



Top Ten Ideas to Engage Your Faith Community

Food is the most tangible evidence of an abundant world and a loving God. We—at Food, Faith and Farming Network—believe congregations can be a powerful force for linking “food, faith and farming”. When we serve food in a spirit of generosity, we demonstrate the values of abundance, hospitality, gratitude and love. And when we serve food produced by local farmers who use sustainable farming methods and receive a fair price for their products, we demonstrate the values of stewardship and justice.

We encourage your congregation to model these values and foster the link between “food, faith and farming.” Many congregations support “fair trade” when it comes to coffee and chocolate. Think about ways you can extend this concept of “fair trade” to other food items your members eat on a daily basis: locally-produced foods from farmers using sustainable farming methods.

Here are ten ways you can educate and engage your congregational members about the link between “food, faith and farming.” See our Resources document for detailed descriptions of books, films, on-line resources, and websites for more ideas.

1. **Find the key person:** Discover the person who is most passionate about food, faith, farming and justice in your congregation. Engage that person in developing your plans.
2. **Source local food for events:** When hosting an event that involves serving food, incorporate local, healthy foods into the menu. During the event, share where that food came from and how your faith calls you to recognize the importance of local foods, sustainable farming methods and purchasing products directly from the farmers who provide the food for our tables.
3. **Promote CSA farmers:** Host a presentation on Community Supported Agriculture. Provide parishioners a list of CSAs in the area and encourage participation. Consider having your faith community adopt one particular vendor who is just getting started. Become a drop-off site for CSAs who have clients in your area.
4. **Create a vegetable garden:** Start a community garden, and/or set up a Victory Garden on your property. What better way to model how to produce your own food. This may be one of the best ways to help members experience sharing the beauty and abundance of God’s created world. Do your best to use sustainable gardening techniques. We can connect you with congregations that have been successful at establishing gardens and/or a consultant.
5. **Get your youth involved:** Most kids have no idea where their food comes from. Incorporate a lesson on the connections between faith and food in your religious education programs. Engage your youth group in harvesting and cooking a meal from your garden.
6. **Invite a farmer:** Host a potluck. Encourage all to incorporate local ingredients in their recipes. Have place-cards in front of all dishes explaining what the local ingredients are and where they came from. Invite one of the farmers who provided the food to speak about sustainable farming practices.
7. **Show a film:** This can be a wonderful way to help your members understand the concepts we are promoting, make connections between these concepts and your faith, and build enthusiasm. We’ve had good responses to the movies Fresh, Food Patriots and Food Fight.
8. **Offer a panel discussion:** Invite representatives from groups involved in the “food, faith and farming” arena to share their views on this important issue. You might include a member of your congregation that is a member of a CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) farm or a CSA farmer in your area.
9. **Sponsor an adult education series:** “Food, Faith and Farming” can be an excellent topic for a series of Adult Education programs. You could start the series with a film (or excerpts of a film) and follow this with a panel discussion and/or series of presenters.
10. **Host a book study group:** There are a number of powerful books around the theme of “Food, Faith and Farming” listed in our Resources document. One parish had excellent discussion after reading Michael Schut’s book: *Food and Faith: Justice, Joy and Daily Bread*. The book includes a study guide.

To find out more about Food, Faith and Farming Network:

Website: www.cclpmidwest.org • Email: tomnelson.art@gmail.com • Phone: 608-438-7154

