

Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon's Interfaith Network
for Earth Concerns

Community Food Security Project

THINGS CONGREGATIONS CAN DO TO PROMOTE COMMUNITY FOOD SECURITY

CELEBRATION AND WORSHIP

- In most traditions, there are already religious holidays or other special worship days through which appreciation for food and the call for building a just and sustainable food system can be lifted up. For example, in the Christian tradition, some denominations celebrate a Rural Life Sunday that celebrates rural life and land stewardship. A rural and urban church could come together for worship or do a pulpit exchange to reflect on their interdependence around food. Some congregations celebrate an Earth Sabbath near Earth Day that could provide a focal point for raising awareness about the importance of our local food system and how we can support it.
- Learn about a faith other than you own by exploring the meaning of food and religious practices around food in that faith's tradition.

EDUCATION

- Visit a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) farm, or plan a day of education, service and celebration at a CSA. CSA's often have work that needs to be done and are happy to educate in the process. Take a youth group to the farm to learn and work. Expand their notion of food ministry beyond the canned food drive.
- Include gardening activities in children's education. For example a "To Till and Keep" vacation Bible school could focus on growing a garden and the spiritual lessons available from the activity of gardening.
- Organize an educational series at your congregation on food, faith and care of the land. The course could include topics such as the spiritual, scriptural and theological grounds for land stewardship and ethical eating, sustainable agriculture, farmland preservation, food justice issues and making ethical food choices as a consumer. To round the course out include a potluck of locally grown food and a visit by a local farmer. Conclude by exploring practical action steps your congregation can take and plan follow-up steps that are manageable and include participants' passions and interests. (See INEC's bibliographies for useful videos/group discussion materials).
- Convene a small group-study using curriculum such as *Food and Faith: Justice, Joy and Daily Bread*.

CONGREGATIONAL LIFESTYLE

- Use local produce for congregational meals. Start by aiming to buy at least 10% of your food from local growers. Invite one of the farmers you've purchased the food from to talk at the meal, or hold a *Locally Grown Meal* event.
- Use the congregation's kitchen as a community kitchen for food preservation and shared meals.
- Make land available for gardening projects that assist at-risk youth and involve congregation members in mentoring and teaching.
- Buy a share from a local CSA farm for your neighborhood food pantry, or find a farmer who will grow for congregation member. Consider setting up a CSA that employs recent immigrants. Many have good gardening skills but limited English and would appreciate the opportunity to generate their own income through an entrepreneurial garden or farm. Use the congregation as a drop site, preferably when the congregation is already being used, thus minimizing the coordination efforts of opening and closing the building. Participate in the life of the farm together.
- Consider offering the church parking lot as a site for a farmers' market.

COMMUNITY MINISTRY AND PUBLIC AWARENESS

- Provide support to local, regional and national organizations that promote farmland protection and sustainable agricultural practices. This could include co-sponsoring a conference, financial support or in-kind support.
- Work with farmland protection organizations to uphold and strengthen land-use laws protecting farmland. Write letters to your elected representatives to let them know of your concerns and express support for good land use laws.
- Advocate for policies that address root causes of hunger as well policies that support the development of community food systems. (Contact EMO, or Oregon Faith Roundtable Against Hunger at www.ofrah.org)