

No Child Goes Hungry Adult Discussion Session

Introduction for Leaders

[No Child Goes Hungry](#) works to eliminate childhood hunger, one child at a time. No matter what other justice-making work youth do, when they focus on one meal for one child, they will find ways they can be helpful.

We will explore:

- The extent to which children and youth do not have enough to eat
- Their own role as justice makers
- Importance of partnering when helping
- Recognizing that our UU identity has compassionate service at its core

Set Up

Comfortable seating and a chalice.

Materials

- Information on food drives, pantries or other feeding programs that your congregation or your community participates in.
- Chalice/matches

Chalice Lighting

Some of you may have heard our chalice lighting words before, which are originally from the Gospel of Matthew:

“When I was hungry, you gave me something to eat.
When I was thirsty, you gave me something to drink.”

Welcome and Check In

Invite a brief check in, asking each person to share their gratitude for a food item they have eaten in the past 24 hours. You might model by saying something like, “I am grateful for the crisp, cold apple that I had yesterday. It filled the hungry space between lunch and dinner.”

Thank everyone and open the discussion by sharing your role: you will be asking questions and ensuring that everyone has an opportunity to speak. You might share a hand signal, such as pinching your forefinger and thumb together to show a shortening of time. Remind everyone that we will learn more from one another by listening deeply.

Ask the group to listen to this poem, “In the Food Pantry Line” by UU minister, Rev. Angela Herrera.

In the Food Pantry Line

The day before Thanksgiving:
a woman in a beautiful beaded dress
a man with no teeth
a young man with a pierced lip
and one in his forties,
covered in tattoos.
Several young mothers,
a crowd of little girls,
boys flipping and turning on a rail,
and hopping up our sanctuary steps.
Our steps,
but their steps as well, if we mean it,
this inherent worth and dignity;
and if there’s an interdependent web
and we didn’t just make that up;
their steps, if we get radical
and believe that love is justice,
and welcome people in.
Theirs if we overcome our fear
that we’ll be overwhelmed by need.
What’s ours is theirs,
fifteen children
and seventy adults,
the day before Thanksgiving
on the sanctuary steps.

— Angela Herrera, in *Reaching for the Sun: Meditations*. Available from Skinner House Books: <https://www.uuabookstore.org/Reaching-for-the-Sun-P17224.aspx>

Guided Imagery

Invite participants to imagine walking up to your house of worship as one of the people described in the poem. Reread the poem and allow for a moment of quiet reflection.

Childhood Hunger Written Reflection

Ask participants to respond in writing to one or more of the following prompts (or by expressing their answers artistically) in their journals. You may also choose to [project this slide](#) of the questions.

- If you were able to identify with someone in the poem, which character was it and what thoughts and feelings arose in you? What did you sense you needed?
- The poet sets this poem the day before Thanksgiving. How does that affect your sense of urgency? Gratitude? Concern?
- Are there certain times of the year, or certain holidays, that you feel more called to act on behalf of hungry children and families? How do you feel about that?

- Are there certain times of the year that you are in need of food subsidies?
- Our faith calls us to act. How do you find out about the hunger needs in your community?
- What specifically prompts you to act on behalf of those who are hungry?
- How are your beliefs, feelings and actions about feeding the hungry tied to your faith as UU?

Childhood Hunger Shared Reflection

Invite people to share from their reflections. They are welcome to read a short passage, share their art, or simply begin talking about their experience. Guide the group to leave a bit of space between speakers to encourage deeper listening and reflection.

No Child Goes Hungry

Provide background information on [No Child Goes Hungry](#), and how Rev. Kären Rasmussen is working with several congregations and organizations to help feed kids in their local communities. Share that Rev. Kären is partnering with congregations and organizations all around the country to feed children in need. If you're already working with No Child Goes Hungry locally, the hope is you'll continue this partnership in your community. Rev. Kären invites people to donate to her foundation so that she can make grants, in other words: give money) to congregations to get feeding plans going. It's a win-win for everyone.

If your congregation is embarking on a program or partnership to feed the hungry, please invite someone working on the project to talk with the group for about 15 minutes so that the participants are aware of the program, who it is serving, and how they might join in. If you need ideas, you might contact [No Child Goes Hungry](#) to inquire about a grant to help you get started.

Closing Questions

You might say, "One in six children are hungry in America. Our discussion today may have sparked a curiosity in why this is happening and what you might be called to do about it. From food pantries to school backpack programs, we have the opportunity to feed our hungry children. Thank you for joining us for this conversation today.'

Extinguishing the Chalice

We extinguish our chalice with the words of Henry David Thoreau:

"Live your beliefs and you can turn the world around."