritious (easy is good too), share it with others who are participating in the Compact on paper or online.

- **Plan for Greater Food Independence**

Whether in a container garden on your back porch or on our church property through Chicago Corner Farm, consider how you can become involved in growing some of your own food this spring and sharing it with others. In March, we will have an urban gardening workshop to help you develop a plan for growing your own vegetables this summer.

- **Eat Out Ethically**

If your budget allows you to go out for a meal, think about what you eat AND think about the people who work in the restaurant industry. Did you know that the federal minimum wage for food servers is \$2.50 per hour? (Tips are included in their anticipated hourly wage). Download a 2013 dining guide at <http://www.rocunited.org/dinersguide> to learn more about the issues faced by workers in the food service industry. And make sure you tip appropriately.

Throughout Lent, you will be given resources to help you understand the dynamics of hunger in the United States, the politics of hunger (ie the US Farm Bill, etc) and how you can be involved in eliminating hunger through compassion and advocacy. During the months of February and March, we will give 5% of our Sunday offerings to organizations that are seeking to end hunger through advocacy and action. You will receive information on each of the organizations we will support.

Finally, we encourage you to share this Compact with your network of friends and family. Consider posting a link on your Facebook page to the church web site (www.kimballavenuechurch.org) or emailing a copy of the Compact to your friends.

While the Compact will end at Easter, it is our hope that "feeding the hungry" will become your Kingdom lifestyle.

FOOD SPENDING LOG FOR LENT 2013

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