



What we eat and why it matters: Exploring a theology of food

Some suggestions for facilitators

Ministry in adult Christian formation: Welcome to this opportunity for ministry! Serving as a facilitator while members of your parish reflect together about our calling to engage with one another about matters of faith is a service to the Church. Blessings to you in this role.

Exploring a theology of food: The theme of this DVD has to do with how food intersects with our faith lives. Food might seem like a strange (even boring?) topic for church study. We know that God calls us to worship, to pray, and to engage in acts of charity toward the poor. But does God really care if we eat pasta or beef for dinner?

If we dig a little deeper, however, we find that food is at the very center of our lives as Christians. From the Eucharist to the Lord's Prayer, God and food are intimately intertwined in our worship and prayer lives. Though we may rarely notice it, agriculture and care of the land are two of the primary themes in the Old Testament. Though Jesus was the son of a carpenter, much of the imagery he uses in his parables relates to agriculture and food. When describing the kingdom of God, the image sometimes used is of a heavenly banquet. On the road to Emmaus, the disciples recognize Jesus only in the breaking of the bread. What might these resources within our tradition say about what we eat and why it matters?

When we dig more deeply still, we may find that food is also intimately intertwined with the Church's mission in the world. When we eat, we are connected with a whole line of people who grew or raised, picked or slaughtered, processed, transported, and maybe even cooked the food for us. Does this process of getting food to our tables help or hinder the Church's mission in the world? Do we remember in our prayers and mission work the people who make our meals possible? The food we eat, in one way or another, also affects God's wider creation. What are our responsibilities as people of faith to God's creation? Does what we eat reflect these responsibilities and God's vision for the entire creation? How might reflecting on the Church's mission help us evaluate what we eat and why it matters?

When we dig even deeper, we may see that food is also intimately intertwined with our own spiritual lives. Food can build up health, joy, and community. Or food can make us less healthy, more slothful, and more isolated. What and how we eat says something about what we value as people, consciously or unconsciously: rest or busyness, companionship or solitude. How does the health and vitality of our own spiritual lives relate to what we eat and why it matters?

Food is at the core of who we are as people of faith – both our internal life and our external mission in the world (which, of course, are always interrelated!). Recognizing this is just the beginning. The process of engaging what we eat and why it matters is enormous – one best suited for a community of people struggling to live into God’s call for their lives.

This DVD series, then, is designed to help people engage the theme, what we eat and why it matters, either for the first time or at a deeper level. Our hope for this series is *not* that people will all become farmers or vegetarians! Rather, our hope is that people will use a shared and essential human activity – eating – to reflect more deeply on what it means to be human and part of the body of Christ. Through this reflection, perhaps people’s way of eating and their spiritual lives will be transformed while discovering new ways of engaging in the Church’s mission.

Participants on the DVD include

Cynthia Curtis
Episcopal Center at Duke, Durham

Catherine Phillips
Duke Divinity School, Durham

Ellen Davis, Professor
Duke Divinity School, Durham

Various students, teachers, and parents
Trinity Episcopal School, Charlotte

Joe Hensley
St. Luke’s Church, Durham

A further word about Dr. Ellen Davis: She is a lay Episcopalian and Professor of Bible and Practical Theology at Duke Divinity School, and has been at the forefront of this issue in recent years. She has brought her extensive knowledge of Hebrew and the Old Testament to bear on her research on the science and policy behind contemporary agriculture and the ecological crisis. She lectures extensively around the world about the connection between scripture, agriculture, and the contemporary ecological crisis. Her recently published book, *Scripture, Culture, and Agriculture: An Agrarian Reading of the Bible*, represents the culmination of much of her recent scholarly work. We are very grateful for her willingness to participate in this series.

There are five programs in the series *What we eat and why it matters: Exploring a theology of food* (with times):

- *Food and the Church’s Life* (11:54)
- *Food and the Church’s Mission* (11:36)
- *Agriculture and Land Care in Scripture* (11:22)
- *Bible Study with Ellen Davis* (11:11)
- *Where do we go from here?* (11:53)

Purpose of the study: Our hope is that this study will

- explore the wealth of resources within our tradition for thinking about food and agriculture;

- encourage deeper thought and dialogue about this essential human activity and key theme throughout the Christian tradition;
- contribute to strengthening the sense of God's presence amongst and within us during Christian formation and beyond;
- inspire curiosity to continue to learn about the issue of what we eat and why it matters;
- inspire a deeper passion to continue to engage in Christ's mission in the world;
- contribute to strengthening the sense of community among ourselves and beyond our own immediate context;
- affirm the biblical foundations of our faith; and
- challenge us to relate study and reflection to action in the name of Christ.

Facilitation: Please refer to *Doing theology: DVDs for parish study – Some suggestions for facilitators*, which is included in the notebook provided each congregation in the Diocese of North Carolina, for general comments about your role as facilitator. (If a copy is not available, contact the School or visit our website, www.episdioncschool.org.)

Number of sessions: We anticipate that each of these programs could be used successfully in a Sunday morning adult forum, the basics being that you show a program or a portion of it, and then have conversations about it. (The only possible exception to this is program four, *Bible Study with Ellen Davis*, which is discussed in more detail below.) While more extensive time might be beneficial, this pattern is manageable in a Sunday school setting allowing perhaps 45 minutes. If more time is desired, then obviously times other than Sunday morning provide greater flexibility. Additionally, given the topic, incorporating a meal into all or some of the sessions would be appropriate. Each of these five programs is broken down into sections, and if there is particular energy in your group for one aspect of the theme, you could easily expand the sessions.

Programs one, two, three, and five are best shown in that order. However, all or part of the fourth program could reasonably be shown at any point in the session, except perhaps last. The fourth program, entitled *Bible Study with Ellen Davis*, focuses on three different passages in the book of Genesis – the first creation story, the second creation story, and Noah. A group could reasonably spend an entire forty-five minutes on any one of these passages. Alternatively, one could reasonably focus on the two creation stories for an entire session and use another session to focus on Noah. An alternate order to the one outlined below might be to begin with a session on the first two creation stories using program four, proceeding thereafter to the sessions with DVD programs one, two, and three. One could then use the *Bible Study with Ellen Davis* again to spend a session on the Noah passages in Genesis, followed by DVD program five to wrap the series up. This order would give you six sessions instead of five. You could also, of course, simply choose not to deal with all the passages discussed in the *Bible Study with Ellen Davis* program and therefore keep the series at five sessions.

Meals (if desired): If time and space allow, having a meal or meals as part of this study would be appropriate and might help bring out additional areas for discussion. Below are some ideas that you may want to use for structuring meals. One idea for structuring the series would be to have an

introductory session of just a meal and discussion in order to get people interested in the series. As always, these are just suggestions and can be adapted to suit your particular group. Remember to begin each meal with a prayer of thanksgiving – thanking God not only for the food but also for all the people who made this meal possible. (Remember this includes more than the people in the kitchen!)

- Host a regular potluck supper but assign one person to bring a store-bought entrée with everyone else bringing sides or dessert. After the meal, look at several of the main ingredients in the store-bought entrée and assign different people to research what goes into getting that one ingredient into this meal. Discuss it at the next session. This would need to be an internet-savvy group or the research would be very difficult! Make sure the person bringing the entrée knows what you are doing ahead of time!
- Get a group of people (or a caterer, depending on your budget) to prepare a meal using as many local ingredients as possible. Ask people to reflect on how this meal is different from what they might have eaten otherwise. This might work best with people who have some familiarity with local food sources.
- If you have a large group, divide people randomly into two (or more) sub-groups and assign each sub-group a different country. One group should eat a meal typically eaten by middle-class people in the United States. Another group might eat a meal typical of rural Mexico or rural Botswana, for example. Make sure the portions are appropriate for each country! Allow some time for people to reflect on this experience.
- As a variation on the above, one group could eat a meal typical of middle-class or upper-middle class people in the United States. Another group could eat a meal typical of the working poor in the United States – often fast food or inexpensive and often unhealthy food available at convenience stores. See the section entitled “Additional Study” below for some local organizations involved in poverty issues who could speak about the challenges facing the poor in terms of access to and consumption of healthy food. Some questions for discussion:
 - What strikes you about these different meals?
 - Why is a fast-food hamburger cheaper than a head of broccoli?
 - When helping provide food for the poor, should we provide food they want to eat or food that is as healthy as possible? (For example, if a homeless person asks you to buy him a chocolate bar and a soft drink: do you buy it or do you buy him an apple, peanut butter, and whole wheat bread?)
- Get a group of people to prepare a vegetarian (or even vegan if you really want to shake things up!) meal. Have people reflect on the experience. The idea is not to try and make people vegetarian or vegan but just to reflect on eating different kinds of meals. This meal would pair nicely with a study of the first nine books of Genesis, particularly comparing God’s commands regarding eating in Genesis 1:29-30 and Genesis 9:3. This scripture study and meal would work well with the session entitled “Bible Study with Ellen Davis,” as she talks about some of the surrounding verses in Genesis.
 - Reflect on the different circumstances in which God gives these eating guidelines to human beings. What might this say about what we are to eat now? (Note: This is *not* intended to be a leading question suggesting that we should eat only seeds and fruits. Perhaps this is your conclusion – perhaps not.

(Jesus certainly ate more than seeds and fruit.) Rather, the hope is that this tension between scripture and our experience might generate deeper reflection on what we eat and why it matters.)

- In Genesis 9, what other concessions does God make for human beings after the flood? What promises does God make? How do these concessions and promises resonate with our contemporary experience of food and agriculture?
- Prepare a meal of any kind but after the initial prayer, have everyone eat in complete silence. This would be a particularly appropriate exercise before the first session. Have people reflect on the nature of this experience. How did silence change the way they ate? How did silence change the experience of eating with others?
- You could also just have people enjoy a meal of whatever type together before or after the session. Eating together can be a great way to build community and intimacy within a group.

Conversations: Three general approaches seem important to us: The first is to provide opportunity for a study group to connect with what people said on the DVD to their own lives – “what experiences have *you* had...?” The second is similar, with your seeking to learn what resonates with them in the DVD – “what particular points made on the film lead you to say *yes!* or *no!*” And the third is to help people engage more deeply in theological reflection about their everyday lives in ways that may seem challenging at first – recognizing that we grow spiritually, at least in part, when we rub up against unfamiliar ways of looking at the world.

Summary: In the comments on the five programs below, we encourage you to provide a summary at the end of each session. As we suggest in our general facilitation guide, however, note that we are not suggesting a detailed summary of what everyone said. Rather we find it good to somehow tie the conversation together, commending the group for their contribution, and suggesting that the group has engaged in faithful reflection together.

Key Bible passages: Though we may rarely think about this aspect of scripture, the theme of food and agriculture is pervasive throughout the Old and New Testament. Here are some key passages beyond those discussed in the DVD:

Genesis 1-11	Jeremiah 14	Mark 6:30-44
Exodus 16	Job 28	Mark 8:1-10
Exodus 24	Job 38-42	Mk 8:14-21
Leviticus 11	Micah 1-4	Mark 14:12-25
Leviticus 17	Jonah	Luke 6:43-45
Leviticus 25	Matthew 15:32-39	Luke 12:22-31
Numbers 11	Matthew 20: 1-16	Luke 14:15-24
Psalms 8	Matthew 21:18-22	Luke 24:13-35
Psalms 104	Matthew 22: 1-14	Luke 24:36-49
Psalms 144	Mark 2:18-22; 23-28	John 15: 1-11
Psalms 148	Mark 4:1-20; 26-34	John 20:11-18

Having provided these specific passages, we hasten to remind you that there is a broader context to any small set of verses. If you choose to ask the group to read the Bible between sessions, ask them to read entire chapters, or more. You may also want to do some basic secondary research on any passage you assign – particularly the Old Testament passages – to learn more about the history and setting of the text. Some of the above passages, particularly the Gospel texts but also some of the Old Testament texts, would be appropriate for a *lectio divina* exercise. Note that for a *lectio divina* exercise you should usually pick out a few verses from the passage rather than work with the entire passage. This could be one way to get conversation going in a group and often helps people converse at a deeper level than they might otherwise do. (If you don't know what in the world *lectio divina* is, a good introduction can be found at this website, <http://www.rc.net/saginaw/srsclare/lectio.html>, or in M. Basil Pennington's *Lectio Divina: Renewing the Ancient Practice of Praying the Scriptures*. Or test your priest!)

Additional study: Food and its broader social implications, particularly its environmental impact, is a hot subject these days both inside and outside the church, with people from very different backgrounds contributing to the debate. If you choose to have a book to accompany the DVD, be sure to look closely at the book before recommending it. Below are some that you might find of interest for further reading. Note that these books are from many different perspectives – some are from Christian perspectives, some secular, some other religious traditions – but all have something to add to the conversation. Below are also some recent documentaries that may be incorporated into your series, particularly with relation to second program, *Food and the Church's Mission*. Again, make sure you review any documentary before incorporating it into the series. A list of helpful websites as well as some local resources is also provided.

Books:

- Bass, Dorothy and Richter, Don, ed. *Way to Live: Christian Practices for Teens*. Nashville: Upper Rooms Books, 2002. (Includes a chapter on eating.)
- Bittman, Mark. *Food Matters: A Guide to Conscious Eating*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2009.
- Boucher, Douglas, ed. *The Paradox of Plenty: Hunger in a Bountiful World*. Oakland: Food First Books, 1999.
- D'Aluisio, Faith and Menzel, Peter. *Hungry Planet: What the World Eats*. Berkeley: Ten Speed Press, 2005. (Includes wonderful visual material for comparing average diets from different parts of the world.)
- Davis, Ellen. *Scripture, Culture, and Agriculture: An Agrarian Reading of the Bible*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009.
- Kingsolver, Barbara. *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle*. New York: HarperCollins, 2007.
- Hillel, Daniel. *The Natural History of the Bible: An Environmental Exploration of the Hebrew Scriptures*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2006.
- McCormick, Patrick T. *A Banqueter's Guide to the All-Night Soup Kitchen of the Kingdom of God*. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2004.
- Nestle, Marion. *Food Politics: How the Food Industry Influences Nutrition and Health*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002.
- Pollan, Michael. *The Omnivore's Dilemma: A Natural History of Four Meals*. New York: Penguin Press, 2006.

- _____. *In Defense of Food: An Eater's Manifesto*. New York: Penguin Press, 2008.
- Schlosser, Eric. *Fast Food Nation: The Dark Side of the All-American Meal*. New York: Perennial, 2002.
- Schut, Michael, ed. *Food & Faith: Justice, Joy, and Daily Bread*. Living the Good News, 2002. (See www.earthministry.org website for purchase. Includes a group study guide.)
- Wirzba, Norman, ed. *The Essential Agrarian Reader*. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2003.
- _____. *Living the Sabbath: Discovering the Rhythms of Rest and Delight*. Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2006. (While not explicitly about food, a study of this book might be a particularly appropriate outgrowth of a series about what we eat and why it matters.)
- _____. *The Paradise of God: Renewing Religion in an Ecological Age*. New York: Oxford, 2003.

DVDs:

- King Corn*. Directed by Aaron Wolf. Mosaic Films Inc., 2008. (Should be available at most local DVD rental stores, Netflix, and/or for purchase online.)
- The Future of Food*. Directed by Deborah Koons. Lily Films, 2004. (Should be available at most local DVD rental stores, Netflix, and/or for purchase online.)
- Life and Debt*. Directed by Stephanie Black. Tuff Gong, 2001. (Should be available at most local DVD rental stores, Netflix, and/or for purchase online.)
- My Father's Garden*. Directed by Miranda Smith. Miranda Productions, 1995. (Available for purchase from www.mirandaproductions.com or from www.amazon.com)
- Becoming Human: Biblical Interpretation and Ecological Responsibility*. The Kreidler Environmental Lecture delivered by Ellen Davis at Virginia Theological Seminary on April 22, 2008. (DVDs are available on loan from the School of Ministry.)

Internet Resources:

- Institute for Food and Development Policy (www.foodfirst.org): Non-profit focusing on research and advocacy regarding hunger and sustainability issues. Website contains links to additional educational materials relating to local and international food and social justice issues, including links to buy several informative and short DVDs.
- Church World Service: www.churchworldservice.org.
- Earth Ministry: www.earthministry.org Their *Food and Faith: Justice, Joy, and Daily Bread* curriculum is available through their website for group study.
- Slow Food USA: www.slowfoodusa.org.
- Heifer Project: www.heifer.org.
- Eat Wild: www.eatwild.org Website on pasture-based farms that includes a searchable database of such farms in North Carolina.
- Political advocacy sites:
www.fooddemocracynow.org
www.fooddeclaration.org
- Media that Matters Film Festival on Food (www.mediathatmattersfest.org/mtm_good_food/): Website contains links to several short (under 10 minutes) documentaries on food, including some that would be particularly effective for youth.

Local Harvest: www.localharvest.org Website with a searchable database of local farms, farmers' markets, and community supported agriculture opportunities from throughout the United States.

Practicing Our Faith: www.practicingourfaith.org: Under the library tab on this website is some material on eating including *Just Eating? Practicing our Faith at the Table*, which is designed for parish study.

Local Resources:

Episcopal Farmworker Ministry: www.efwm.org A ministry of our diocese located in Newton Grove.

Seeds Community Garden, Durham, NC: www.seedsnc.org. A non-profit "whose goal is to teach people to care for the earth, themselves and each other through a variety of garden-based programs." They provide numerous opportunities for low-income children and youth to learn about gardening, cooking, and running a business. This organization is also involved in improving access to and affordability of healthy food for low-income people.

Cedar Grove United Methodist Church, Anathoth Community Garden, Cedar Grove, NC: http://www.cedargroveumc.net/anathoth/index.php?option=com_frontpage&Itemid=82 A community-supported agriculture garden that is a ministry of Cedar Grove United Methodist Church. Garden Manager, Fred Bahnsen, is a gifted speaker and writer about food and theology. The website contains useful information, including a piece entitled a "Theology of Eating".

Society of St. Andrew's: www.endhunger.org/north_carolina.htm. A non-profit that provides fresh produce to people in need by gathering produce left in the field for whatever reason. This process of gathering leftover produce from fields to help feed the poor, or gleaning, has deep biblical roots!

Chestnut Ridge Camp and Retreat Center, Efland, NC: www.campchestnutridge.org. A camp and retreat center of the United Methodist Church which includes a church sponsored community farm and a ministry to support sustainable environmental practices.

Maren Symonds, MBA, M.Div: Email: symonds@bellsouth.net. She provides informative presentations on U.S. food production and distribution, incorporating her business experience in the field as well as her theological training.

Some farmers' markets that rely on local producers and suppliers only. There no doubt are others.

- Durham Farmers Market, Durham, NC: www.durhamfarmersmarket.com
- Charlotte Tailgate Farmers' Market, Charlotte, NC: www.charlottetailgatefarmersmarket.com
- Carrboro Farmers Market, Carrboro, NC: www.carrborofarmersmarket.com
- Duke Farmers Market, Durham, NC: www.hr.duke.edu/farmersmarket/

Please note that we are able to update our facilitators' guides on-line, so if you find books or other resources that you believe deserve mention here, please contact us.

Comments on each of the five programs follow. Remember that we say more about this program format in our general facilitators' guide, available on-line or in our DVD notebooks.

Program 1: Food and the Church's Life

In preparation:

- ⇒ Make sure that you have suitable equipment to show the DVD, and that you know how to operate it! Make sure, too, that seating arrangements are conducive both to viewing and to discussion.

This first session might look like this:

- *Prayer:* We encourage you to open and close all sessions in prayer. Beginning with a brief period of silence may also help to transition people from their busy lives to a space of reflective listening and sharing. If your group would be open to the following guidance, encourage people to sit comfortably and take a moment to breath deeply and be mindful of the presence of God in your midst. Below is a spoken prayer, which appears in our general DVD facilitation guide and is adapted from *Good News: A Congregational Resource for Reconciliation*, by the Rt. Rev. Steven Charleston. You might wish to use this prayer to end the period of silence or just to open the session with, if you prefer not to use silence.

O God, we stand on the border to your Kingdom. We pray that your Holy Spirit will be with us to guide us in our discussions. Grant us an openness to hear you in the words of those around us, and courage to proclaim you in our own words, through the love of your Son, our Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

- *Introductions:* In some of our congregations, everyone will know everyone, but for many of our parishes, that may not be the case. Newcomers in particular will appreciate a reminder of who folks are. Take a minute or two for basic introductions. If you find more extended introductions appealing, you could ask participants why they were interested in coming today.
- *The plan for this program:* Provide an overview of what will happen today. This is simply a courtesy to the group to make it clear how you'll proceed and what to expect. This program contains reflections on the theme of food in our worship and prayer lives, including some scripture passages.
- *The DVD program:* Show the entire first program or any segment of it. The segments are (1) Our Worship and Prayer Lives; and (2) Scripture. Note that if after showing it you or some in the group want to see a particular section again, you may simply choose the program you have just shown, then choose the section, and then just fast forward or stop wherever you wish.
- *Conversations:* Below are some possible questions to help initiate conversation. These questions are provided as examples - you should feel free to alter them or create new ones, as you deem appropriate. Each group will be different. Thus stimulating conversation requires you discern where energy lies and to draw out insights from throughout the group. Once the

conversation gets going – and we believe it will! – your task is to keep it focused, and to shift ground when a particular subject seems to have been exhausted.

Here are some possible questions for discussion:

1. What experiences from your own lives might suggest a connection between God and the practice of eating? Can you think of a time when you were very aware of the gift of a meal – perhaps it was the food itself, the timing of the meal, or the company gathered around the meal?
 2. Do you think about the Eucharist as a meal? If so, does how we receive the Eucharist connect with how we eat other meals? Why or why not? Is it appropriate to talk about all meals being sacramental or should that language be reserved for only the church's sacraments in our liturgy?
 3. Most of us are accustomed to giving thanks before a meal. So accustomed in fact that we may not reflect too often on what it means. Think about your standard pre-meal prayer (if you have one) – unpack it a little bit. What are you trying to say to God? Do you carry the spirit embodied in that prayer throughout the meal? What does your choice of prayer say about how you think about the practice of eating?
 4. Have you ever eaten a meal with other people completely in silence (perhaps on a retreat of some kind)? What was that experience like? How did silence change the way you ate and your experience of eating with others?
 5. Do any scripture passages about food or agriculture stand out for you?
 6. Read all or part of Leviticus 25, the chapter about the Sabbath and Jubilee years. Have people reflect on what stands out for them in the passage. What would it look like if we celebrated a Jubilee year today? Can you think of ways to modify the Jubilee year for our current world? If we were to do so, how would that change how we think about food and our neighbor?
- *Summary, reminder of the next program, task for the week, and prayer:* Ask participants to pick one area of the church's mission that they feel passionately about and perhaps have been engaged with in the past. Provide some examples for people: Feeding the poor, taking care of God's creation, international missions, etc. You might also pull some examples from activities in which your particular parish has been involved. Ask the participants to reflect on and/or research ways their particular area of passion might intersect with this issue of what we eat and why it matters.

Prior to the closing prayer, if you and your group are comfortable with silence, ask everyone to take a moment to get comfortable, breath deeply, and reflect on how the Spirit might have spoken to him or her today.

In closing, one spoken prayer you might wish to use is also adapted from *Good News* by Bishop Charleston. It is as follows:

Dear God, thank you for the presence of your Holy Spirit in this conversation. We ask that the Spirit will go with us as we leave this place to be your ministers. Give us grace to be healers of what hurts us and heralds of what makes us whole. In the blessed name of Jesus, we pray. Amen.

Program 2: Food and the Church's Mission

In preparation:

⇒ Make sure equipment is set up and seating arrangements are as you wish them to be.

The second session might look like this:

- *Prayer:* See session 1 for a possible text and guidance regarding opening in prayer and, perhaps, silence.
- *The plan for this program:* Provide an overview of what will happen today. The second DVD program explores ways in which what we eat intersects with the Church's mission. It also explores what the intersection of food and the Church's mission might say about our own lives.
- *The DVD program:* Show the entire second program or any segment of it. The sections are (1) Justice and Stewardship and (2) Life and Flourishing.
- *Conversations:*
 1. Joe Hensley mentions his reflection in his youth about how food is processed. Is this something you have given much thought to? Why or why not? If not, what do you think about the assertion that as Christians we should be attentive to how our food is processed?
 2. When working on hunger issues, we perhaps tend to focus on charity or providing access to food for poor people. However, perhaps hunger is also a result of food distribution and not just access. For example, farmers in India use land to grow tulips to export to Europe when hunger is still a widespread problem there. Or farmers in Central America use land to grow grain for cattle or to graze cattle to export to the United States, when hunger is still a widespread problem there as well. How do you respond to the assertion that eradicating hunger might require that we change the way we secure our food or the way we eat?
 3. Can you think of any other areas of mission that might intersect with what we eat?
 4. The theme of rest and Sabbath returns in this program. How does our busyness affect our attempts to engage in the Church's mission, in whatever form? Can you think of an example from your own life when rest or Sabbath might have changed how you engaged in mission? (Either lack of rest or incorporation of rest into your life!) What is your reaction to the idea of Sabbath and rest being important for everyone? Have we grown so accustomed to our busy lives that rest sounds naïve?
 5. Cynthia Curtis mentions the "holy natural" and the "sacredness of the earth." Do these ideas resonate with you? Why or why not?
 6. How do you react to Joe Hensley's final point that he hopes our food choices would be about more than comfort and convenience? Do you agree? What factors do you incorporate into your food choices?

- *Summary, reminder of the next program, task for the week, and prayer:* You might choose one of the Old Testament passages from the earlier list for people to read, research, and reflect on before next week's session. See session 1 for a possible text and guidance regarding the closing prayer and a period of silent reflection.

Program 3: Farming and Land Care in the Old Testament

In preparation:

- ⇒ Make sure equipment is set up and seating arrangements are as you wish them to be.

The third session might look like this:

- *Prayer:* See session 1 for a possible text and guidance regarding opening in prayer and silence.
- *Bible reading:* If you have chosen an Old Testament passage to focus on for this session, you may want to have someone read it aloud before watching the DVD. Ask the person to read it slowly and deliberately, which might help people hear it in a new way.
- *The plan for this program:* Provide an overview of what will happen today. This program is a discussion with Ellen Davis, an Old Testament professor at Duke Divinity School, about her work on issues of agriculture and land care in scripture.
- *The DVD program:* Ideally you should show this program in its entirety, as segments build on preceding sections. The sections are (1) Scripture and Farming; (2) Our Current Environmental Challenges; and (3) Criticisms and Response.
- *Conversations:*
 1. What point made by Ellen Davis struck you most strongly? (In a “Yes, how interesting!” way or a “No, what in the world is she talking about?!” way.)
 2. Were you aware of the connection between agriculture and the environmental crisis we are currently facing? Is this aspect of the problem overlooked in our public discourse? Why might that be?
 3. Do you have any memories from your childhood about farming? What was different about your relationship with farming then from what it is now? (These memories need not be actually farming but could very well be just interacting with farmers.)
 4. If you all read and researched one particular scripture passage, spend some time discussing this passage in light of Ellen Davis' statements.
 5. A much quoted verse from scripture is from Luke 12:48: “From everyone to whom much has been given, much will be required; and from the one to whom much has been entrusted, even more will be demanded.” It is perhaps in this spirit that Ellen Davis makes the statement that if thinking about food is a luxury only some can afford than it is also a responsibility. What is your response to this suggestion? As Christians, insofar as we are able, do we have a responsibility to reflect on the impact of our food choices?

- *Summary, reminder of the next program, task for the week, and prayer:* Ask participants to read the first eleven books of Genesis with the theme of food and agriculture in mind. Note for participants which section or sections you will focus on during the next week so that they can focus (or limit as the case may be!) their reading. See below for the three sections of Genesis on which the *Bible Study with Ellen Davis* is focused. See session 1 for a possible text and guidance regarding the closing prayer and period of silent reflection.

Program 4: Bible Study with Ellen Davis

Note: See the suggestions in the section “Number of Sessions” for alternative uses of this Bible study.

In preparation:

- ⇒ Make sure equipment is set up and seating arrangements are as you wish them to be.

The fourth session might look like this:

- *Prayer:* See session 1 for a possible text and guidance regarding opening in prayer and silence.
- *The plan for this program:* Provide an overview of what will happen today. This DVD shows Ellen Davis talking about three separate passages in Genesis:
 1. The first creation story (Genesis 1:1-2:4a);
 2. The second creation story (Genesis 2:4b-25), and
 3. Noah (Genesis 6-9).

It may work best to choose one or at most two passages to deal with in a single session depending on the time available. For each passage, we would suggest the following sequence: (1) read the relevant passage; (2) spend time talking about the passage generally and people’s initial reactions; (3) focus the conversation on the specific topic within the passage on which Dr. Davis will speak; (4) listen to Dr. Davis speak about the specific passage on the DVD; and (5) discuss again the passage in light of Dr. Davis’ insights.

We recognize that this may demand a significant amount of time. Your task is to choose what seems most workable to you. Trying to “get everything in” frustrates groups, so be attentive to where a group’s energies lie, and be flexible. Keep in mind that if the group is interested and scheduling permits, you could add another session, and just take up where you leave off.

- *Bible reading:* Have someone read the scripture text for the relevant section of the DVD that you will watch.
- *Initial Conversation:* Spend some time talking about what struck people about this passage before watching the DVD. Here are some possible introductory questions to use with whichever passage you have just heard. Remember, discussing just one of these questions will probably be sufficient depending on the time allotted:

First Creation Story

1. What strikes you as significant as you read this first creation story in Genesis?
2. What land-care ethic is suggested by this passage? Does it resonate with your own understanding of how we should care for the earth? Why or why not?
3. Is our current agricultural system consistent with the land-care ethic suggested by this passage? Why or why not? If not, is this a problem?
4. What does this passage have to offer to our dialogue about what we eat and why it matters? (Genesis 1:29-30 might be a good jumping off point for this question.)

Second Creation Story

1. What strikes you as significant as you read this second creation story in Genesis? What differences do you notice from the first story? Why do you think the writer incorporated both stories?
2. What land-care ethic is suggested by this passage? Does it resonate with your own understanding of how we should care for the earth? Why or why not?
3. Is our current agricultural system consistent with the land-care ethic suggested by this passage? Why or why not? If not, is this a problem?
4. What does this passage have to offer to our dialogue about what we eat and why it matters?

God's Relationship with Noah

1. Did you notice anything in this passage that you hadn't noticed before?
2. What relationship is suggested between God and the non-human creation in this passage?
3. What is the nature of the relationship between humans and the non-human creation suggested by this passage?
4. Note the difference between Genesis 1:28 and Genesis 9:1. What do you make of this difference? What does this difference say about how we should care for land, if anything?
5. Note the difference between Genesis 1:29-30 and Genesis 9:2-7. What do you make of this difference? What does this tension have to offer our dialogue about what we eat and why it matters?

Following this initial congregation, direct the group toward what Ellen Davis will focus on in the segment you are about to view. In the First Creation Story, she will consider Genesis 1:28, "be fruitful and multiple, fill the earth and subdue it" and "to exercise dominion over...;" in the Second Creation Story, Genesis 2:15, "to till it and to keep it;" and in God's Relationship with Noah, Genesis 8:20-22, God's Covenant with the earth and "all flesh" through Noah.

- *DVD Program:* Show the appropriate segment of the DVD.
- *Conversations:* Here are possible post-viewing questions. Remember that you don't have to use all of them.

First Creation Story

1. What is your reaction to Ellen Davis' theological point that this passage suggests land is given under the condition of obedience, and therefore can be lost?
2. What significance does this idea have, if any, to our contemporary world?
3. Does your reading of this passage change after hearing Dr. Davis' thoughts? If so, how? If not, why not?
4. What about her nuanced translation of "to exercise dominion" as skilled mastery, allowing us to image God in how we exercise dominion. How does this distinction resonate with your own experiences of leadership (over land, animals, children, employees, etc.)?
5. What does it look like to "exercise dominion" over something without reference to God? And what does it look like to "exercise dominion" over something in a way that reveals the image of God within us all?
6. What implications do you see for our current ecological crisis? How as people of faith should we care for the earth?

Second Creation Story

1. How do Dr. Davis' comments about the Hebrew words that are often translated "to till and to keep" change the way you hear this passage?
2. What implications does this more nuanced understanding of the original Hebrew have for our determining how we are to interact with the earth?
3. If you were the one writing scripture, why would you choose words with religious resonance instead of just horticultural words when speaking about what God intends people to do in the garden of Eden?
4. For those with gardening experience, does this choice of words resonate with your own experience of gardening? If so, how? If not, why not?

God's Relationship with Noah

1. Did you ever notice before that God's covenant was not with Noah individually but with the wider creation? How does this change how we understand the covenant?
 2. How do you respond to Dr. Davis' point that our current environmental crisis may reflect the fact that human beings have broken their end of the covenant with God?
 3. How do we understand God's pledge that the natural seasons shall endure in light of our experience of climate change? Where is God in this change?
 4. Read Isaiah 24. Do any similarities between our current situation and this passage strike you?
- *Summary, reminder of the next program, task for the week, and prayer:* Ask participants to pray about how God may be speaking to them through this series. What might be stirring within them as a result of this dialogue? Are there ways that this stirring might be leading them to a new way of living out God's call for their lives? See session 1 for a possible text and guidance regarding the closing prayer and period of silent reflection.

Program 5: Where do we go from here?

In preparation:

- ⇒ Make sure equipment is set up and seating arrangements are as you wish them to be.
- ⇒ Photocopy the evaluation of this program which is located after the guide in the notebook.

The fifth and final session might look like this:

- *Prayer:* See session 1 for a possible text and guidance regarding opening in prayer and silence.
- *The plan for this program:* Provide an overview of what will happen today.
- *The DVD program:* Show the entire fifth program. The sections are (1) Some Ideas for Adults and 2) Some Ideas for Youth and Children.
- *Conversations:*
 1. What ideas suggested in this fifth program resonated with you as possibilities for your congregation's life and ministry?
 2. What other ideas for ministry did you think of during the last week?
 3. Are there any areas of this issue that you would like to learn more about? If so, what areas? Can you think of some resources to go about learning more? (If not, please contact us and we will do our best to direct you!)
 4. What about your own spiritual and family lives? Are there ways you would like to change what or how you eat?
 5. What is your own "theology of food"? Why do you think it matters what we eat?
- *Evaluation:* Encourage participants to complete the evaluation, and provide time for it. Please share the results with us.
- *Final summary and closing prayer:* See session 1 for a possible text and guidance regarding the closing prayer and period of silent reflection. Note, however, that Rogation Days have to do with harvest and stewardship of creation, and those prayers may provide a good closing. See pp. 258-59 in the *Book of Common Prayer* for Rogation Days collects; "I. For fruitful seasons" and "III. For stewardship of creation" may deserve attention. Note also "Thanksgivings for the Natural Order," including "For the beauty of the earth" and "For the harvest," on p. 840.

Blessing to you in this ministry!