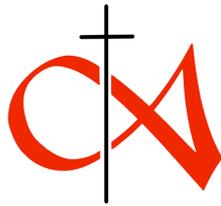


# Feed My Lambs

A guide for clergy and congregations to explore childhood hunger using John 21:1-19  
With liturgies, sermon suggestions, and bulletin inserts for April 10, 2016



Christian Associates of  
Southwestern Pennsylvania





Dear Pastor,

On April 10, 2016, the lectionaries used in many of our churches will bring us John 21:1-19 as the Gospel lesson: Jesus' appearance in Galilee after his resurrection. As Jesus inspires a miraculous catch of fish, cooks breakfast on the beach, and instructs Peter to "Feed my lambs," the message is clear: Christ brings abundance and nourishment to all, and his disciples can continue his ministry.

Just as Peter and the other disciples searched for hope in the weeks after Easter, our churches are full of people seeking signs of hope. Hope that life has meaning and we are here for a purpose; hope that things don't have to remain as they are; and hope that we are not alone. There are many tangible and practical ways that churches can offer hope to their neighbors. One of these is by supporting meal programs for children.

In Southwest Pennsylvania, more than 110,000 children are food insecure, meaning that they don't have reliable access to a sufficient amount of affordable, nutritious food. When children don't get enough healthy food to eat, they face short-term and long-term consequences including poor health outcomes, behavior issues and difficulties in school. The lambs right here in our own neighborhoods are hungry and need to be fed.

The hopeful news is that these poor results can be prevented. When children eat healthy meals, they can experience childhood as it should be — a time to explore, learn, and play. Churches, schools, and other community organizations can work together to implement and support meal programs, ensuring that children get enough to eat so that they grow up healthy and strong and so that they can serve in their communities.

This guide has information and resources for ways that you and your congregation can improve food security for children in our region:

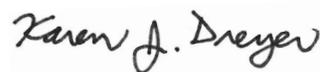
- On pages two and three, you will find suggested prayers, liturgies, and sermon suggestions that will help you relate John 21:1-19 to childhood nutrition programs in our region.
- On page four, you will learn about ways that your whole congregation can engage in advocating for hungry children in our communities.
- Page five and six are reproducible bulletin inserts that you can include in your church's worship bulletins on April 10. The inserts, designed to be cut in half, offer facts about School Breakfast and Summer Feeding programs, and ways that individuals can get involved to help.

Please consider joining us in working together to ensure that all children have enough to eat. Together, let us feed the children: the little ones He has sent us to serve.

With hope,



Rev. Liddy Barlow  
Executive Minister  
Christian Associates of Southwest Pennsylvania



Dr. Karen Dreyer  
SWPA Food Security Partnership Director  
Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank

As you plan worship on Sunday, April 10, you may choose to use these worship elements that connect the lectionary texts with the call to feed hungry children.

**Call to Worship (based on Psalm 30 and Psalm 107):**

Leader: O Lord my God, I cried to you for help,

People: ...and you have healed me!

Leader: O Lord, you brought up my soul from the depths,

People: ...and restored me to life!

Leader: Some wandered in desert wastelands,

People: ...hungry and thirsty, their soul fainted within them.

Leader: Then they cried to the Lord in their trouble,

People: ...and he delivered them from their distress!

Leader: Thank the Lord for his steadfast love,  
People: ...for his wonderful works to humankind!

Leader: For he satisfies the thirsty

People: ...and the hungry he fills with good things!

**Hymns:**

Break Now the Bread of Life (Text: Mary Lathbury)

All Who Hunger, Gather Gladly (Text: Sylvia G. Dunstan)

We Come to the Hungry Feast (Text: Ray Makeever)

Lord You Give the Great Commission (Text: Jeffery Rowthorn)

Will You Let Me Be Your Servant (Text: Richard Gillard)

We are Called (Text: David Haas)

Children of the Heavenly Father (Text: Carolina Sandell Berg; tr. Ernst W. Olson)

**Prayers of the People:**

With confidence in God's abundant mercy, let us pray to the Lord.

"They cast the net to the right side, and now they were not able to haul it in because there were so many fish." Lord, the world you have created is rich and abundant, with enough for all. Help us to appreciate your gifts and to share them wisely, so all may be fed. Lord, in your mercy, *hear our prayer*.

"That disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, "It is the Lord!" Jesus, help us to recognize you wherever you are found, especially in the faces of the needy. Lord, in your mercy, *hear our prayer*.

"Simon Peter went aboard and hauled the net ashore, full of large fish ... and though there were so many, the net was not torn." Lord, help us to ensure an unbroken safety net for all those in our communities in need of aid: for people who are disabled and unemployed, for the elderly and for the children. Lord, in your mercy, *hear our prayer*.

"Jesus said to them, 'Come and have breakfast.'" Lord, help us to extend your invitation to all the children of our community. Especially, let us help ensure that healthy, nutritious school breakfasts and lunches are accessible to all who need them. Lord, in your mercy, *hear our prayer*.

"When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, 'Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?' He said to him, 'Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.' Jesus said to him, 'Feed my lambs.'" Holy One, you know that we love you. Help us to feed your lambs. Empower our work at summer feeding sites, in food pantries, in nutrition programs, that all children in our region may be fed. Lord, in your mercy, *hear our prayer*.

"After this Jesus said to him, 'Follow me.'" Lord, in everything we do, help us to follow you, for you are our Savior, our Shepherd, and our Hope. We make all our prayers in your holy name, and we pray as you still teach us, saying *Our Father ...*

**Benediction/Charge:**

Leader: Jesus asked, "Do you love me?"  
People: "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you."  
Leader: Then feed my lambs. Now may the God of love -- Father, Son +, and Holy Spirit -- give you the will to do this. Follow him and go forth in peace.  
People: Amen

For additional worship elements, including directions for a liturgy children and families and can celebrate at home in the coming week, please visit [www.casp.org](http://www.casp.org).

### **Sermon Inspiration: reflection on John 21:1-19**

Jesus said – one could even say he commanded – his disciples to “come and have breakfast.” Usually when someone says, “come have breakfast,” it’s a welcome invitation. We might expect a tasty start to the day, often with people we love and enjoy. We can imagine ourselves responding to Jesus’s breakfast invitation with enthusiasm and joyful anticipation. After all, it’s breakfast with Jesus Christ! But his disciples responded differently. John writes, “Now none of the disciples dared to ask him, ‘Who are you?’ because they knew it was the Lord.” Their reaction to Jesus’ call betrays a sense of dread and anxiety about eating with him. Why?

Breakfast with Jesus comes just a few short days after his disciples had seen him betrayed, arrested, brutalized and killed. They had seen the worst humanity can dish out, which is enough to make anyone lose their appetite. Worse yet, they had been complicit in the crime, denying Jesus and abandoning him. It’s no wonder they might dread a meal with Jesus. Besides the understandable confusion of eating with someone they thought to be dead, they would eat with the very one they had betrayed.

Yet, Jesus said to sit down and eat anyway. This is just like God, isn’t it? Despite the shame you carry, all that you’ve done and left undone, and the ways which you have not loved God or neighbor with your whole heart, God still chooses to bring you to the table. “Come and have breakfast,” he says.

Jesus’s command can be ours to speak to others as well. There are people in our community who need to hear, “come and have breakfast” because they don’t have anyone else who will or sometimes can say it. Many of the people in our region who need to hear this most are children: the more than 110,000 children who rely on school breakfast and lunch and summer feeding programs to fill out the nutritional needs of their day.

It’s likely that those who hear you or your congregation say, “come and have breakfast” may meet you with round, anxious eyes. You might see suspicion or dread, similar to what we saw in Jesus’s disciples. After all, society tends to see people who need help with suspicion. Much of the help food-insecure people receive is accompanied by feelings of embarrassment and insecurity. Like any kid, hungry children wish that Mom and Dad or other special grownups could give them everything needed in the comfort and privacy of their own homes. Parents and caregivers are often embarrassed or frustrated, themselves, in circumstances of unemployment or underemployment. They wish they could just go to the grocery store like other people. They wish they didn’t have to ask or be known by anyone, anywhere, as someone who needs help. Sometimes it’s just easier to be silent and hungry than full and ashamed.

But today, we invite you to “build a fire.” Get meals ready for your neighbors who need it, extend your support to school and summer feeding programs, and speak Jesus’s words, “come and have breakfast.” Those whom you ask may understandably respond with anxiety, just as Jesus’s disciples did that morning by the water, but share the news about breakfast anyway. Fill up plates with warm, good things and sit down together.

The question simmering beneath the disciples’ anxiety about eating breakfast together with Jesus is this: what does it mean to have God in the world? Jesus responds to this question in person with a command to sit down by the fire for breakfast, which echoes his earlier words “Take and eat.” To have God in the world means sitting down for a meal with God’s people, who come in all of their real brokenness, need, and uncertainty. To have God in the world means getting filled up with good things, then being free to go about the day in love and service to others. To have God in the world is to receive strength over stigma and tangible, no-strings-attached care. To say, “come and have breakfast” is to feed God’s lambs out of love for him who gave himself in love for our sake.

-- the Rev. Natalie G. Hall, pastor in residence, First Lutheran Church, Pittsburgh, PA

## **SUGGESTED NEXT STEPS FOR CONGREGATIONS**

- Become a Summer Food site either inside or outside of your building, or add a food component to your existing afterschool or summer programs, including Vacation Bible School. Summer Food sites don't have to run all summer - how long the site is open is up to you! Sites qualify to be an open site, meaning any child 18 or under can come and get a meal without burdensome financial paperwork, if a school in the school district, or the Census Tract the site is in, has 50% or more kids eligible for free/reduced school meals. Alternatively, a site can be an enrolled site for the kids that are enrolled in a particular program if 50% or more of those kids qualify for free/reduced school meals according to the school district. The Food Bank can determine your site's eligibility for you! Please use our email below to find out more.
- Help find new Summer Food sites in your community or volunteer at one nearby.
- Collect donations or do a Summer Food Program drive, collecting supplies such as recreational equipment, games, books or arts and crafts items that can be used at Summer Food sites.
- Help spread the word about the Summer Food Program in your community with flyers and posters.
- Become involved with Bread for the World ([www.bread.org](http://www.bread.org)), a bipartisan Christian organization committed to ending hunger by working to change the policies and conditions that allow hunger to persist. Bread for the World members send letters and emails, make phone calls, and visit their members of Congress about legislation that addresses hunger in the U.S. and around the world. Congregations can organize an annual Offering of Letters to elected officials. The Southwestern Pennsylvania Bread for the World team meets regularly to coordinate activities in our area.
- Collect food donations that can be given to a local pantry.
- Have a member of the Food Bank staff come and talk to your congregation about hunger in your area and ways that you can get involved.

*If your congregation is interested in any of these activities, please email [partnership@pittsburghfoodbank.org](mailto:partnership@pittsburghfoodbank.org).*

## **CHURCH SUCCESS STORIES**

*Kingdom Life Fellowship Pittsburgh:* This church is located in Pittsburgh's South Side and became a Summer Food site in 2014. They have since expanded to providing an afterschool program with meals as well. In the summer of 2015, Kingdom Life Fellowship served both lunch and an afternoon snack through the Summer Food Program and they averaged 56 kids each day in attendance. They are meeting a critical need in the community by being a welcoming place that kids can come and get good food and good programming.

*United Methodist Church Union:* Located on Pittsburgh's North Side, United Methodist Church Union became a Summer Food Program Sponsor in 2013. That year they managed six Summer Food sites that served 3,606 lunches to children in need. During the Summer of 2015, they managed eight sites and served a total of 13,377 lunches and snacks. Additionally, they partnered with StarKist to have their employees visit a Summer Food site and bring special activities for the kids. In the summer of 2016, they hope to expand again with even more Summer Food Program sites and meals due to all of the positive outcomes they have seen this program bring children and churches.

“Jesus said to them, ‘Come and have breakfast.’”  
- John 21:12

### SCHOOL BREAKFAST FACTS

School Breakfast has been linked to better test scores, better concentration, better memory, fewer disciplinary problems, and fewer visits to the school nurse.\*



Unfortunately, Pennsylvania ranks 40th in the nation for low income children’s participation in school breakfast.\*

School districts and schools can take a variety of actions to increase school breakfast participation:

- Change the school breakfast model. Instead of eating in the cafeteria before the school day starts, students might have Breakfast in the Classroom, a Grab and Go Breakfast or a Second Chance Breakfast (takes place after first period).
- Have a breakfast promotion, such as a raffle that kids are entered in every time they eat school breakfast.
- Advertise the breakfast program by using in-school announcements, school newspapers, taste tests and surveys, poster contests or flyers with menus for kids and their families.

\*School breakfast information from the Food Research & Action Center.

### SCHOOL BREAKFAST ACTION STEPS YOU CAN TAKE

- Call or email Chris West at Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank to find out how your school district is doing with School Breakfast participation, and how you can let your district know the importance of this issue: 412-460-3663 x307, [cwest@pittsburghfoodbank.org](mailto:cwest@pittsburghfoodbank.org).

- Learn more about School Breakfast at [frac.org](http://frac.org) or [nokidhungry.org](http://nokidhungry.org).

“Jesus said to him, ‘Feed my lambs.’”  
- John 21:15

### SUMMER FOOD PROGRAM FACTS

• In Southwestern Pennsylvania, approximately 142,000 kids are eligible for free or reduced price meals at school, but less than 16,000 kids participate in the Summer Food Program, which ensures that kids can receive



nutritious meals during the summer months when school is not in session.

- Most sites are located in income eligible areas and are open sites, meaning that anyone age 18 or under can receive a meal at the site, or up to 21 years of age for young people with disabilities. Examples of site locations are churches, parks, playgrounds or community centers.
- Meals able to be served through the Summer Food Program are breakfast, lunch, afternoon snack or dinner.

### SUMMER FOOD ACTION STEPS YOU CAN TAKE

- Call or email Chris West at Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank to help find new Summer Food sites in your area, or help spread the word about this program: 412-460-3663 x307, [cwest@pittsburghfoodbank.org](mailto:cwest@pittsburghfoodbank.org).
- Beginning in late May, dial 211 to find the Summer Food sites nearest you.
- Talk to your church about becoming a Summer Food site, collecting donations or materials that will help support the Summer Food Program, or volunteering at a site. Please call or email Chris West if you are interested in any of these ways to help.

**“Jesus said to him, ‘Feed my lambs.’”  
- John 21:15**

### **SUMMER FOOD PROGRAM FACTS**

- In Southwestern Pennsylvania, approximately 142,000 kids are eligible for free or reduced price meals at school, but less than 16,000 kids participate in the Summer Food Program, which ensures that kids can receive nutritious meals during the summer months when school is not in session.
- Most sites are located in income eligible areas and are open sites, meaning that anyone age 18 or under can receive a meal at the site, or up to 21 years of age for young people with disabilities. Examples of site locations are churches, parks, playgrounds or community centers.
- Meals able to be served through the Summer Food Program are breakfast, lunch, afternoon snack or dinner.



**“Jesus said to them, ‘Come and have breakfast.’”  
- John 21:12**

### **SCHOOL BREAKFAST FACTS**

- School Breakfast has been linked to better test scores, better concentration, better memory, fewer disciplinary problems, and fewer visits to the school nurse.\*
- Unfortunately, Pennsylvania ranks 40th in the nation for low income children’s participation in school breakfast.\*
- School districts and schools can take a variety of actions to increase school breakfast participation:
- Change the school breakfast model. Instead of eating in the cafeteria before the school day starts, students might have Breakfast in the Classroom, a Grab and Go Breakfast or a Second Chance Breakfast (takes place after first period).
  - Have a breakfast promotion, such as a raffle that kids are entered in every time they eat school breakfast.
  - Advertise the breakfast program by using in-school announcements, school newspapers, taste tests and surveys, poster contests or flyers with menus for kids and their families.



\*School breakfast information from the Food Research & Action Center.

### **SCHOOL BREAKFAST ACTION STEPS YOU CAN TAKE**

- Call or email Chris West at Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank to find out how your school district is doing with School Breakfast participation, and how you can let your district know the importance of this issue: 412-460-3663 x307, [cwest@pittsburghfoodbank.org](mailto:cwest@pittsburghfoodbank.org).
- Learn more about School Breakfast at [frac.org](http://frac.org) or [nokidhungry.org](http://nokidhungry.org).