



Embrace ©2014, Marian C Honors, CSJ

COMMUNION within the EARTH COMMUNITY: FOOD

I. Connecting with Our Tradition

Responding to a desire to live in communion with Earth, “the sacrament of divine presence” our Chapter declared: We believe in the interdependence of humanity and nature in the whole Earth community, and recognize our harmful impact. Therefore we commit ourselves to simplify our lifestyles through specific, measurable actions regarding ...food... taking into consideration local realities and concerns.

Following this call, we challenge ourselves to actions that will make of every meal a sacred communion. With every bite we take, “God feeds us with finest wheat; we share one loaf and drink from one cup.” We are connected with the whole Earth community that brings food to our table.

Our foremothers recognized the symbolism of eating-as-communion when they professed that “We are most deeply community in the Eucharist, the source of our union with God, with one another.” (Constitution #15, p. 3) We are broadening our understanding of “the Lord’s table” to the whole of creation.

Who then, is welcome at the table? Hospitality is an expression of the cordial charity to which the members of the congregation are called. (Constitution #17 p.3) In opening our hearts and hearths, we desire to nourish both body and soul of our dear neighbors. By being mindful of our food resources and of the choices we make regarding food, we honor the whole food chain.

We were invited by our last Chapter to enter into a conversion process, moving beyond what we have thought was sacred to seeing the whole Earth community as a sacrament of divine presence (Johnson). In presenting these materials, the Ad Hoc group hopes to engage the mind, heart, and will of each of us in this conversion process. This is our chapter call.

Attention to the needs of the dear neighbor is not new to us. We have been hearing this call of the dear neighbor for hundreds of years. Now, however, we are realizing, ever more deeply that our neighbors are the whole Earth community—exquisitely beautiful, abundantly generous, frightfully wounded, and desperate for the human to reconnect with the web of life before it is too late. We acknowledge that there is a great deal that we are doing, even as we are being invited into a new way of being, knowing that we are always called to MORE.

Preparation:

A meal or snack (Section II)

Table with festive covering

A piece of fruit or vegetable for each person (Section IV)

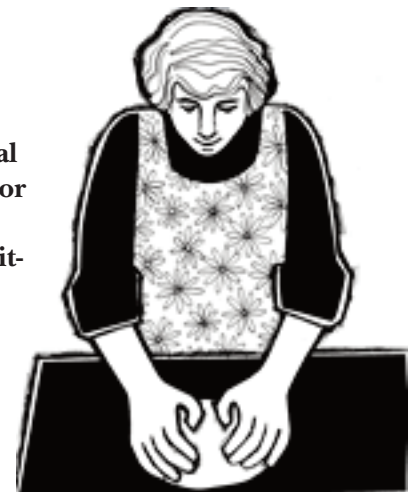
II. A Ritual of Sharing Food

Begin by sharing food together: a meal of as much local produce as possible or healthy snacks purchased locally or have a simple breaking of the bread ritual.

Suggested meal prayer:

Living God, may the food we are eating make us aware of the interconnections between Universe and us, Earth and us, and all other living species and us. Because each bite contains the energy of Sun and Earth, may we know the meaning and value of life from these precious morsels of food and each other. Amen.

- ❖ During your meal share memories of food and family rituals
- ❖ What is your experience of food rituals now? Do you have any favorite one?



Breadmaker © 2014, Marion C. Honors, CSJ

III. Contemplation: After celebrating the gift of food, take ten minutes of contemplative silence.

IV. Food for Thought:

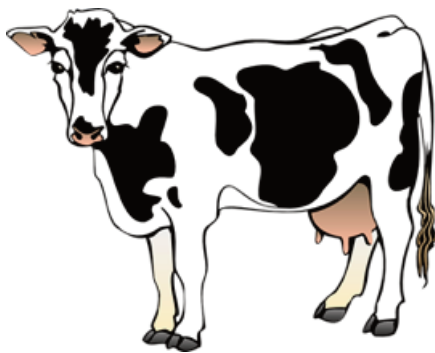
The way our ancestors ate had an impact on the land but very often it was positive. It was working with

the community of land, air, water to receive and give back. Now, agribusiness destroys the soil, air and water that we rely on for food. We are complicit in this destruction, often because we are so far removed from the process of growing our food that we purchase food grown in an unsustainable way.

Review the charts on this page and the next.

In the U.S., meat consumption alone accounts for 30% of our water footprint.

Water Footprint Network



Meat production requires more water than fruits, vegetables, or grains.

Water required to produce one pound (1 lb.) of:

- ❖ Beef = 2,000 gallons of water
- ❖ Pork = 576 gallons of water
- ❖ Chicken = 468 gallons of water
- ❖ Soybeans = 206 gallons of water
- ❖ Wheat = 138 gallons of water
- ❖ Corn = 108 gallons of water

Scott Cullen Executive Director, GRACE Communications Foundation (GCF) - environmental attorney

Problems with producing farm animals for food

- ❖ Increases antibiotic-resistant bacteria because of the overuse of antibiotics
- ❖ Degrades air quality
- ❖ Contaminates rivers, streams, and coastal waters with concentrated animal waste; 3x more poop than humans! (EPA 2007)
- ❖ Disregards animal welfare
- ❖ Shifts the social structure and economy of many farming regions throughout U.S.

The Pew Charitable Trusts and Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health

Consider

Water consumed per gram of protein

Beans, lentils, peas	5 gal/gram
Eggs	7.7 gal/gram
Milk	8.2 gal/gram
Chicken	9 gal/gram
Beef	29.6 gal/gram

www.huffingtonpost.com



The Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee has found that **a diet lower in animal-based foods is not only healthier, but has less of an environmental impact. The healthy diet:**

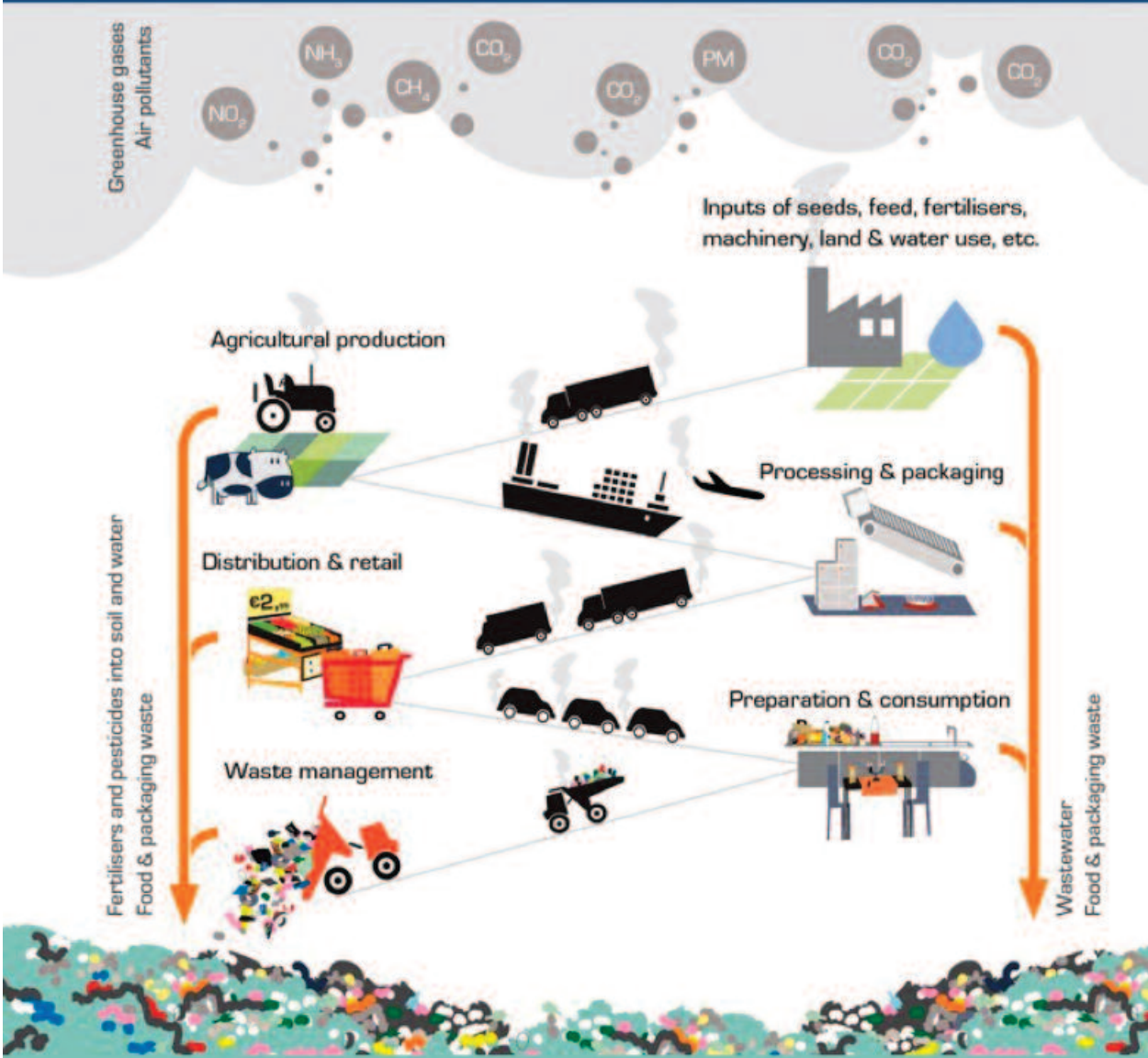
- ❖ Rich in vegetables, fruit, whole grains, seafood, legumes and nuts
- ❖ moderate in low- and non-fat dairy products and alcohol
- ❖ low in red and processed meat, sugar-sweetened foods and beverages, and refined grains

Barbara Millen, chairwoman, Prof of Family Medicine, Boston University School of Medicine

Distribute one piece of fruit or vegetable to each participant to hold as they think/talk through the following chart, envisioning their bit of food going through this process.

How does the food we buy, eat and don't eat impact the environment?

Before reaching our plates, food needs to be produced, processed, packaged, transported and distributed. Every step uses up resources and generates more waste and pollution.



In Europe, agricultural production of food, fibre and fuel accounts for:

90%

of ammonia (NH_3) emissions, impacting air quality

50-80%

of nitrogen load in freshwater bodies, affecting water quality and aquatic ecosystems

10%

of greenhouse gas emissions (incl. 80% of methane emissions) contributing to climate change

Source: EEA

If our goal is to reduce the harmful effects of the way we eat on the Earth community, then buying local eliminates many of the steps in the above process. Buying food local, organic, and fair trade conserves fuel and other resources, reduces health hazards in air, water, and soil, and invests in the quality of life of those in our food neighborhood.

- ❖ How does this information surprise you?
- ❖ What are your feelings, reactions to the information?
- ❖ What challenges you?
- ❖ How do your food choices impact the Earth] community (e.g. packaging, transportation)?

Prayer Response

We grieve and apologize to God and to the Earth community for the many ways humans have acted in destructive rather than sustainable ways.

Our response is: **We will work for change.**
(Pause for 5 seconds after each response.)

- ❖ For the development and extensive use of seeds that are genetically modified, patented, and removed from the normal cycle of seed saving and replanting: **Response**
- ❖ For inhumane treatment of animals raised in unnatural confined areas, treated with hormones and antibiotics: **Response**
- ❖ For the use of artificial fertilizers, pesticides, and herbicides which are toxic to humans and animals, pollute fresh water sources, and cause dead zones in rivers and oceans: **Response**
- ❖ For extensive planting of monocultures destroying diversity as well as habitats for insects and other animals causing extinction of significant numbers of species: **Response**

Musical interlude suggestions: *O Beautiful Gaia*, Carolyn McDade; *For the Beauty of the Earth*; or a song that you find fits this theme.

- ❖ Our response is: **We give thanks and will support them.**
(Pause for 5 seconds after each response.)
- ❖ For farmers who raise range-fed animals free of hormones and antibiotics: **Response**

For gardeners and farmers who raise organic produce free of toxic chemicals: **Response**

For farmers markets and co-ops which make local produce available and help farmers sell directly thus receiving a fair market price for their labors:

Response

For those who compost, returning unused food to be recycled rather than increasing landfill: **Response**

For urban and community gardeners who help provide healthy fresh produce in poor inner city areas:

Response

For those who collect leftover, usable food from restaurants and markets and redistribute it to those in need: **Response**



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V. Communal Action and Partnering

A. Partner with a CSA in your area (Community Supported Agriculture)

Community Supported Agriculture consists of a community of individuals who pledge support to a farm operation so that the farmland becomes, either legally or spiritually, the community's farm, with the growers and consumers providing mutual support and sharing the risks and benefits of food production. Typically, members or "share-holders" of the farm or garden pledge in advance to cover the anticipated costs of the farm operation and farmer's salary.

In return, they receive shares in the farm's bounty throughout the growing season, as well as satisfaction gained from reconnecting to the land and participating directly in food production. Members also share in the risks of farming, including poor harvests due to unfavorable weather or pests. By direct sales to commu-

nity members, who have provided the farmer with working capital in advance, growers receive better prices for their crops, gain some financial security, and are relieved of much of the burden of marketing. Many communities are promoting small agriculture and ecologically sustainable systems. Often these are garden plots in city lots or on rooftops. Slowfoodstl.org has a directory of CSAs in the St. Louis MO area. You may have a similar organization in your area.

B. Support local food pantries that help those who are food insecure. Share your excess garden produce, food supplies, money or time to help carry on this ministry.

C. Buy from Farmers Markets and local co-ops which are a unique shopping experience where you can get fruits and vegetables that are grown locally and picked when perfectly ripened. This enhances the taste, texture and aroma of the produce. When you buy at the Farmers Market or through a co-op, you're supporting your local economy and the community.

D. Give support to Heifer International a charitable organization working to end hunger and poverty around the world by providing livestock and training to struggling communities. Heifer stresses sustainable farming practices. Heifer also supports gender equality and education.

E. Join Bread for the World. Bread for the World is a collective ecumenical voice urging our nation's leaders to end hunger, whether people live in the next house, the next state, or the next continent. We can end hunger in our time. Together we can move legislators to support bills that will overcome hunger and poverty. Go to www.bread.org.

VI. Commitment (Consider the following and choose one or more.)

- ❖ What might you do that you are not doing now?
- ❖ Increase the number of meatless meals you eat per week.
- ❖ Check for commercial compost possibilities in your area. Work for your city to include compost in garbage pickup.
- ❖ Buy locally.
- ❖ Buy organic.
- ❖ Join a CSA (Community Supported Agriculture).
- ❖ Eat lower on the food chain (more vegetables and less meat).
- ❖ Be more conscious about how food is used in our homes and institutions. (see following chart).



www.recycleforoxfordshire.org.uk

“Once our grandparents were very careful not to throw away any leftover food. Consumerism has led us to become accustomed to the superfluous and the daily waste of food, which we are sometimes no longer able to value correctly, as its value goes far beyond mere economic parameters. Note well, though, that the food we throw away is as if we had stolen it from the table of the poor or the hungry! I invite everyone to reflect on the problem of the loss and waste of food to identify ways and methods that, addressing this issue seriously, may be a vehicle for sharing and solidarity with the neediest.”
(Pope Francis 6/5/13, Environment)

We thank God for the gift of food and pray for those who are hungry and those who are food insecure.

We commit to one action (individually or as a group) before leaving our discussion. Each person names an action chosen as a way to safeguard the value of food.

VII. Resources:

The values we express in the choices we make around food are critical. There is a great deal of information available on the internet. Investigate the impact of any of the following by researching on the internet:

The problems with Monocultures:
(<https://www.weedcontrolfreaks.com/monocultures>)

Issues in the factory farming of meat: Natural Farming (<https://www.youtube.com/factory-farming-food-inc>)

Understanding GMOs (genetically modified organisms): Genetically Modified Organisms: Truths and Myths

(https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M_ztZGbLEJ0); Eyes of Nye- GM Foods

(https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8z_CqyB1dQo)

The International Peasant's Movement resists free trade's threat to food sovereignty (<http://www.via-campesina.org/en/index.php/main-issues-main-menu-27>)

The reality of Overfishing: (<https://www.overfishing.org>)

Issues with Fish farms: (<https://www.healthresearchfunding.org>) pros and cons of fish farming

What's involved in the Transportation of food: (<https://www.foodsafetymagazine.com/transportation: The Squeaky Wheel of the Food Safety System>)

The cost of food Packaging: (<https://www.eusia.com/when it comes to food packaging...>)

The value of Fair trade products: (<https://www.fairtradeusa.org>), the section products and partners.

MAGAZINE ARTICLES

National Geographic Magazine: each of the 2014 issues covered something about food issues

Sierra, March/April 2015: The Food Issue: You are what you plant and harvest and cook and share

(http://www.sierraclub.org/sierra/2015-2-march-april/feature/local-roots-vs-industrial-agriculture?utm_source=insider&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=newsletter#1)

BOOKS

Animal, Vegetable, Miracle by Barbara Kingsolver with Steven L. Hopp and Camille Kingsolver; HarperCollins Publishers.

A delightful account of Barbara's family attempting for a year to only eat food raised in their own neighborhood, grown themselves or learning to live without it.

The Good Food Revolution by Will Allen with Charles Wilson; Gotham Books Publisher.

The story of Allen's personal journey from son of a sharecropper to professional basketball to executive to developing Growing Power, a grassroots movement that is changing the way our nation eats.

True Food by Annie B Bond, Melissa Breyer, and Wendy Gordon; National Geographic.

8 Simple Steps to a Healthier You. The book is full of very helpful basic information about eating local, organic, fresh, whole foods and eating lower on the food chain.



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Plants ©2014, Marion C. Honors, CSJ