

No Child Goes Hungry Workshops for Grades 8-12

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 be helping the group to understand:

- 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

- Chart paper and markers
- Paper, pens, markers
- Be ready to share information on food drives, pantries or other feeding programs that your congregation or your community participates in with "No Child Goes Hungry."
- Recording devices (phones, etc), optional

Welcome and Check In

Follow your usual check-in process, inviting youth to share one food they are grateful for. You might begin by sharing that you are grateful for green smoothies or some other somewhat healthy food item.

Share this poem, "In the Food Pantry Line" by UU minister, Rev. Angela Herrera. Used by permission.

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>

Remind students that food pantries are one way of providing food for families who are not able to buy enough food.

Then provide background information on [No Child Goes Hungry](#), and how Rev. Kären Rasmussen is working with your congregation. Share that Rev. Kären is partnering with UU congregations all around the country to feed one child at a time. She hopes that ongoing relationships between congregations and feeding people to continue long after her visit. Rev. Kären invites people to give 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.

Guest Invitation

If your congregation is embarking on a No Child Goes Hungry partnership, please invite someone working on the project to talk with the group for about 15 minutes so that the youth are aware of the program, who it is serving, and how they might join in. If you are not currently involved in a NCGH project, share the ideas on the website under "Grants in Motion:" <https://nochildgoeshungry.net/grants-in-motion/>

Childhood Hunger Discussion

- Ask youth: “Out of every 10 kids in America, how many do you think sometimes don’t know where their next meal is coming from?” (The answer is 2 out of 10. That’s about 16 million kids a year, or enough children to fill 18,000 school buses.)
- Rev. Kären notes that in the United States, 1 out of 4 children go to bed hungry at night.

With these statistics, it is likely that someone in this room or in any of your classrooms at school, either is or has not always had enough food to eat.

How Food Insecurity Affects Students

Tell students that we are going to some time to think about how not having enough to eat affects students in a classroom.

- Ask youth to move into three groups.
- Tell them they will work together for five minutes.
- Once they are settled, tell them to discuss how they think students might be affected by a lack of food.
- Return to the full group after about five minutes to share their responses.
- Two volunteers are invited to research how students are affected online (using an electronic device or laptop) or you can use the information below from the [Food Research and Action Center](#): Note that the numbers correspond to research studies cited

“During childhood, low-income children are more likely to experience food insecurity,^{18,19} obesity,^{20,21} tobacco exposure,^{22,23} lead exposure,²⁴ poor oral health,²⁵ poor growth (e.g., low birth weight, short stature),²⁶ asthma,²⁷ developmental risk,²⁸ learning disabilities,²⁹ poor academic outcomes,^{30,31} behavioral and emotional problems,³² unintentional injury,³³ and physical inactivity.³⁴ Low-income adolescents also are more likely to engage in health-compromising behaviors, such as smoking.³⁵”

According to the study, many of these challenges continue into adulthood.

What can we do?

Some of you may have heard the words below 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.”

We’re going to think about how we might impact families who are not getting enough food. Let’s consider

- How you might feel if you needed food and you went to the food pantry but everything was from a culture you were not familiar with. How would you choose among the unfamiliar foods?

- What kinds of foods make sense to stock a food pantry? Most food pantries don't have refrigeration, or you cannot assume someone has a place to put perishable foods. Research nonperishable food that would be healthy and easy to carry and store.

Tell the group that we are going to work in smaller groups. Partners or larger groups are fine. Keep in mind the types of food people need when they visit food pantries and work together to create a skit, rap, song, poem, poster or something similar that either illustrates how you can feed one child at a time (the motto of "No Child Goes Hungry") or convinces others to support the congregation's "No Child Goes Hungry" program. This might include making signs, writing text for announcements, creating a live announcement or video to get the congregation involved in the program.

Share the Work

Encourage each group to share their work with the group and determine how the work can be shared with the congregation. If there are opportunities for the youth to lead or participate in the congregational action, discuss how and when that will happen.

Closing Questions

Share that each of us is capable of doing something to help others in need. However, it is important to think first about what is needed. Our first principle is to affirm and promote the worth and dignity of every individual. As we reach out to help where we can, how can we remain respectful of each person or family who is in need? (asking or finding out what they need)

Extinguishing the Chalice

Use your usual process and words or you might say,

"May we all remember our ability to take small steps to make a big difference in the world."

Note: Provide any information from "No Child Goes Hungry" about projects your congregation is sponsoring for ongoing discussion and action from home.