



A TABLE FOR ALL

A Toolkit for Christian Community Meals
in a framework of food justice



This toolkit was developed collaboratively by Christ Church Anglican Cathedral, Planted Community Food Network and Union Gospel Mission in Vancouver, British Columbia. We share a commitment to modelling, teaching, and accompanying other organizations as they orient their food programs towards social inclusion and deeper justice.

This work was funded in part by a Vancouver Foundation Social Innovation Grant awarded to Christ Church Cathedral.



CHRIST CHURCH CATHEDRAL
Vancouver, BC · Open Doors, Open Hearts, Open Minds



PLANTED
a community food network



UNION
GOSPEL
MISSION
Feeding hope. Changing lives.

Contact churchrelations@ugm.ca with questions, suggestions, or to access the resources listed.

This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License.

To view a copy of this license, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/> or send a letter to Creative Commons, PO Box 1866, Mountain View, CA 94042, USA.

About this Toolkit

With this toolkit, we aim to offer you a springboard for connection amongst communities of faith as you create, host, partner, or rethink community meal programs in your own context. It is our sincere hope and desire that in reading and using this guide that you will know that you are not alone in this vital work.

We crafted this toolkit by gathering insights and material gleaned from years of running, advising, and observing meal programs in a wide assortment of settings and denominational traditions. The tools within it are designed to help you and your community set tables for all in cities, towns, and neighbourhoods that are all-too-often marked by exclusion. It offers a coherent but generic framework, one that you will want to adjust to your particular context. Indeed, there will be pieces that make sense for your circumstances and others that will not. Think of this toolkit as a literal tool that you can pick up and use at any time.

As you embark on the journey of starting a new community food program, or as you work to transform an existing meal, these tools will help your community to do so in ways that cultivate connection, holistic health, and shared resilience. Regardless of where you find yourself planted, this toolkit offers practical and spiritual inspiration for ways of sharing food with your neighbours. In God's economy, there are few activities that bear so much fruit for human flourishing and the common good than gathering around a common table.

Kari Bergrud, Jonathan Bird, Karen Giesbrecht, and Andrew Stephens-Rennie

Epiphany 2020

(Updated January 13, 2021)

About this Toolkit	3
Introduction	6
Why Now?	7
Why Here?.....	7
Part A: Blessing the Table – Sacred Dimensions of Food Security	10
Introduction.....	10
Overview for a Small Group Study	11
Sessions Include	11
Turning Theology into Operational Strategies.....	12
Part B: Building the Table – From Food Charity to Food Security	14
Moving into Mutuality	14
How Food Insecure are We?	17
Continuum of Responses.....	19
Questions for Reflection.....	20
Asset Based Community Development	21
Part C: Setting the Table – Creating a New Meal Program	22
Scan for Neighbourhood Assets and Needs	22
Build a Team	23
Establish Oversight	27
Volunteers	28
Hosts and Guests.....	30
Orientation, Training, and Management	33
Trauma and Violence Informed Care.....	35
Craft a Shared Mandate.....	36
Set Goals, Measure Outcomes.....	37
Quantity vs. Quality	39
Free verses Fee	40
Spiritual Formation	42
Part D: Changing the Table – Transforming an Existing Program	46
Motivate for Change	47
Timeline	48
8 Week Program Change Agenda	48
Iterative Review and Response	51

Part E: Supplying the Table – Practicalities & Procedures.....	52
Permits and Food Safety.....	52
Fashioning a Welcoming Space	55
Food Service Basics	56
Materials, Equipment, Supplies	58
Dishwashing.....	60
Food Procurement.....	60
Food Storage.....	61
Part F: Filling the Table – Planning Your Meals.....	62
Basic Considerations	62
Menu Planning and Preparation	62
Food Waste	67
Part G: Putting Food on the Table – Sample Menus	68
Key Tips.....	68
Menus for Community Meals	69
Appendixes.....	78
Appendix A: Set-Up + Clean-Up for a Community Meal	79
Appendix B: Food Amounts For 50 People	80
Appendix C: Sample Donor Letter	82
Appendix D: Food Philosophy (Christ Church Cathedral, Vancouver BC)	83
Appendix E: Glossary.....	87
Appendix F: Roadmap to Program Transformation.....	89
Appendix G: More Resources.....	95

Legend



Jump to
Section



See Appendix



Resource Link



Contact Us

Introduction



Throughout the gospels, we find scene after scene of Jesus sharing food. Usually it is with the unlikely people – from the powerful and the affluent to the homeless and struggling; from intimate meals with friends to spontaneous picnics with crowds of thousands, Jesus is there to commune.

As Jesus criss-crosses the land with his good news of God's upside-down kingdom, it is no wonder he shares stories and images of lavish parties and abundant banquets to describe God's desire for the world. Jesus connects with us through common experiences we thought we understood, giving new depth and meaning. Peace and flourishing in God's kingdom is like a banquet. Jesus is the host, and we are all guests.

Food provides more than we might give it credit for. When we come together to share a nourishing meal, the barriers between us begin to dissolve. Conversation may start with comments on the food, the setting, or the weather, and then take us to places more meaningful. Somehow sharing food engages needs deeper than sustenance—to agency, beauty, compassion, joy, meaning, and hope.

Sharing food with others allows us to experience mutuality and friendship, which leads in turn to the fostering of personal and community resilience. Food connects people in ways that transcend cultures, generations, and socio-economic divides. Healthy food habits cultivate essential attitudes of abundance and open-handedness as we tend to God's good creation and to one another.

Jesus' wide assortment of dining practices, meals, and dining companions offer a compelling alternative image for the modern world. The creation of this toolkit is one way in which the authors have accepted Jesus' invitation to radical table fellowship with him and with each other. In joining together, the authors have experienced the gifts of setting a table for all.

WHY NOW?

The number of people without sufficient access to quality, nutritious food is growing in both cities and rural areas across Canada (and beyond). As income inequality increases, the number of people struggling to afford the basics of daily life also increases. In recent years, food policy makers and community developers have demonstrated that simply feeding people without fostering relationships tends to contribute towards rather than eliminate the causes of hunger. They are calling instead for a holistic approach that builds personal skills and communal resilience. They advocate long-term strategies *from seed to compost* that make local food systems more just and more sustainable while harnessing community meals to counter the epidemic of loneliness.

An unreported side-effect of poverty is the way in which it can increase the risk of social isolation. However, all across the country, there are communities of faith who practice generous hospitality. There are Christians who have a strong desire to connect with their neighbours, and to be a thoughtful, caring presence in their neighbourhoods. Even so, it is not easy to design and sustain a genuinely good community meal. Christians across the spectrum of denominational traditions are responding to this call to shift away from haphazard, arms-length charity toward mutuality, justice, and resilience. As we recover biblical historical practices for loving our neighbours, we are finding ways to eat as Jesus would, honouring the agency, creativity, dignity, intellect, and worth of all who come to the table.


WHY HERE?

This toolkit is written on the ancestral homelands of the s̓cəwaθenaʔt̓ t̓əməxʷ (Tsawassen), S'ólh Téméxw (Stó:lō), Kwantlen, Stz'uminus and šxʷməθkʷəy̓əmaʔt̓ t̓əməxʷ (Musqueam) Peoples. The Indigenous peoples of this region remind us that lands and waterways are sacred, and that food practices are intimately connected with cultural, interpersonal, political, medicinal and spiritual meanings. Publicly acknowledging where we stand shows respect for the practices and wisdom of those who have tended these lands from time immemorial. It challenges Christians to consider ways of walking in right relationship with God, this place, its inhabitants, and the nations who still call it home.

We also acknowledge that we live, work, and play on *unceded* territories. Ownership of these lands and waterways was never granted to European settlers through treaty, war, or surrender. In many regions of British Columbia, Indigenous title is undeniable, and thus all who have settled here are obligated to understand how colonization fragments traditional Indigenous social structures and the interdependent relationship to the land, water, plants, and animals. Colonization used tools such as land expropriation, displacement, residential schools, and making cultural practices illegal to enact what Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission called *cultural genocide*¹. Entrenched colonial practices of marginalization continue to this day, with destructive effects that include a rate of household food insecurity that is up to six times greater in prevalence and severity compared to other households in Canada².

Indigenous Food Sovereignty holds that food is sacred, and that people who natively inhabited a region have a right to steward their land, including cultural harvesting practices. When traditional foods³ are part of one's diet, intake of protein, fibre and key vitamins and minerals is higher. In contrast, diets that consist mostly of processed foods tend to be higher in sodium, sugar and saturated fat, which can negatively impact health and overall quality of life. Indigenous communities, like all people, should have control over what and how they grow, gather, share, and eat food.

For decades, British Columbia's lower mainland has been fertile ground for world-class grassroots action in environmental sustainability, food security, urban planning, and relearning the value of eating locally. We are becoming increasingly aware of how we have collectively contributed to the destruction of this watershed, its many interdependent species, and the people who first cultivated this land. Learning this history helps us to take steps toward reconciliation with both indigenous communities and the land we inhabit.



To learn more read
*Wrongs to Rights:
How Churches can
Engage the United
Nations Declaration
on the Rights of
Indigenous Peoples.*
Edited by Steve

¹ http://nctr.ca/assets/reports/Final%20Reports/Principles_English_Web.pdf

² <https://www.dietitians.ca/DietitiansOfCanada/media/Documents/Resources/HFI-Executive-Summary-Dietitians-of-Canada-FINAL.pdf?ext=.pdf>

³ http://www.fnha.ca/documents/traditional_food_fact_sheets.pdf

Keeping the context of our living and eating in mind, particularly the people and places we rely on for our nourishment, and the increasingly urgent reasons to take action now, we encourage you and your group to take time to reflect on what biblical traditions teach us about the sacredness of food. Good food only grows in healthy soil.

Part A: Blessing the Table – Sacred Dimensions of Food Security

INTRODUCTION



We depend on food for life. We gather around food for celebration, connection, healing and mourning. Our most ancient stories tell us that we are lovingly created in the image of the Creator who has provided all we need through the life of the earth. In so many ways, food is the common thread that weaves together our relationships with God, each other, and the earth. Thinking about food in this way offers a poignant reminder of the ways in which God uses food to sustain us in heart, mind, soul, and body.

While it is often our preference to begin planning something like a community meal by asking **what** we should do, that is not our suggestion. The practical details will come. First, we need a foundational understanding of **why** we are doing what we are doing. In Christian community, our most powerful sense of why comes from the story of God's faithfulness to his people. Before jumping into the logistics of starting or transforming a community meal, we recommend spending time in discussion and prayer discerning your group's reasons for starting the program. Figuring out how it will take shape in your context will flow from this foundation.

As you take time to engage with biblical themes, you may find yourself inspired with new reasons to share food in ways that celebrate God's image present in everyone. As you do so, may God fill you with opportunities to share in table fellowship, a practice where all (including you!) are welcome and needed around the table, and all gain a renewed appreciation for the sacredness of shared food.

OVERVIEW FOR A SMALL GROUP STUDY



Contact us for a series of sessions designed to help foster curiosity, discussion and a foundation for food as both a healing salve and a spiritual practice. These discussions are formatted to help you walk through a biblical search for ways that sharing meals are an expression of our faith and a way to create communities of welcome. Divided into four sessions, these can be done individually or in a group as you reflect on creation, our purpose in it, and how holistic communities are formed. Resources for further reading into any of these topics are found in [Appendix G](#).

SESSIONS INCLUDE

Creation as a Practice – With God's gift of abundance comes the responsibility to care for and steward our interconnected relationship with God and creation.

Sabbath: Rest as Practice – Through creation we are led to Sabbath, a regular reminder that we cannot create or sustain life by ourselves. Stepping back, we see our limits and where we must rely on God and others to supply our needs.

Shalom: Shared Wellbeing Between Creator, Land and People – Sabbath leads to shalom, and the ability to see beauty in creation, and a call to reconciliation with all.

Radical Hospitality: Strangers Become Friends – The abundant providence of shalom leads us to respond with generous hospitality, creating space for everyone to give and everyone to receive.

Rhythm of the Sessions

Learning outcomes – Summarizes the purpose of each session

Scripture – Biblical context for what is being discussed

Observations – Initial discussion on what you notice in the passage

Readings – Insights into aspects of food in relation to spiritual community formation

Discussion questions – Consider what this means in your life and community

Prayer – A shared prayer from followers that have come before us

TURNING THEOLOGY INTO OPERATIONAL STRATEGIES

We set the table believing that God will show up. The following pages will shift towards logistical ideas around starting and running a food program. The challenge we wrestle though is how to apply these theological foundational ideas to every aspect of our programs, from procurement to pot washing. If we do not, we risk being hypocritical and exhausting ourselves and our resources.

If spiritual truths of honouring creation, sabbath, shalom and hospitality are the foundation of all our tasks, programs will continue to grow and flourish, attracting new people, maturing those who have become part of the core community, and leading both guests and hosts to leave each day with more energy and hope than they arrived with. So as you continue on through this journey, look for ways that God is showing up in the details. Be curious about the spiritual practices of being present, listening, and caring for one another.

A prayer as you take the next steps

*To Christ the seed to Christ the sheaves;
so into God's barns may we all be brought.*

*To Christ the sea, to Christ the fish;
so into God's nets may we all be caught.*

*From birth to growth, from growth to age
may your two arms, O Christ, fold us around.*

*From age to death, from death to new birth
in the palace of grace may we be found⁴.*

⁴ A Traditional Irish Prayer Found in Neil Paytner, *Blessed Be Our Table: Graces for Mealtimes and Reflections on Food* (Wild Goose, 2003)

Part B: Building the Table – From Food Charity to Food Security

MOVING INTO MUTUALITY



Grocery vouchers, emergency pantries, food banks, sandwich lines, and soup kitchens – these are usually the first responses of compassionate people who want to do something for the poor. They certainly are the most common. And for good reasons: they meet an immediate need, they are relatively uncomplicated, almost anyone can usefully volunteer in them, and they make for easy partnerships between urban and suburban ministries.

More importantly, what could be a more basic, universal gesture of goodwill and compassion than offering food? Haven't Christians always given free food as a vital expression of God's love, ever since Jesus miraculously fed crowds and told us that when we give food to "the least" we are feeding him?⁵

⁵ Matthew 25:40

Acts of charity (from Latin *caritas* = “love”) can be invaluable for relieving temporary crisis situations. However, hunger and poor nutrition are now more than a short-term emergency. They are chronic challenges for millions in Canada⁶ and billions globally.⁷ To the extent that charitable food programs divert attention and resources from solving the underlying causes of hunger and reinforce social roles that push low-income people farther to the edge, they do more harm than good. The full significance of food for Christian charity emerges when we see how Jesus used food to overturn systems that excluded and oppressed the poor.

True love acts quickly to address crisis but does not stop until the underlying causes of crisis are eliminated and the loved ones are wholly restored as integral members of the community, contributing their God-giftings toward the common good. There may always be a need for us to follow our charitable impulses to offer free food. But we should do so in ways that guide people into a continuum of holistic interdependencies that yield health and justice. Let’s look at a few concepts that are rapidly changing the way communities are addressing the universal need for good food.

A complex, incredibly extensive web of relationships operates to satisfy our hunger and appetites - something our modern food culture obscures with its myriad of instant gratification options. This web, our **food system**, includes all the processes, places, and people involved with keeping us fed: from growing and harvesting food to its processing, packaging, transportation, distribution, preparation, marketing, and its final consumption. The food system also includes the management of packaging, waste, and the recovery of nutrients within the region.⁸

To function well, a food system must be **sustainable** by meeting our current needs in ways that ensure future generations can meet theirs. A sustainable food system protects the ecological heritage of its region, and improves the biodiversity and health of its environment, while fostering equality and human health. It strengthens its local economy by stimulating investment, creating quality jobs, introducing efficiencies across the sector, and increasing both production and consumer choice.

⁶ <https://proof.utoronto.ca/food-insecurity/>

⁷ <https://data.unicef.org/resources/sofi-2018/>

⁸ Metro Vancouver. (2011). *Regional Food System Strategy*, p 5.

A truly sustainable food system yields social equity as well. To honour how food vitally forms community, it ensures that everyone living in a region can easily access the nutrition their bodies need, with food choices that maintain their cultural and familial traditions, and in a manner that more intimately connects urban residents with the cycles of Creation and people who produce their food.

The prime objective for sustainable food systems is **food security**. Community food security has been defined as “a condition in which all community residents obtain a safe, culturally acceptable, nutritionally adequate diet through a sustainable food system that maximizes community self-reliance and social justice.”⁹

Given this definition, we are all at risk of being food insecure.

Key Choices for a Sustainable Food System

- Emphasize plant-based proteins
- Fewer and better animal proteins, which support local farmers who avoid excessive antibiotics; read more at [Creature Kind](#)
- Emphasize field-grown fruit and vegetables bought in season
- Emphasize certified foods (i.e. [Oceanwise](#), [SeaChoice](#), [Fair Trade](#), [Canada Organic](#), [Certified Humane](#))




Limit processed foods and avoid ultra-processed foods, which lead to overconsumption of sugar, salt, fat, preservatives, and other substances that compromise health

⁹ Forum of Research Connections (FORC). (2006). *Vancouver Food System Assessment*, p 13.


HOW FOOD INSECURE ARE WE?

Supermarkets stock about three days worth of fresh food. Only a small percentage of the foods that wind up on our plates are locally grown or processed (particularly for those with lower incomes); most come from hundreds if not thousands of kilometres away. The global food supply faces a host of diverse threats: climate change, natural disasters, overuse and redevelopment of farmland, political upheaval, rising oil prices that elevate production and transportation costs, private ownership of patented seed strains that dominate commercial food markets and outcompete natural strains in the field, food safety issues such as e. coli contamination of produce and water sources or bird flu among poultry, and even fluctuating currency exchange rates. Greater Vancouver is especially vulnerable to these threats, isolated as it is by mountains, ocean, and an international border; prone to floods, earthquakes and volcanic eruptions, while being severely pressured by population growth.

What threatens the food system you rely on? What vaccinates your food supply against such risks?



These threats to our food supply have caused the price of food to rise more quickly than general inflation. For instance, according to the 2021 [Canada's Food Price Report](#), the price of food rose 2-4% in 2020, and is expected to rise up to 5% in 2021, given the impacts of climate change and the COVID-19 pandemic. This translates into an increase of \$695 for a family of four.



Rising food costs hit lower income households harder. And with housing costs going up substantially faster than food costs or incomes, more and more people are being forced to choose between paying for a roof over their heads or for groceries. People on fixed incomes—pensions, government disability or welfare benefits—are particularly at risk. To bring attention to how dire this situation is in Vancouver, the advocacy group [Raise the Rates](#) has coordinated an annual Welfare Food Challenge since 2012, in which politicians, teachers, and others write about trying to eat for a week on the amount of money that BC welfare rates make available. The 2018 Challenge was cancelled:

... because even if we don't count expenses for hygiene, rent deposit, bus fare, or phone, people will only have about \$6 a week for food — not enough to keep starvation at bay. The main reason it's worse now is that rents have gone up so much. The average rent in a private Downtown Eastside SRO

[Single Room Occupancy] *hotel room, the cheapest housing around, is now \$687 a month. Subtract \$687 from the total monthly welfare rate of \$710, and all you have left is \$23 or about \$6 a week for everything.*¹⁰

Levels of Food Insecurity¹¹

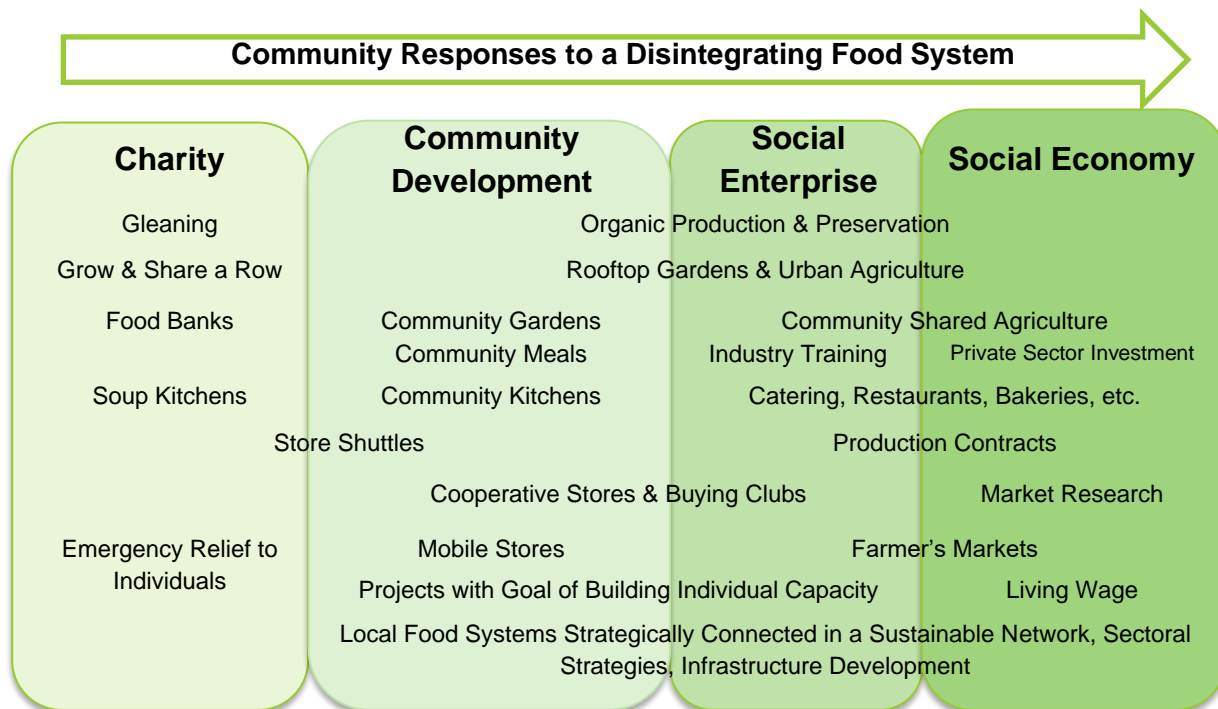
- **Marginal Food Insecurity:** Worry about running out of food and/or limit food selection because of lack of money for food.
- **Moderate Food Insecurity:** Compromise in quality and/or quantity of food due to a lack of money for food.
- **Severe Food Insecurity:** Miss meals, reduce food intake and at the most extreme go day(s) without food.

¹⁰ <https://thetyee.ca/Opinion/2018/11/06/Why-Cant-Do-Welfare-Food-Challenge-2018/> accessed Jan 13, 2021

¹¹ https://proof.utoronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/Household_Food_Insecurity_in_Canada-2012_ENG.pdf

CONTINUUM OF RESPONSES

Given the diversity of threats to our food system and its inherent complexity, there is “no single set of practices that will ensure the food security of a community. Rather, food security exists when there is a **comprehensive continuum of resources** in the community’s food system.¹²” That continuum may need to begin with short-term relief of acute food insecurity, then it moves on to efforts that develop the community’s capacity to feed itself, and proceeds to re-design the entire local system in support of innovative synergies among the not-for-profit, private, and public sectors. The continuum must be more than the sum of its parts. It yields food security to the degree its various components intentionally strengthen each other.



¹² Forum of Research Connections (FORC). (2006). *Vancouver Food System Assessment*, p 5

In this light, the typical Christian responses to hunger clearly fall short. We have been concentrating our efforts in precisely that part of the continuum which has the least impact on life outcomes for our vulnerable neighbours and on the long-term health of our home communities. We also inadequately connect and coordinate with existing programs.

Consider when which community response is appropriate? In which situation? For how long?

The good news is that much of the biblical story revolves around food-related themes and symbolism. The more we pay attention to how God uses food, the more we will see how to translate our charitable impulses into radical acts of grace, bridging different parts of the food continuum. We eliminate inequalities between rich and poor by turning strangers into neighbours. By sharing our gifts, we satisfy the deeper hunger for belonging that all of us experience.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

- Jesus taught us to pray, “Our Father...give us this day our daily bread” (Matthew 6, Luke 11). Why might it matter that Jesus does not say “give me”?
- Have you, or someone you know well, ever had to ask God or other people for basic food because they could not secure it for themselves? What was that like? (Imagine if you must.) What might Jesus be trying to teach us about interdependence?
 - Consider your last food purchase, for yourself or for a communal gathering.
 - Do you know where the food was grown or produced?
 - If it included meat, dairy, eggs, or other animal products, what do you know about the conditions in which those animals lived?
- Did the store layout and food packaging help you feel more or less connected to the place where the food came from, and to the people who grew it or made it?

- Name as many of the faith-based food initiatives in your community as you can. Where do they fall on the diagram of Community Responses to a Disintegrating Food System? What do you notice? Where are the gaps?
- If you had \$1000 to give, how would you allocate those funds across this spectrum, and why?

ASSET BASED COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

We are almost there, but before moving into logistical parts of building and transitioning community programs, we will review (or introduce, if this is a new concept), **asset-based community development (ABCD)**. It may be subtle, yet represents a significant change in approach, necessary for community programs to flourish.

Community Development is a process where connected individuals come together to take collective action on common problems. ABCD is the stance that any sustainable action must be based on a community's resources, skills, and experience, not be reliant on outside assets.

Principles that guide ABCD include:

- Each person in a community has something to contribute
- People must be connected through personal relationships in order for sustainable community development to take place
- Community members are the driving force of action, not merely the recipients
- Institutional leaders should step back from leadership after opportunities for community-member involvement have been created
- Decisions should come from conversations where community members are asked for ideas, not presented with probable solutions¹³



See more on resources on community development in [Appendix G](#).

¹³ Stan Rowland. "What is Asset Based Community Development (ABCD)." *Collaborative of Neighborhood Transformation* (2008)

Part C: Setting the Table – Creating a New Meal Program



A new program will only happen when an individual or small group recognizes others who need nutrition and companionship, and then engages their congregation, neighbours and/or community partners to explore how to respond. Expect to take **six months to one year** to get approval from your congregation or a coalition of churches, and then at least **three months** to plan and launch. During this pre-launch phase your group will **work through a neighbourhood scan, build a team, craft a shared mandate**, and explore ways to **incorporate holistic care**.

SCAN FOR NEIGHBOURHOOD ASSETS AND NEEDS

First, determine who the stakeholders are and who can advise, invest in or make use of your proposed program, and whether your idea is the best way to meet a community need. Your local municipality and other service providers will help answer questions like:

- Who are the most vulnerable or socially isolated people in your neighbourhood?
- What community food assets and supportive programs already exist?
- How will factors like transit and accessibility for the physically challenged impact your program?

- How has your neighbourhood changed in recent years?
- What dietary preferences should be considered for different age, cultural or religious groups?
- Who might be negatively impacted by your program?

BUILD A TEAM

Collaborate with Nearby Congregations

You can configure a community meal program that your congregation (no matter how small) can carry on by itself. But why would you if you did not have to? Collaborating with other churches or community groups adds complexity and might slow your launch process, yet the practical and spiritual benefits make the extra effort more than worth it.

Collaboration makes it easier to secure a larger budget and pool of volunteers, which could allow you to launch as a weekly rather than bi-weekly or monthly program, or with a paid staff person in place from the beginning. If your church meets in a rented public space that you can only access for your worship gatherings, or if your building is too small or inadequately equipped, then partnering with one or more other congregations can open a path for you beyond potlucks or caterers.

Sharing the load with other churches can give you confidence to attempt what may seem at first to be a risky proposition. It also offers a way of ensuring the community meal can continue to exist in some form even if one congregation needs to scale back or refocus its efforts. Because volunteerism is often cyclical, expanding the pool of volunteers will allow you to adapt as some volunteers' life circumstances and shifting priorities pull them away. It also provides the volunteers who remain with the fresh energy and curiosity that comes with new people; it is easier to get that supply from multiple groups than from one alone.

For collaboration to endure:

- Co-create a vision and leadership structure, rather than simply recruiting churches into a predetermined course of action
- Select one church or organization to oversee funds and paid staff if any (it may be easier for a para-congregational charity to manage this, especially if you need to raise money from beyond the participating churches)
- Identify lead volunteers from each church acting as primary liaisons with the program and with the other churches
- Identify persons who have authority to allocate their church's resources to convene at least annually to revisit the vision, status, and budget

Perhaps the most compelling reason for collaborating with other churches has less to do with sustainability and more to do with testifying to God's abundant love for the world. Jesus' prayer in John's gospel says our most beautiful embodiment of God's redemptive power comes through our communion with one another:

*"The glory that you [Holy Father] have given me I have given them, so that they may be one, as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may become completely one, so that the world may know that you have sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me."*¹⁴

¹⁴ John 17:22-24

The Trinity's own generative love fills us then overflows from us as we communally live out Jesus's commandment to love God and our neighbour. When diverse congregations jointly offer a meal to the public, we give our neighbours a foretaste of the Eucharist and the shalom of Christ's Kingdom. In our experience, church leadership appreciate the chance to meet needs in the community but are even more motivated to embrace an opportunity to demonstrate the Gospel across denominational boundaries.

If you lack space or kitchen equipment, consider asking community organizations such as community centres and, in Greater Vancouver, Neighbourhood Houses to let you use theirs. These organizations will often see these partnerships as a win-win and may waive the rental fee.

Link to Local Service Providers and Allies

When your church offers a community meal, the main thing you bring to the table is the gift of yourself, opened by Christ's love to receive in turn the gift of the stranger's self, whom Christ has brought to the table. Keep this main thing the main thing! But as God deepens your connection with your guests, you will naturally want to help your new-found friends to access formal supports of various kinds.

Discover where and how to direct guests to nearby service providers (particularly for vulnerable sub-populations such as single parents, seniors, new immigrants, individuals with mental health challenges, etc.). Introduce yourself to these agencies, and ask for:

- Brochures and other literature about their services that you can display and distribute
- Their perspective on your neighbourhood or target population's assets and needs
- Their help to get the word out about your program
- The procedure for referring people to them

These agencies may even be willing, indeed eager, to send a staff person or volunteer periodically to be available to your guests. Reach out also to your nearest

provincial Health Unit and local library (librarians interact daily with patrons who are street-involved or vulnerable).

Find out when and where other free or low-cost food programs are available in your area. In addition to the questions above, ask them how your program can supplement their existing calendar - is it better to fill a gap or to double-up on a given day because the other programs are at capacity? Connect with:

- Community food centres, community gardens, food banks, and food recovery programs for products and potential shared programming
- Nearby supermarkets, coffee shops, bakeries, farmers markets, farmers, and equipment suppliers for in-kind contributions
- Food security networks—local, regional, beyond—for expertise, camaraderie, advocacy

Finally, consider contacting your neighbourhood's business improvement association (BIA) or equivalent, and your church's immediate neighbours (one block radius) to inform them of your plans, answer their questions and concerns, and invite their participation. Let them know who to contact with questions. You may be required by your city's permitting process to enter into a formal [Good Neighbour Agreement](#)¹⁵ that specifies responsibilities your program has for minimizing impacts on people living close by, and how to resolve any problems that may arise. Even if your municipality does not require this preauthorization, being proactive can minimize conflict should it arise.



¹⁵ https://www.ugm.ca/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/UGM_GoodNeighbour.pdf

ESTABLISH OVERSIGHT

Community programs usually start when a passionate small group recognizes a pressing need and volunteers their time to respond. As programs grow, mature, or seek to become integrated within a larger initiative, it is valuable to hire a **paid part-time staff person** at least to monitor logistics (budget, health regulations, metrics of success, etc.), to mitigate risks, to ensure continuity and communication between rotating teams, to establish and maintain partnerships, and to support volunteers and guests. One common, minimal option is to hire a chef who can ensure the food is properly planned, procured, cooked, and served. All these responsibilities combined will require on average ten hours per week for a weekly meal.

It is a rare person indeed who possesses all the necessary technical skills *and* the essential people skills. Even if you do find that person, they will not be able to coordinate all that must be done while simultaneously attending to your guests' and volunteers' emotional and spiritual needs. Beware of creating this expectation. Ideally, a **pastor** or gifted lay leader can take ownership of the latter role, connecting what happens during the meal program with the life of the larger congregation. Alternatively, local supportive organizations may be able to lend staff to your program and gradually pass on their competencies to core volunteers.

Establish an advisory board or leadership team consisting of people with diverse expertise and networks, representative of your program's stakeholders. Initially, this board might be drawn only from your congregations. The advisory board will need to:

- State clearly in writing their terms of reference: role, limits of authority, expected availability
- Meet regularly to cast and hold steady the vision, to plan the logistics of the launch and ongoing program, and to monitor progress towards goals
- Clarify who (lead volunteers, staff, clergy, church board?) has the authority and responsibility to do what - not least when it comes to creating and monitoring the budget, and ensuring funds are in place. Countless programs get stuck because there is no clear authority or, more typically, no clear pathway and power of decision.

However you decide to structure authority, those who have it need to adopt the stance of servant leadership modelled by Jesus (Mark 10:41-45) and detailed by organizational theorists¹⁶. With humility and empathy, a servant leader shares power judiciously in order to help everyone involved grow as persons and as a group. A servant leader in the context of a Christian community meal program will continually show how offering Christ's hospitality to the stranger yields the fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control (Galatians 5:22-23).

Many vulnerable individuals will have had little experience in leadership or with healthy power dynamics and may not recognize their own potential. Poorly designed charitable programs often foster in them a learned helplessness. If you encourage emerging participant leaders to articulate a vision of servant leadership in their own language, they will more likely see how the concept can apply to them and trust it.

VOLUNTEERS

The success of any community meal is determined by the contributions of volunteer hosts who commit to make it happen. The ideal ratio of hosts to guests depends on how seriously your group is prepared to blur boundaries between the roles. Food programs require a lot of work, typically being open to the public for at least two hours, with about two hours of room setup and food preparation beforehand and almost as much time cleaning afterward. Most volunteers are present for only part of that time (possibly in formal shifts), depending on their availability, capacity and energy. A ratio of one volunteer for every 2-4 guests gives every volunteer time to sit down and eat with guests – this is the central practice of the meal! – and ensures that no task falls heavily on any one person.

¹⁶ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Servant_leadership



A few roles are especially important and should be reserved for “lead volunteers.” Each shift of the kitchen team and dining room team needs a lead volunteer with [Food Safe training](#) to ensure tasks are accomplished properly and to help instill the desired culture of the program. Each partnering congregation should have a designated liaison to champion the food program within their church, recruit volunteers from among parishioners, facilitate communication, and share some responsibility for routine logistics and periodic strategic planning. Lead volunteers can also be expected to attend more frequently than other volunteers, to lend continuity between teams as well as familiar faces for guests.



Volunteers can be recruited through partnerships with various congregations, neighbours, schools and other community programs, or an online volunteer portal such as govolunteer.ca or Craigslist. People long to be part of something meaningful: just about anyone can become a valuable member of a competent, committed volunteer team if they are:

- Welcomed well
- Supported thoughtfully (including a good snack before starting to work)
- Facilitated to do tasks that fit their interest and capabilities

Guests of community programs typically want to help, too. Reciprocity is a healthy human response to gestures of hospitality, especially when these are repeated or when any degree of intimacy forms. By the third time you eat in a new friend's home, if not sooner, you will feel rude if you do not help clear dishes from the table. Yet guests of charitable food programs are often discouraged from doing so by volunteers who feel they would not be *doing their job* if a guest had to assist, or that it would be unsafe or unsanitary to allow the guest to participate. While not always expressly stated, these kinds of presumptions and prejudices can work their way into programs.

HOSTS AND GUESTS



Meal programs operating with a eucharistic ethic and a philosophy of [Asset Based Community Development](#) do not serve “clients” so much as they host “guests” who might one day become members of a community. This is the first step in breaking down distinctions between “us” and “them” and dismantling hierarchies of service provision that disempower. The commonly used phrase “We offer a hand up, not a handout” is condescending even in its imagery: people in a higher position are stooping to help others in a lower position. Community development initiatives advance along the continuum of support when we invite guests to become participants, co-hosts, servers and then leaders.

Progress on this developmental pathway is usually slow and challenging (for hosts and guests alike), yet it is crucial to assisting people to realize their full potential as beloved human beings who bear the image of God. The deeper crisis we must address is not hunger, but rather misperceptions about worth and identity. To quote a man who has relied on the charitable food circuit in Vancouver for more than a decade:

You can try your best to treat people with dignity here..., and I think you guys do treat people with dignity, but there’s no real point because we’ve all already lost it. As soon as you make anyone line up for a handout, they’ve lost their self-worth.

Strong words! And a necessary reminder that we must continually examine our methods of service provision to ensure that we are creating space for guests to discover and strengthen their gifts. We will need to give away some of our own power, take a step or two to the side, to make room for the marginalized to grow alongside of us.



[Appendix F](#) has a **Trajectory of Increasing Responsibility and Privileges** which articulates the differences between casual, core and lead volunteers, and manager duties. Moving guests along this trajectory requires:

- Enthusiastic support from your whole team
- An awareness of safety, i.e., clarity about who can hold keys, safely prepare food, or be alone with other program participants
- Extra support for the practical and social needs of the new volunteers

A perfect opportunity for inviting guests to become volunteers is when your team is unexpectedly short-handed. In fact, you may want to schedule one night a month to have two or three fewer regular volunteers, in order to gently prompt your team to proactively recruit among your guests. Or you may choose to build participation slowly over time, starting a guest off with small brief tasks and then drawing them into more responsibility as they respond positively.

Here are some ways to invite guests into host roles:

- Ask guests to help with tasks such as setting up the room, bussing tables, or sweeping the floor
- Have guests work alongside established volunteers within the larger community space, not alone with another volunteer or other guest
- Have snacks during set-up for guest-volunteers, especially during morning programs, since many will have had little or nothing to eat before coming
- Reinforce regularly with your entire team your culture of hospitality, healthy boundaries, safe food handling practices, and universal precautions
 - Remind everyone to wash hands (and put on gloves when necessary) before preparing or serving food
 - Support guests to take training like Food Safe or First Aid, by covering the cost of course fees, transportation, meals, etc., and helping them navigate registration processes. Be prepared to offer a verbal testing option for guests who have limited English or literacy skills.
- Include guest-volunteers in sessions of team planning, prayer, and celebration
- If your program has a formal time of welcome, announcements, or prayer, ask a guest to co-facilitate it

There is a legal requirement to do police background checks on all volunteers who work with “vulnerable populations” such as seniors, children and homeless individuals. Distinguishing between core and casual community volunteers, at the discretion of the program coordinator, may allow people with a criminal record to volunteer without triggering a police check.

- Name tags or aprons (with your program's logo, if there is one) can indicate who is part of a team and make for an extra degree of pride
- Work with guests and community volunteers to tell the story of what the meal means to them, what their life is like, and what would help them thrive
- As guest-volunteers prove reliable, promote them to positions of greater responsibility (menu planning, Maître D', managing the dish pit) and, if possible, compensate them for their work

ORIENTATION, TRAINING, AND MANAGEMENT

Training methods and a volunteer management system will evolve and mature as other aspects of your program evolve. A lot of training will happen during the routines of the program itself, as your coordinator and core volunteers orient new team members to established rhythms and practices.

Depending on the size and complexity of your food program, **initial orientation** for new volunteers can be highly formal, involving a facility tour, walkthrough of the volunteer manual, and a teaching session that communicates key themes, postures, and background information. When preparing to launch a new program, it is essential to take this formal approach for your founding volunteers. But for an existing small program or a large one that is operating smoothly with competent core volunteers already in place, orientation can be as simple as introducing new recruits to the other volunteers present, pairing them up with a buddy, debriefing for a few minutes at the end of the shift, and sending them home with the volunteer manual or other resources.



A brief **volunteer manual** may help ensure important details are shared with new recruits. Contact us for an example, which includes:

- The program's vision and mission
- An introduction to the community and what to expect (program timeline)
- The structure, budget and where to donate
- Community tasks
- Safety and Hygiene
- Personal and Medical Safety
- Key tips and FAQs

Occasionally, you will need to provide **crisis training** in the face of a growing problem, such as how to administer naloxone due to the enormous increase of opioid overdoses¹⁷. We recommend you **establish a proactive curriculum** of workshops on core convictions and competencies, to be delivered on a rotating basis over the span of two to three years. Such a curriculum could cover topics such as:



- [The Sacred Dimensions of Food Security](#) (Part A above)
- [Moving Food Charity to Food Justice](#) (Part B above)
- The Roots and Impacts of Poverty
- Counteracting Social Isolation through Re-neighbouring and Place-making
- Local Indigenous Culture(s)
- Boundaries and Resilience
- Advocacy - Being on the Front Lines
- Managing Hostile Interactions
- Food Safe, First Aid/CPR (need at least 1 person on site with current certification, ideally more)
- Addictions, Substance Use Awareness and Safety
- Mental Health First Aid, Suicide Alertness and Intervention Skills
- Grief, Loss, and Trauma-Informed Care



Homelessness Services Association of BC¹⁸ and Union Gospel Mission¹⁹ offer many of these workshops.

¹⁷ <https://towardtheheart.com/naloxone-training>

¹⁸ <http://hsa-bc.ca/training-and-events/full-day-training-descriptions-instructors-their-bios>

¹⁹ <https://www.ugm.ca/take-action/churches>

TRAUMA AND VIOLENCE INFORMED CARE

Any supportive program must be done with a lens of **trauma and violence informed care**. Vulnerable individuals have likely had traumatic experiences, which can impact every area of functioning, including physical, mental, behavioural and spiritual. Prioritize policies and practices that:

- Foster safe settings (i.e. ensuring entrances/exits and bathrooms are well lit, monitoring noise levels, appropriate language, etc.)
- Actively prevent re-traumatization
- Make space for an individual's coping mechanisms that may have developed after trauma (i.e. detachment, hyper-vigilance, altered self-regulation, short-temperedness, self-medicating or substance abuse)
- Educate staff and volunteers about secondary traumatic stress (also called vicarious trauma, burnout, or compassion fatigue) and the importance of self-care

“Because trauma is so common and because you don’t know if someone has experienced trauma or violence, it is best to treat everyone in a safe and compassionate way.”²⁰

²⁰ <https://equiphealthcare.ca/equip/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/TVIC-Orientation-Tool-Final-EN.pdf>

CRAFT A SHARED MANDATE

Once you have assembled your initial team, one of the first things you will need to do together before hosting your first meal is to clearly articulate the foundation from which you are operating - your shared mandate - which typically includes:

- A vision statement that inspires your community and potential allies by painting a picture of how the world will be better if you succeed. It names outcomes, some of which may take years to fulfill.
- A mission statement that identifies the people and place you serve as well as the full range of your activities. It names strategies, which may change over time.
- Five (or so) commitments or values that your community believes are timeless and essential to its identity. These name personal/organizational character traits which your staff and core volunteers should aim to embody, even if doing so would cost your program its largest source of funding or volunteers.
- A food philosophy, or statement which articulates why food is shared and will help guide partnership, purchasing, and serving decisions (See [Appendix D](#)).



Revisit your shared mandate every three years to incorporate insights from participants, volunteers, staff, church and other organizational partners, and donors.

Also take time early on to write down the genesis of your community meal, the story of what prompted you to get started in the first place. If yours is a brand-new program, the impetus will be fresh – perhaps an encounter with a vulnerable person, or a conversation with a friend, or a Scripture passage or sermon series that gripped your heart. If your community meal has been operating for years and you are now re-designing it, you have even more reason to uncover its original motivation. If that heritage was healthy, it will lend to your reform effort; if unhealthy, knowing it will clarify the deep issues to be addressed.

SET GOALS, MEASURE OUTCOMES

“You can’t hit what you don’t aim at.” “What gets measured gets done.” These common sayings illustrate how we all recognize the need to set goals and to periodically evaluate how well we are achieving them. Your shared mandate expresses your standards of excellence and your long-term vision, but you will need to break these down into short term and medium-term outcomes, which you plan to accomplish within 1-12 months and 1-3 years respectively.

Determining your desired outcomes is not so simple as deciding “to feed X number of people every week” or that “we want guests to feel safe among friends in a home-like atmosphere.” Both goals are worthy. Yet the first goal confuses outcomes with outputs, and therefore will have very limited effect on lives or the underlying causes of hunger. Outcomes are qualitative changes in skills, motivation, attitude, behaviour, policies, social/economic/political conditions, etc. Outputs, on the other hand, are simply raw numbers, though important for gauging the scale of your outcomes. The second goal above is a worthy outcome, but in order to accurately track progress toward it, you will need to carefully discern how to collect and interpret direct and indirect evidence (“indicators”) of such a subjective experience.

There are many methods of evaluation, each yielding its own particular perspective that has strengths and weaknesses. We recommend adopting a combination of two or more of the following methods most helpful for working with vulnerable populations:



- Participatory Evaluation is particularly important because it enlists program participants to design the evaluation questions, to determine how these questions will be asked, and to recommend how the results will be made available (see, for example, the [Manifesto for Ethical Research in the Downtown Eastside](#)).
- Outcome Evaluation focuses on what changes within individuals and society as a result of your program, and is usually required by government and institutional funders. It involves charting a theory of change using a tool like a logic model that links inputs, activities, outputs, outcomes, and indicators



- See SPARC BC's, ["Splash and Ripple: Using Outcomes to Design and Manage Community Activities"](#) or The University of Idaho Extension's brief ["The Logic Model for Program Planning and Evaluation"](#)
- Process Evaluation sheds light on how change happens or does not happen by focussing on the first three elements of outcome evaluation - inputs, activities, outputs - in order to assess:
 - Progress during the early phases of the program
 - Whether the program is being or was implemented according to plan
 - Whether failure to achieve an outcome was due to poor implementation or to poor strategy and theory
 - How unexpected developments during the program were successfully or unsuccessfully managed
 - See the RAND Corporation's ["Step 7 of Getting to Outcomes"](#)
- Narrative and Case Studies involve gathering and examining stories from program participants, volunteers, and staff in order to understand their experiences of the program in their own terms, allowing themes and trends and linkages to emerge unscripted by your logic model.



[Appendix F](#) includes a "Trajectory for Program Transformation" which contrasts low-impact status quo food programs with high-impact best practice ones, with regard to key areas of competency and planning. Regardless of which evaluation methods you choose, pay close attention to relationships between guests and hosts, to food standards, and to environmental impacts.

Goals & Objectives are often guided by the acronym SMART, suggesting that the elements of your strategy should be Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound.

QUANTITY VS. QUALITY

Emergency relief actions tend to emphasize quantity over quality. We want to help (sometimes we even say “rescue”) as many people as we can. We certainly do not want to turn anyone away. And it feels gratifying when we see more and more guests coming because word is getting around that we are providing great food. Sooner or later the number of guests will push against the threshold where genuine friendship with volunteers, and therefore mutual transformation, can happen.

Despite our best intentions, a food program can start to feel like a major production, a quasi-industrial experience where everyone involved (guests, volunteers, staff) is gradually reduced to numbers or functions. We become consumed with managing the poverty around us: the poverty in those who come to us hungry, the poverty in our programs which seem unable to keep up with the need, the poverty in our own spirits as we become burnt out. What began as a grumbling hole in the gut – “I’ve got to get me something to eat!” or “I’ve got to do something to help these poor people!” – becomes an ulcer in the soul.



The challenge, then, is to consistently reject the emergency relief mindset. Adopt instead a [community development](#) approach. Plan from the start to expand in ways that preserve relatively intimate settings which empower guests to become hosts. Seek to grow numerically only by expanding the personal capacities of everyone involved as well as their communal capacity to celebrate and work together.

For instance, before serving your first meal, determine:

- How you will set-up and serve your meal (i.e. buffet or cafe-style)
- The maximum number of people you will serve at one sitting so that the room will not feel crowded
- What you will do when you reach that maximum - e.g., ask guests to come back a little later, provide a comfortable waiting area, extend the hours of the meal, add another meal to the weekly or monthly rotation, look for an auxiliary location where another meal could be offered simultaneously
- If possible, coordinate your meal schedule with others offered elsewhere, either to act as an overflow site if they are chronically crowded or to fill a gap

- An appropriate ratio of hosts to guests (1:4 is a good starting point), then add tables only when you have enough hosts to accommodate the growing numbers of guests
- An ongoing recruitment and training regimen for hosts that draws as many guests as church or community members into volunteer roles

FREE VERSES FEE

There is debate among charitable organizations over whether poverty reduction programs should provide their goods and services for free or, at least in some circumstances, require payment or other forms of contribution. This is a complex issue. No single answer fits every situation.

Justifications and Drawbacks for Free Meals

The simplest justification for serving a free meal almost goes without saying. Most cultures, whether ancient or modern, hold hospitality - especially toward the stranger - as a core virtue if not a sacred duty. Gestures of peace and goodwill do not come with a price tag. In light of the shalom of Christ, freely offering a meal expresses God's abundant provision in a culture of scarcity, a sign of love without preconditions even toward those who seem threatening, a first gesture of restorative justice and mutual aid. For congregations taking up life with their poor neighbours for the first time, hosting a no-charge lunch or dinner can be a transformative extension of their "table fellowship."

There are also many unique circumstances that more or less require that meals be provided without cost to guests. For instance, in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside several thousand residents on welfare or disability pay rent for Single Room Occupancy (SRO) units that do not have kitchens or food storage. These residents are unavoidably dependent on charities for most of their meals. Others

[Jesus] said also to the one who had invited him, "When you give a luncheon or a dinner, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbours, in case they may invite you in return, and you would be repaid. But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind. And you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you, for you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous."

Luke 14:12-14

reside in temporary shelters which they must leave from early morning to sometime in the evening.

On the other hand, there can be serious negative consequences to prolonged or institutionalized provision of a free meal service. At best, it strains against community development goals that rely on the contributions of marginalized individuals who are the focus of the initiative.

At worst, it reinforces habits of dependency and entitlement among guests, as well as corresponding attitudes of sacrifice and superiority among hosts. As time goes on, personnel change over, budgets strain, routine or compassion fatigue sets in. Almost inevitably the positive motivations we started with become forgotten or submerged.

And taking the five loaves and the two fish, [Jesus] looked up to heaven, and blessed and broke them, and gave them to the disciples to set before the crowd. And all ate and were filled. What was left over was gathered up, twelve baskets of broken pieces.

Luke 9:16-17

Why and How You Might Require a Contribution

Successful community development projects hinge on reciprocity, on equitable exchange that flows from acknowledging we are gifted (by God) to each other. We spoke earlier about the ways that Jesus turned conventional host-guest relations upside down, and about how vital it is that we create opportunity for marginalized people to contribute their skills and passion in fashioning a shared life with us. These practices dismantle the social, psychological, and spiritual frameworks of poverty that hold them - and us - back from the flourishing God intends for everyone.

If mutuality and dignity are desired outcomes, then we can reasonably adopt a “pay or volunteer” model for our food programs, even if we continue to subsidize them heavily. This communicates that our meals are something of value, not a handout. Many low-income people, especially seniors or the newly unemployed, avoid free food programs because they are ashamed to feel dependent. They gladly will pay a dollar or two, or help with tasks. Others, who may be stuck in an attitude of entitlement born of the passive role assigned to them in other charity contexts, will complain. A gently firm commitment to reciprocity on our part will encourage growth on theirs.

It is best to introduce a fee or volunteer requirement when starting a new program or making major changes to an existing one. In the case of a currently free meal, consult the community who attends. By engaging guests in a conversation about timing, how much to charge, and other related considerations, they will hopefully feel some sense of ownership over how and why contributions are solicited. You can assure them that funds collected will go toward improving the quality and selection of the food. Discuss options such as:

- Requiring everyone to pay the same amount
- Requiring everyone to pay what they can
- Suggesting a donation
- Giving the option to pay or sign up for a volunteer role for that session
- Not requiring money but asking all to volunteer (when > 25 are participating)

If using a donation box, to gently encourage guests to contribute something, place the box in a prominent yet neutral space, not directly in front of the food. Flexibility ensures that those who cannot afford to pay can still eat.

SPIRITUAL FORMATION

Meal programs should be an integral part of a congregation’s larger approach to discipleship and participation in God’s mission. Parishioners who volunteer at a meal will almost certainly be impacted in a variety of ways, including a deeper experience of their spirituality and faith. Since the meal will probably be your



guests' first point of contact with your congregation, the meal—in all its aspects—should reflect as accurately as possible who you are and what you believe. At a minimum, we recommend:

- Two sessions a year for volunteers (open to all parishioners as well) to reflect theologically on the meal program and to name what it is bringing up for them in their spiritual journey
- Sermons and group studies should regularly touch on the subjects sketched in [Part A](#) and use illustrations drawn from the meal program
- Helping the congregation to remember how the community meal is an extension of the congregation's participation in God's mission and life of the church, and to invite these practices into their own household habits

Spiritual formation in a diverse community that includes the marginalized requires extreme sensitivity. This is especially important, as there are many who have experiences of religion used to oppress them. For instance, in our Vancouver context, a disproportionate number of guests at community meal programs are Indigenous. They, their parents, and many ancestors have been forcibly removed as young children from their homes, to be detained in government-mandated and church-run residential schools where they were physically and sexually abused. Thousands died.

Apart from such racialized harm, some of your guests will have grown up in spiritually abusive congregations or feel rejected as a result of their marital status, gender identity or sexuality, level of mental health, or substance use. Many will feel generalized guilt or unworthiness merely for being poor - which is abetted in Christian circles by "health and wealth" theology and the so-called Protestant work ethic. Quite a few will have experienced deep trauma, perhaps chronically. Often these painful questions defy our usual practice of discipleship.

Jesus had to spend a great deal of his teaching time up-ending intertwined false theologies of material blessing, social status, and moral purity. So shall we. In this, pay attention to what Jesus (and the prophets before him) said to whom the message of salvation comes to different people from different angles.

Remember that your guests are essentially a captive audience. Many rely on the food you provide and will endure what they must to access it. Overly persistent attempts by volunteers to start a “spiritual conversation” will raise resentment in some and, worse, fake piety in others. At the same time, many guests are interested in pursuing such conversations. In cases like this, it is better to follow their lead. Imagine how hardened your heart might become if you had to jump through someone else’s religious hoops day after day, week after week, in order to meet your basic needs. Beware of the temptation to start a community meal as an evangelistic bait-and switch. Nobody likes to be someone’s project.

Among the community food programs we know well, effective spiritual development for community members has centred around the following:

In 2011 Vancouver’s Union Gospel Mission discontinued its decades-long practice of requiring guests to sit through a sermon and worship service before they could eat. Instead, guests are invited to attend optional worship services and bible study groups at other times throughout the week, should they wish.

- **Prayer Before Meals** – Many programs publicly bless the meal and the people sharing it. Keep your prayers short or invite a participant to offer theirs. In higher liturgical traditions, prayers for particular seasons can be selected or crafted. Other programs choose to pray before opening the doors. For example, in a cafe-style setting where guests arrive during a larger window of time, there is no one moment to gather everyone’s attention to pray, so volunteers (some of whom are community members) gather briefly to make introductions, share announcements, and pray before inviting guests inside.
- **Prayer Room** – In a separate room, away from the noise of the dining area, guests may pray on their own or with volunteers, who have received training in healing or [listening prayer](#). Ask the artists among you to [create interactive, themed prayer walls or stations](#) to lead participants deeper into faith and help them voice their pain, questions, gratitude, and dreams. If you’re short of ideas or inspiration take a look at other [what other artists have done](#).
- **Pastoral Accompaniment** – Designate a trained staff person or core volunteer to be a Pastoral Community Builder. Task them with overseeing faith formation in your meal program generally, helping all participants to



establish healthy boundaries, providing them emotional and spiritual support to experience God's restorative love, and giving practical assistance to people struggling with multiple barriers.

- **Weekly Bible Study** – It is a safe bet that at least a few guests will be keen to study the Bible together when the meal is over or in a separate room after they have eaten. This should be facilitated by a Pastoral Community Builder or similarly competent person.
- **Courses** – such as [Alpha](#), a globally popular ten-week introduction to Christianity designed around a shared meal with discussion. Other courses with a similar format but different theological emphases include [Animate](#), [Living the Questions](#), and [Pilgrim](#).



If running a formal program consider that some participants may struggle with literacy, access to technology (no Bible apps on phones), let alone Christian jargon. Learn to ask open-ended questions, to be transparent about your own journey with Jesus and the challenges of living your faith in community. Let go of the need to be right or expert, and direct attention back to Scripture. Do not worry: God will show up powerfully.

Part D: Changing the Table – Transforming an Existing Program



Starting programs from scratch can be easier than shifting an existing program, especially one that has settled into solid rhythms which are simultaneously helpful and reinforce unwanted dynamics. If this is true of your program, those invested in it may question its ultimate usefulness. Start by honestly asking how you, and some of your core stakeholders, would respond:

- Are there ways in which your community meal program operates with an arms-length charitable approach?
- How do established routines embrace ways that reinforce connection or disconnection amongst guests, volunteers, and staff?
- How does your way of sharing food embody creation care, Sabbath, shalom and hospitality (or not)?
- What outcomes or positive changes can be tied to the program?
How much closer is the community to its shared mandate?

Program transformation may require adaptations to the physical and social elements of the system. We often default to changing physical structures, but effective long-lasting change requires the transformation of hearts and minds. That said, early shifts and adaptations at other levels (finding some low-hanging fruit) can prepare participants in a program for more significant changes, such as moving from a place of seeing food as fuel towards seeing shared meals as a place of dignity and community resilience.

Transformation of any system requires interventions at a variety of levels, including:

- Senior leadership
- Those most invested in leading the current program
- Those the program was created for
- Community partners and stakeholders
- An outside consultant, who can bring useful, neutral perspectives

Transformation also takes commitment to reflective, iterative adaptations. Such change understands that as we engage in transformation, and as we receive new information from guests, volunteers, and staff, our programs will evolve in response to what we are learning. It also requires dedication to a particular vision of the world grounded in creation, Sabbath, shalom, and hospitality, and an ability to stay the course even when some do not agree with the changes being made.

MOTIVATE FOR CHANGE

Significant change often needs motivation. Sometimes that motivation comes because of the loss of momentum, leadership, or funding. Other times it is prompted by good questions, experiences of new models, reading a book, or seeing an inspiring film. While this can at times feel challenging, these catalytic moments can offer opportunities for you and your team to review and change long established routines.

Consolidating and reviewing statistics may also contribute to seeing the need for change. Program coordinators should track and review:

- How many people is the program serving?
- Is the program serving the population it was intended for? How have the community needs and assets changed since the program started?

- How many critical incidents (i.e. injuries, banned or barred individuals) occur?
- How closely does the program stick to its budget?
- What is the subjective experience of volunteers and guests, including satisfaction level, the stress of running the program, commitment to continue engaging with the program, and sense of agency in addressing challenges?
- How have the above changed over the last seasons?
- How closely are current practices aligned with the original shared mandate?

TIMELINE

Expect any program change process to take several months to a year. Below is a sample 8-week agenda for a group that currently runs a weekly program. This can happen in consecutive weeks if the program is put on hold, or over a longer season while the established program continues to run. If at some point the group decides to make a significant change to the program model, that may be best done after a break that shuts down the program for a period of at least several weeks.

8 WEEK PROGRAM CHANGE AGENDA

- Week 1**
- Identify stakeholders and potential new partners
 - Who is impacted by and invested in the current meal?
 - Who would be impacted if the meal changed or stopped?
 - Are there nearby churches and/or agencies who might want to collaborate with us?
 - Who can help us scan our neighbourhood for needs and assets?
 - Team building and Community Agreements

- How can we work well together during this change process? Establish values and ground rules for the process.
 - Create a “parking lot” for good ideas that are nevertheless not a focus for this process.
- Review or create a Shared Mandate
 - Why are we sharing food in the first place?
 - Review current program vision, mission, and values (if established)
 - Review host organization’s vision, mission, and values
 - How are these reflected in the current program (or not)?
 - Review (or begin crafting) a food philosophy
- Appreciative Inquiry exercise
 - What are the joyous highlights of the story of your program as it has unfolded up to now? Can you describe scenes or encounters that have inspired delight, surprise, or enduring gratitude?
 - What dreams and hopes do we have for the program?
 - What skills and assets do we possess?
 - Connections – what assets and skills will help us realize our dreams and hopes?
- Next steps

Week 2

- Review ground rules and goals for the meeting, and why we are entering this process
- Look deeper into connections between hopes and assets (in small groups)
 - Note program ideas further articulate vision
- Review list of stakeholders
 - Who do we need to most engage, and how?
- Review the results of a neighbourhood scan (see Part C above).
- Consider 3 models of serving, and the benefits and disadvantages of each (small groups have 15 minutes to look at each)

- Current model (emergency relief)
- Food Bank or bulk buying program (no meal)
- Café model of serving similarly to a restaurant

- Week 3**
- Visit other programs with models that fit the group's vision, values, hopes, dreams, skills and assets
 - What worked well with this?
 - What would be lost by changing the existing program?
 - What other questions need to be answered as the group moves forward?
 - Choose a model to go forward with (or identify what needs to happen in order for you to be able to decide)

- Week 4**
- If not already answered, be sure to ask:
 - Does the program need a new name (and/or logo)?
 - Will there be a charge for the meal? What different ways are there to do so? Reasons for a fee? Reasons against it?
 - What roles will be needed (food preparation, set-up, service, clean up, take-down)?
 - What is a workable timeline for rolling out the changes, including a few weeks of practicing?
 - How can volunteers and guests work alongside each other?
 - How do volunteers currently limit guest participation?
 - How will working together help the program meet its larger vision?

- Week 5**
- How will we assess the impact of the change?
 - Review the difference between outputs and outcomes in the Set Goals, Measure Outcomes section (above)
 - What do we want to see in 6 months (or 1 year)?
 - How will we know this is not working? What methods of evaluation will we use?

- Communicating the change to all stakeholders - who, how, when
- Outstanding logistics (timing, roles, food to be served...)

Weeks 6 & 7

- Work through logistics, set-up and other details

Week 8

- Dry Run

ITERATIVE REVIEW AND RESPONSE

Expect a new or updated model to adapt over the first months (and years) of operation. Remain open to re-introducing elements of the former program that were overlooked, particularly elements where guests were able to demonstrate autonomy by serving themselves.

- If creating a permanent sign to post outside when the program is running, have it read, “Open Now” rather than specific times, as they may change
- Keep track of where the meal is advertised and update all references to it if needed (especially if times, fees or location changes)

Even if a significant structural change is not necessary, an ongoing process of reflection and assessment is vital to maintaining life-giving, sustainable programs, and ensuring a program’s vision and goals are being met. [Appendix F](#) outlines a pathway or trajectory of change for both the people and programs itself. It may be useful for assessing different elements of an established program and prioritizing what to address with a program.



- The first chart outlines personal traits (inner and outer) that signal that transformation is happening. It aims to capture the important marks of an individual moving from chaos to flourishing or moving from experiences that reinforce poverty to relieve it.
- The second chart contrasts elements in typical programs that have settled into unhelpful, status quo rhythms with how those same elements could be refashioned as transformative for both the program and the people who engage with it.

Part E: Supplying the Table – Practicalities & Procedures

PERMITS AND FOOD SAFETY



It is necessary to ensure food is stored, prepared and served safely to prevent food-borne illnesses – all the more so when the food will be eaten by people with compromised immune systems. Regulations about food safety vary from place to place, and your food program likely falls under the jurisdiction of more than one set of legal rules. You will need to:

- Obtain copies of all food regulations that relate to the program you are running
- Obtain any operating permits required (or ensure the kitchen you use has them)
- Have written food handling and sanitation procedures
- Ensure that at least one staff or core volunteer for each shift is trained in all required procedures



In British Columbia, [local Health Authorities](#) administer the [Food Premises Regulation](#) under the [Public Health Act](#). They licence, inspect, and respond to complaints regarding food facilities under their jurisdiction. The Food Premises Regulation does not apply to “premises in which food is prepared or served by voluntary caterers for functions or gatherings limited to members of their own

organization and invited guests” (Section 1.2.c). So the Act does not affect, for instance, congregational lunches after Sunday services or seniors’ dinners where parishioners might bring their friends. Community food programs do require an operating permit because they qualify as “food service establishments” where “food is processed, served or dispensed to the public.” You will need the permit even if you are dispensing the food offsite, such as in a park or from a van traveling from place to place (but not if you are only giving out commercially pre-packaged food or whole fresh fruits and vegetables).

Contact your local Health Authority to get the permit, which should be displayed in a conspicuous location. Your municipality may have additional requirements, especially with regard to their zoning bylaws. Read more about Vancouver operational requirements in their 2017 guide, “Putting Your Kitchen to Work.”²¹

Foodsafe Training

The Food Premises Regulation sets out mandatory training in Section 2.10:

2.10 (1) Every operator of a food service establishment must hold a certificate, issued by a health official, for the successful completion of the food handler training program known as FOODSAFE or its equivalent.

2.10 (2) Every operator of a food service establishment must ensure that, while the operator is absent from the food service establishment, at least one employee present in the establishment holds the certificate referred to in subsection (1).

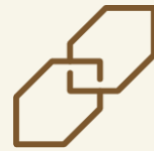
This means that the person generally responsible for your food program must be certified in FOODSAFE, and so must any staff or volunteer who takes on that responsibility when your coordinator is absent. We recommend as a best practice that several staff and core volunteers be certified (Level 1).

²¹ <https://vancouver.ca/files/cov/putting-your-kitchen-to-work.pdf>

Foodsafe Level 1 typically costs \$80-100, but you may be able to find it offered free to charities or at a discount when given in-house to your group. Level 1 can be completed in a single 8-hour session. FOODSAFE certification is a marketable skill and a worthy addition to a resumé. Note that certification only lasts five years.

Find more information at [Food Safe](#). The training can be taken in:

- Face-to-face classes
- An online course through [Open School BC](#)
- By correspondence (Level 1 only) through [Go2HR](#)



Written Policies and Procedures, Handbook

Established programs should have written **Policies and Procedures** that can be referenced by volunteers as needed, which covers:

- Conflict resolution
- How to safely diffuse a situation that is leading toward violence or disruption
- Boundaries generally
- Sexual harassment
- Solicitation, giving out money
- Spending time with guests outside of the program time; giving out personal information

Contact us for a policy and procedure manual that can be adapted to individual programs



Extra Precautions to Consider During an Outbreak

Safe food handling practices will include cleaning and sanitation (daily and deep cleaning routines). Clarify what is the responsibility of program volunteers versus

the host building maintenance team. In the event of an outbreak, steps should be taken to be extra vigilant, including:

- Have someone at the entrance to welcome and ask people (guests and volunteers) about symptoms (i.e. fever, cough, etc.)
- If individuals are sick or nervous, offer food to-go
- If individuals join the community, remind everyone to thoroughly wash hands, and/or have hand sanitizer available, before and throughout handling food
- Station volunteers to dispense consumable items (i.e. hot and cold beverages, bread, condiments, etc.)
- Regularly sanitize high-touch surfaces (doorknobs, railings, sinks, elevator buttons, tables) – ensure sanitizer is safe for food contact surfaces
- Continue to follow Universal Precautions

FASHIONING A WELCOMING SPACE

How we consume our food nourishes us as much as **what** we eat. Be deliberate about the dining spaces, especially for larger community meals.

- Avoid line-ups as much as possible
- Prevent crowding (too little space puts people on edge)
- Entrances and exits (exterior grounds) are important psychologically
 - Ensure the space is well-lit and has clear signs for people coming for the first time
 - Guests often appreciate when the menu is posted outside (including alternates for special diets and vegetarian options if available)
- Services Style
 - Family-style serving (at tables)

- Restaurant-style table services
- If there is a buffet or food line, have volunteers available to help those with mobility challenges
- No one should feel rushed to finish eating
- One way to allow choice/autonomy is to set up hot/cold beverages and appetizers (i.e. bread and butter) so guests can help themselves
- Decor like tablecloths, flowers and other seasonal features add to the welcoming space
- Volunteers whose key responsibility is to create a welcoming culture by acting as greeters or Maître D's, striking up conversations, initiating games, etc.
- Noise - Limit background noise as able. Music can create a good tone, but can also be overstimulating - ensure good speakers and appropriate volume if there is music.

FOOD SERVICE BASICS

Shared kitchens should have a written Food Safe Plan that can be referenced by volunteers as needed, which covers:

- Food handling and record keeping (i.e. temperature logs for cooked food and coolers)
- Pest control
- Cleaning and hygiene

Contact us for a sample food safe plan, which can be adapted to your operation.

Food donated must be good quality and come from safe, known sources.

A staff or lead volunteer should be trained in 1st Aid. Have an updated 1st Aid kit available.



- Major burns require medical attention
- For a minor burn (skin is unbroken and burn is less than 3" in diameter), run the affected area under cold water for several minutes (seconds to burn, minutes to cool), soothe the area with a burn cream, and monitor for blistering or signs of infection



A list of set up and clean up tasks will help volunteers know what to do (see sample in [Appendix A](#)).

Other Training Resources

BC Centre for Disease Control

- [Providing Nutritious and Safe Food: Guidelines for Food Distribution Organizations with Grocery or Meal Programs](#)



Healthlink BC

- Also has information in Chinese, Farsi, French, Korean, Punjabi, Spanish and Vietnamese
- In BC, dial 8-1-1 to speak to someone who can answer related questions

Canadian Food Inspection Agency

MATERIALS, EQUIPMENT, SUPPLIES

Basic Equipment for a Shared Cooking Setting

Preparing	Cooking/Baking	Serving
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Can opener• Colander, strainer• Cutting boards, grater• Ladle, whisk• Measuring cups (liquid & dry)• Measuring spoons• Mixing bowls• Paring & chopping knives• Potato masher• Rolling pin• Spatula, mixing spoons• Vegetable peeler	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cookie sheets• Baking/roasting pans• Frying pans• Meat thermometer• Oven mitts• Stock pot• Timer• Cooling racks• Casserole dishes or hotel pans	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cups, mugs• Cutlery• Napkins• Plates, bowls• Serving spoons• Tea/coffee carafe• Cream/sugar holders• Water/juice pitcher• Salt/pepper shaker• Hot pads• Serving bowls, platters
Cleaning	Other	Storage/Leftovers
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Bleach, sanitizer• Broom & dust bin• Dish detergent• Dishwasher or tubs for washing dishes• Floor mop & bucket• Hand soap• Pot scrubber• Tea towels, dishcloths	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Hand blender (wand)• Electric frying pan or portable electric burner• Aprons• Recycling & compost bins• First aid kit• Garbage bags• Non-latex gloves• Hair nets or hats	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Bins for staples• Containers to take food home• Plastic wrap, aluminum foil• Marker & tape for labelling

- Paper towels

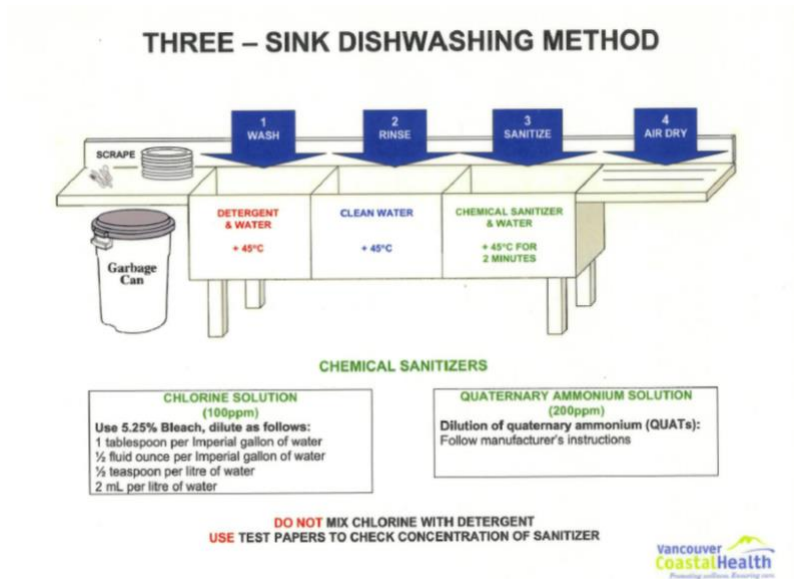
Basic Staples for a Community Meal

Grains	Spice Rack*	Oils & Condiments
Flour	Basil	Mayonnaise
Oatmeal	Chili Powder	Mustard
Pasta	Cinnamon	Peanut Butter
Rice	Cumin	Sugar, Honey
Other grains	Garlic	Vegetable oil
	Ginger	Vinegar
	Oregano	
	Pepper	
	Salt	
Proteins	Vegetables & Fruit	Beverages
Canned or dried beans	Canned fruit & vegetables (when fresh produce not available)	Fair Trade, Organic Coffee
Nuts (peanuts, walnuts, almonds)	Canned tomatoes	Fair Trade Tea (black, green, non-caffeine)
Canned animal protein (tuna, salmon, chicken, ham)	Dried fruit (raisins, prunes, apricots)	
Peanut Butter		

**Common spices will vary with different cultures and cuisines*

DISHWASHING

If a dish-machine is unavailable, three sinks (or tubs), dish soap, chlorine bleach, and a drying rack are needed to hand wash and sanitize dishes and small equipment.



FOOD PROCUREMENT

For purchased items, large stores or food distribution companies (i.e. Gordon Food Services or Sysco Canada) may deliver for a charge or require a minimum order (around \$500). Buying items in bulk can save money, but will require adequate storage.

Grocery stores, bakeries, and other food supplies may be willing to donate or offer goods at reduced prices.



- ~52% of the food served at charitable meals is donated, which tends to be lower poor-quality, and less appropriate for meeting health needs²²
- See [Appendix C](#) - Sample donor letter



If using donated food, do not accept donations that are mouldy, tampered with, past the expiry date, or badly dented. See the [Guidelines for Food Distribution Organizations](#) (Section 5).

A par list of items used regularly posted in the food preparation or storage will help volunteers track when items are running low, so they can be replaced as needed. See [Appendix A](#) (Par List).



FOOD STORAGE

Ensure that adequate, secure storage will be available for dry goods, refrigerated items, and frozen foods. Implement a system for labelling foods in storage, and ensuring food is used before its expiry dates. Follow a First In, First Out practice of using older items before newer ones. Keep daily temperature logs of refrigerators and freezers, noting corrective actions taken when temperatures were out of safe ranges.

Budgeting

- A well-balanced meal will likely cost \$3.50-\$5.00 per plate at market rates (minus what is donated).
- Plan for ~\$500 of start-up costs (staples, storage bins).
- Include food wrap, containers for leftovers, cleaning supplies and labels (or masking tape and markers).

²² Bocskei, E. (2010). Charitable Food Programs in Victoria, BC. *Canadian Journal of Dietetic Practice and Research*, 71(1), 46-48.

Part F: Filling the Table – Planning Your Meals

BASIC CONSIDERATIONS



When we share food with vulnerable individuals, we must be especially conscientious of food safety, nutrient density, and how our hospitality is experienced by our guests.

This guide endorses the [2018 VCH Food Standards](#), which identifies three guiding principles (plus ideas for implementation):



- **Inclusion** – welcoming food environments for people of all cultures and backgrounds
- **Access** – meal availability with choice and variety in safe settings
- **Quality** – fresh, whole foods

MENU PLANNING AND PREPARATION

Vulnerable individuals who visit a meal program may not have had another balanced meal that day. A meal can be planned that strives to supply most of an adults' daily requirements, particularly for protein and micronutrients. This can be done through nutrient-dense foods and micronutrient-rich vegetables and fruits,

not necessarily adding excessive calories. The following meal planning guide indicates food needed to meet an adult's nutrient requirements.²³

²³ Tse C, Tarasuk V., (2008). Nutritional assessment of charitable meal programs serving homeless people in Toronto. *Public Health Nutrition*, 11(12), 1296-305.

Food Categories	Examples & Serving Size	Servings
Grains	Bread (1 slice) Pasta, rice, noodles (1/2 cup) Cereals (1/2 cup) Bagel, pita, bun (1/2 of one)	2
Meats & Alternates	Beef, poultry, pork, fish (100 g) Beans, lentils, chickpeas (1 cup)	2
Vitamin A-rich Vegetables	Carrots, Peas, Squash (1/2 cup)	1
Vitamin B-rich (folate) Vegetables/Fruit	Beans, lentils, chickpeas, dark greens, such as broccoli, spinach, romaine lettuce (1/2 cup)	1
Vitamin C-rich Vegetables/Fruit	Oranges, other citrus (fruit and juice), bell peppers, broccoli	2
Other Vegetables/Fruit	Tomatoes, potatoes, cauliflower, corn, melons, apples, bananas (1/2 cup)	2
Milk Products	Fluid Milk (1 cup) Milk Powder (1/2 cup) Cheese (50 grams) or Yogurt (3/4 cup)	2

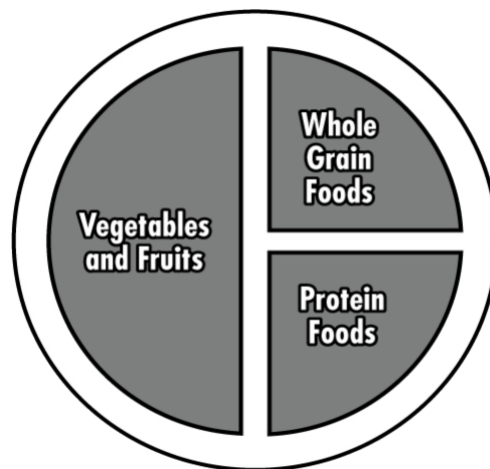
Serving Sizes

Protein	4-6 oz (2-3 oz if served in a sandwich, or part of a casserole, or other mixed dish)
Starch	4-8 oz (rice, noodles, potatoes, etc., or 2 slices of bread for a sandwich)

Vegetables 4-6 oz if cooked, 8 oz (1 cup) of a leafy salad

Plate Reference

A simpler way of ensuring the nutrition quality of food is to use the plate as a reference. Aim for $\frac{1}{2}$ of each plate vegetables and fruits, $\frac{1}{4}$ of each plate whole grain foods, and $\frac{1}{4}$ protein foods (including plant-based proteins often).



Cultural Considerations, Allergens, Preferences

- Clearly indicate food that contains potential allergens or foods individuals are likely to avoid for religious reasons, especially peanuts, dairy, shellfish, or pork
- Offer high quality protein options for individuals who do not eat meat or other foods from animal sources
- Aim to have food reflect cultural diversity, holiday traditions, and other community celebrations (i.e. Chinese New Year, Diwali, Ramadan, etc.)

- Many guests will appreciate knowing what is to be served at a community meal, and any alternative options that may be available. As possible, post this near the entrance to where the meal will be served.

Scaling Recipes

- Scaling and measuring food weights (pounds, ounces, grams) is more accurate than using volume (cups, teaspoons, millilitres), although most food preparation, especially household cooking, is done by volume
- To adjust recipe yields:
 - Check that the recipe portion size is what you will be serving
 - Divide the desired yield by the known yield to get a conversion factor
 - Multiply each ingredient in the recipe by that conversion factor
 - Salt, pepper, and spices will need to be adjusted for taste
 - If more than tripling the recipe, reduce salt (and high sodium ingredients like soy sauce) by 1/2, reduce spices about 1/3
- If cooking for a large group:
 - Make several smaller batches, especially when baking
 - It will take significantly longer to prepare, mix, bake, boil, etc. a large amount of food
 - Oven temperatures do not need to be adjusted
- Keep notes of what worked well and steps followed to ensure quality food production
- Check utensils or measure one portion before serving



- Portions that are too large will not yield intended amounts
- See [Appendix B](#) - Food Amounts for 50 People

FOOD WASTE

A sustainable food system fosters minimal food waste, which in turn reduces all the refuse generated by growing, processing, packaging, transporting, and serving food. Unconsumed food depletes natural resources and increases harmful substances in the environment, particularly single-use plastics and methane gas. Discarded or spoiled food also leads to loss of vital nutrients, and the potential for the mental health and social benefits of shared food.

Food preparation, especially when using donated food, can create a significant volume of compostable and recyclable materials, and some garbage. Plan enough time and resources to sort and deal with compost, recyclable materials and garbage appropriately and ecologically.

Costs related to dealing with waste could include:

- Appropriate bins for garbage, recycling and compost (one-time expense and occasional replacement)
- Bags for lining bins (may need to be biodegradable for organic waste)
- Contractor fees for carrying away waste (may increase with expanded programs or special events)
- Dealing with pests and rodents if not adequately maintained, both inside and outside facility
- Higher food costs to compensate for lost food

Part G: Putting Food on the Table – Sample Menus



Some recipes and menu ideas are provided here for healthy community meals. If planning a community kitchen or cooking with a group, add soup or extra salads to get team members involved with chopping and preparing a dish.

KEY TIPS

- Larger quantity recipes take significantly longer to prepare and cook
- Taste everything before serving: use a clean spoon, then wash before reuse
- Watch that the menu plan is feasible in the prep space (i.e. not all items need to be baked in the oven, or cooked on the stove top)
- Limit multiple items with the same base ingredient (especially dairy or wheat)
- Sweet dessert can round out a meal, and is appreciated by many, but if serving, have options for individuals with diabetes or similar health conditions
- Overeating can be as harmful as under-eating. Challenge assumptions that guests should leave the meal “stuffed” as they do not know when they will eat next.

- Fairness is important, but appetites vary between individuals, so plan for smaller portions (to not overwhelm guests with lesser appetite) and larger portions for those who may be very hungry
- Set a time (i.e. ~30 minutes before the end of the meal) to offer 2nd portions (let guests know as early as possible if there will likely be more food)

MENUS FOR COMMUNITY MEALS

Following are a set of menus for a 20 person and 50 person community meal. Each recipe allows for some customization based on your context.

Taco Soup with Toppings (for 20)

Taco Soup

- 2 onions, chopped
- 2 lb chicken, cubed (or ground beef)
- 6 cups canned tomatoes
- 4 cups cooked black beans, drained (canned or other kinds of beans ok)
- 10 cups soup veg (fresh or frozen), such as corn, zucchini, carrots, celery, etc.
- 2 tbsp each chilli powder, cumin & oregano
- Salt & pepper to taste
- In a large pot, sauté onion in a small amount of oil, until translucent.
- Remove from pan cook chicken.
- Add onions, tomatoes, beans, vegetables and seasoning. Mix well and let simmer until vegetables are soft. Add water if necessary to thin soup to the desired consistency.
- Serve in soup bowls with toppings on the side.

Lime Infused Sour Cream

- 4 cups sour cream
- 2 limes, juice & zest
- 1 bunch green onions, chopped
- Pinch of salt
- Mix sour cream, lime zest, juice and green onions together until well combined.
- Season to taste with salt.

Soup Toppings (as available)

- 1 bunch cilantro, chopped
- 2 large bags tortilla chips (or 1 dozen tortillas)
- 3 bell peppers, diced
- Put toppings in individual bowls.
- To make baked tortilla chips, preheat oven to 350°F. Cut the tortillas into wedges or strips. Spread tortilla out on a baking sheet in a single layer. Sprinkle with salt. Bake for ~ 6 minutes, then use tongs to turn the wedges over. Bake for another 6-9 minutes, until they are just beginning to colour. Remove from the oven and let cool.

Rice Noodle Salad with Peanut Sauce (for 20)

Rice Noodle Salad

- 30 ounces rice noodles
- ~20 cups fresh veggies: carrots, spinach, bell pepper, cabbage, etc.
- Fresh herbs as available: green onions, cilantro, mint
- 1.5 kg cooked chicken (or other protein)
- 2-3 cups black beans (or other legumes)
- Cook rice noodles according to package instructions. Rinse, drain and set aside to cool.
- Chop veggies and herbs.
- Combine with noodles, protein and peanut sauce (or other dressing).

Peanut Sauce

- 2 cups peanut butter (or other nut butter)
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup tamari or soya sauce
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup honey (or other sweetener)
- 1 tbsp chili sauce (or $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp red pepper flakes)
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup lime (or lemon) juice
- ~1 cup Water (to thin)
- Whisk all ingredients until smooth, heating gently in a pan.
- Add water a little at a time until a thick but pourable sauce is achieved.
- Taste and adjust seasonings as needed
- For variation, add fresh grated ginger, add fish sauce, &/or replace water with coconut milk
- Store leftovers covered in the refrigerator for up to 1 week.

Shakshuka, Cornbread & Salad (for 20)

Shakshuka is a North African entree of eggs poached in a sauce of tomatoes, peppers, and onions, or can incorporate seasonal vegetables on hand.

Shakshuka

- 2-3 onions, diced
- 3 bell peppers, diced
- 8 garlic cloves, minced
- 1 tbsp cumin
- ½ tsp hot pepper sauce
- 100 oz canned crushed tomatoes
- 2 tsp salt
- 1 tsp black pepper
- 40 eggs
- Sauté onion in oil until softened. Add bell pepper and garlic. Cook ~5 minutes until tender-crisp, stirring occasionally. Could add other vegetables.
- Stir in cumin, hot pepper sauce, salt and pepper.
- Add tomatoes, Heat to boiling; simmer 6 to 8 minutes until mixture has thickened and flavours are blended.
- Reduce heat. Make indentations in tomato sauce. Gently crack eggs into indentations. Cover and simmer until eggs are set. Cook eggs in several batches, depending on pan size.

Cornbread

- 1 cup butter
- ¾ cup sugar
- 4 eggs
- 2 cups buttermilk*
- 1 tsp baking soda
- 2 cups cornmeal
- 2 cups flour
- 1 tsp salt
- Preheat oven to 375 F. Grease two 8" square pans.
- Melt butter and stir in sugar. Add eggs and beat well.
- Combine buttermilk with baking soda and stir into mixture in pan. Stir in cornmeal, flour and salt until few lumps remain. Pour batter into prepared pan.
- Bake in preheated oven for 30 to 40 minutes, or until a toothpick inserted in the centre comes out clean.
- *Can sour milk with 2 tbsp vinegar or lemon juice, or use milk alternate (i.e. unsweetened soymilk).

Garden Salad

- Salad veg as available (2-3 heads leafy greens + 2 cups cucumber, tomato, etc).
- Cut vegetables to bite size pieces.
- Toss with dressing before serving.
- Salad Dressing ($\frac{1}{4}$ cup oil, $\frac{1}{4}$ cup vinegar, 1 tbsp sweetener, 1 tbsp mustard)

Sausages, Roasted Potatoes & Salad (for 50)

Sausages

- 50 sausages
- Roast per package directions, ensuring sausage gets to an internal temperature of 140°F (60°C)

Caramelized Onions

- 8 lb onions
- ½ cup oil
- 2 tbsp each salt, pepper & sugar
- Peel and slice onions.
- Heat oil until the fat begins to ripple, and then add onions. Add salt, pepper and sugar, stirring frequently, until onions are soft and caramelized.
- If onions stick to pan, add a small amount of water to deglaze, then let evaporate as onions cook.

Roasted Root Vegetables

- 25 lb root vegetables (potatoes, yams, beets, turnips, carrots, etc.)
- ~¼ cup oil
- Salt & pepper
- Wash vegetables. Cut out any bad spots.
- Toss with oil, salt and pepper. Spread single layer on a parchment-lined baking tray.
- Roast until tender (~30 - 45 minutes, depending on size of cut)

Green Salad

- 6 heads leafy greens
- 3 lb salad veggies
- Cut to bite-size pieces
- Toss gently together

Dressing

- 1 each cup oil & vinegar • Whisk until smooth
- 2 tbsp each mustard & honey (or other sweetener)

Roasted Vegetable Curry & Rice (for 50)

Chickpea & Roasted Vegetable Coconut Curry

- 12-15 lb seasonal vegetables (Cauliflower, Yams, Potatoes, Turnips, Onions, Squash, etc.)
- ½ cup vegetable oil
- 2.84 L canned chickpeas, drained
- 2.84 L canned coconut milk
- 2.84 L canned tomatoes
- 2 tbsp ginger, minced
- ½ cup curry paste, or 1/3 cup powder, or to taste
- Cilantro for garnish
- Cut vegetables to bite sized pieces. Toss with oil. Spread on baking pans. Roast at 400°F (350°F in convection oven) until nearly tender (~20min.). Turn several times during cooking.
- While vegetables are roasting, divide the chickpeas, coconut milk, tomatoes, ginger, and curry paste between 3 cooking pots. Heat gently.
- Add vegetables to curry sauce when roasted. Heat until mixture boils, then reduce heat and simmer until vegetables are tender. Stir frequently.
- Note: curry pastes vary in strength and spiciness. Taste and season accordingly.
- Chop and sprinkle over dish

Rice

- 10 cup dry rice
- 20 cups water
- Cook per package directions.
- Note: different types of rice require different amounts of liquid.

Veg & Lentil Plate + Pumpkin Seed Sauce (for 50)

Rice, Lentil & Veg Plate

- 12 cups brown rice
- 6 cups green lentils
- Salt to taste
- 15 lb broccoli
- 15 lb sweet potato
- 6 lb shredded red cabbage
- ¾ cup lemon juice
- 1/3 cup olive oil
- Boil lentils and rice together until tender, adding water per package directions (cook in 2-3 batches if cooking in pot on stovetop)
- Steam broccoli.
- Cube and roast sweet potatoes (tossed in oil).
- Shred cabbage. Drizzle with lemon juice and olive oil.
- To assemble the bowl or plate, spoon in the cooked rice and lentils. Top with the veggies and pour sauce over.

Garlic, Ginger, Pumpkin Seed Sauce

- 4 cups pumpkin seed butter (may be part tahini or other seed butter)
- 8 cloves garlic
- Knob of fresh ginger, grated
- ½ cup each honey, olive oil, cider vinegar & lemon juice
- ~4 cups water
- Salt & pepper to taste
- Pinch of cayenne pepper
- Blend all ingredients, adding water as needed. Season to taste.
- This should make about 10 cups of sauce; serve ~3 tbsp (50 ml) per plate
- Store in an airtight glass container in the refrigerator for up to five days.

Appendixes

APPENDIX A: SET-UP + CLEAN-UP FOR A COMMUNITY MEAL

To be done before guests
arrive:

Before everyone leaves:

-
- Assign volunteer roles
 - Hot Drink Table
 - Mugs, milk, sugar, napkins
 - Tea, coffee, water
 - Sweep floor (as needed)
 - Tables (tablecloths) & chairs
 - Cups, water jugs
 - Bread: baskets, cutting board, knives, butter (or peanut butter)
 - Salt, pepper
 - Sign Up Outside (Open Now, Today's Menu...)
 - Host chair, table, donation box
 - Cutlery & napkins
 - Dirty Dishes Cart (include bin with water for cutlery)
 - Cleaning buckets, cloth
 - Compost, recycling & garbage bins
 - Food serving station - serving utensils, plates, bowls, hot pads, warming trays...

- Dining Hall
 - Tables & chairs wiped, put away
 - Hall tidied & swept
 - Garbage, recycling, compost taken out, bins ready for next event
 - Donation bin to coordinator
 - Kitchen
 - Food put away
 - Kitchen & Freezer organized
 - Oven & fan off
 - Coffee urns cleaned
 - Par stock assessed for next meal
 - Other
 - Garbage, recycling & compost out
 - Carts wiped clean
 - Signs put away
 - Laundry started
-

Par List of Supplies

- Tea (black, green, herbal)
- Coffee (regular, decaf)
- Milk, sugar (for hot beverages)
- Bread, butter (for tables)
- Salt, pepper
- Vegetable oil
- For salad dressing: vinegar, oil, mustard, sweetener
- Parchment paper
- Napkins
- Name tags
- Zip-lock's/take-out containers (for left-overs)
- Tape, marker for labelling

APPENDIX B: FOOD AMOUNTS FOR 50 PEOPLE

Note: These are approximate amounts, and may vary with specific foods:

Item	Serving Size	Amount for 50
Beverages	180 ml (6 oz)	2 ½ gallons
Coffee	180 ml (6 oz)	1 – 1 ½ pounds (5-6 cups)
Bread	1 slice	4 loaves
Hot Cereal	2/3 cup	2 lb dry cereal (11 cups), 2 gallons cooked
Rice	½ cup	3-4 lb dry rice (8-10 cups), 6-8 qt cooked
Cake or Muffin Mixes	1 each	5 lb (20 cups)

Canned Vegetables	Fruit or	½ cup	2 – 2 ½ x 2.84 litre cans
Fresh Fruit or Vegetables		½ cup, cut-up	~15 pounds
Fish		3 oz	14-16 lb (1 lb raw = 0.7 lb cooked)
Meat (boneless)		3 oz	15-18 lb (1 lb raw = 0.6 lb cooked)
Meat with bones		6 oz	19-20 lb (1 lb raw = 0.5 lb cooked)
Condiments		½ - 1 tbsp	1 quart
Sauces, Gravies		3-4 tbsp	3-4 quart
Soup		1 cup (8 oz)	3 ¼ gallon
Salad Greens		2 ½ oz	9 lb (8-10 heads)
Mashed Potatoes		4 oz (½ cup)	15-18 lb
Frozen Vegetables		3 oz	10 lb
Pasta		4 oz	4 ½ - 5 lb dry (18-20 cups), 12 lb cooked

APPENDIX C: SAMPLE DONOR LETTER

(Date)

Hello,

(Start with a description of the meal and hosts). A group of local churches and community organizations run a weekly community meal, called _____.

(Describe, briefly, the need). The neighbourhood is home to a surprising number of unsheltered and other highly vulnerable people - pensioners, widows, people with disabilities, and people struggling with various mental health issues. Regular access to a nutritionally appropriate meal made with quality ingredients is essential for general health as well as other life outcomes. Community meals can also be amazing environments for creating a sense of belonging for socially isolated neighbours. Loneliness afflicts many Vancouverites, and studies show it hits young adults and low-income individuals the hardest.

(Be as specific as you can about what you are looking for).

Would you support the (program) by donating food, money or other items?

Volunteers could pick up perishable items (when?). We are looking specifically for:

- Bread, or other baked goods
- Seasonal fruit and vegetables (especially salad ingredients)
- Coffee and tea
- Talents and interests: music, haircuts, tax prep, discussion, advocacy, etc.
- Socks and basic hygiene items

A donation of \$350 will cover all food costs for one week. Financial donations should be made out to _____. Tax receipts will be available for donations over \$20.

For more information, please contact _____. Thank-you for helping us care for our neighbourhood!

Sincerely,

(Your Name)

APPENDIX D: FOOD PHILOSOPHY (CHRIST CHURCH CATHEDRAL, VANCOUVER BC)

Dignity for All

How we share food matters. Even more important are the reasons why we share food. Why do we share food at all, and why do we share food in the way we do. In the process of transforming a faith-based community meal, it is one thing to change what we do and how we do it. It is another to know why the approach had to change.

At Christ Church Cathedral in Vancouver, British Columbia, their food philosophy, the foundation for their community food programs, is rooted in two main themes: dignity and social inclusion. For years, members of the Cathedral community had been working hard at extending dignity to those who society (including the church) had been pushed to the margins. Even so, there was work to be done in the Cathedral's approach to addressing economic injustice and sharing food. Over time, the Cathedral was confronted with the question of why a church that claimed to be a leader in barrier-breaking social inclusion would operate its food programs from a position of arm's-length charity.

In response, the leaders of the food ministry came to the simple conclusion that they could no longer operate from a charitable position. Rather, they knew that they needed to bring the Cathedral's approach to food in line with its vision and values. The way food is shared, and the reasons why it is shared in such a way ought to be rooted in the same theology and practice that prompted the Cathedral to develop its embrace of other communities society had pushed to the margins.

This is the context out of which the Cathedral developed its food philosophy. Drawing on a number of other communities for inspiration, the ministry's leadership devised the statement below. Its overarching vision and individual tenets continue to shape the ways in which the community shares food, explores partnerships, and reflects on a variety of issues related to food and community whether at the Maundy Café (the weekday community food programs), a committee meeting, or a community celebration. We refer to it at every meeting as a way of reminding ourselves of why we do what we do.

All are welcome to use this Food Philosophy to start the conversation in their own communities as a way of developing their own. You may wish to borrow some aspects of this for your own context, while others will make less sense. There will also be particular aspects not included here that make sense for your community meal. If you use aspects of this food philosophy in developing your own, please let the folks at the Cathedral know by emailing andrew@thecathedral.ca

Cathedral Food Philosophy

Christ Church Cathedral uses food to nourish its communities in ways that cultivate connection, holistic health, and community resiliency by honouring the agency, creativity, dignity, intellect, and worth of all who come to the table.

- Food is at the core of who we are and what we do. Our philosophy of food is rooted in the biblical traditions of Sabbath, shalom, and eucharist, and expressed in the Five Marks of Mission of the Anglican Communion²⁴.
- Food provides far more than nutrition. It is a vehicle for connection, and an engine for social inclusion, and has the opportunity to address deeper needs such as meaning, beauty, and hope.
- Growing and sharing food cultivates essential attitudes of abundance and hospitality, of mutuality and resilience, of thankfulness and celebration. Food roots us in the land and in community. Food connects us across generations, cultures, and socio-economic divides.
- All members of our community have a right to food based on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which states: “food security exists when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe, nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life.”

²⁴ The Five Marks of Mission of the Anglican Communion are: *To proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom / To teach, baptize and nurture new believers / To respond to human need by loving service / To transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind and pursue peace and reconciliation / To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation, and sustain and renew the life of the earth.*

We will live into this philosophy by:

- Sharing nutritious food in ways that foster community and contribute to a sustainable local food system
- Building on the strengths of all participants, including staff, volunteers, and guests
- Seeking ways to share food and to serve one another across the lines that would otherwise divide us
- Championing and working towards increased access to food for those who are nutritionally vulnerable
- Sharing fresh, healthy, and locally-sourced food whenever possible
- Sharing food that is nutrient-dense, low in refined sugar and sodium, and not overly processed.
- Providing opportunities for increased food literacy, connection, and community resiliency
- Sharing foods that reflect the diversity of our community, city, country and world.
- Becoming aware of the impact that our food choices have on the environment.
- Committing to the reduction of the Cathedral's ecological footprint by composting, and minimizing packaging
- Collaborating with other organizations in ways that reduce unneeded duplication and that maximize efficiencies of time and resources for those who provide food, and those who eat it
- Participating in community-based and faith-based networks and organizations focused on local food policy and food security networks

As we work towards:

- Person-centred programs that empower all participants by giving them choice and voice, and by focusing on their strengths
- Community development initiatives to build participation, knowledge, skills, jobs, and mutually transforming friendships
- Eradication of hunger through fair access to affordable food that is safe, nutritious, and culturally appropriate
- Just wages and conditions for all farmers and workers
- The development of urban farms and healthy food cooperatives
- Improved biodiversity and health of urban and rural lands

APPENDIX E: GLOSSARY

Asset Based Community Development	A process where connected individuals come together to take collective action on common problems using community resources, skills, and experience.
Community Resilience	The sustained ability of a social group to utilize available resources to respond to, withstand and recover from adverse situations.
Eucharist	Also known as the Lord's Supper, or Communion, this Christian ceremony commemorates Jesus sharing bread and wine are to remind us of His sacrifice of himself on the cross and his commission of the apostles.
Food Asset	A place where people can grow, prepare, buy, share, receive or learn about food.
Food Security	<p>"Food and nutrition security exists when all people at all times have physical, social and economic access to food, which is safe and consumed in sufficient quantity and quality to meet their dietary needs and food preferences, and is supported by an environment of adequate sanitation, health services and care, allowing for a healthy and active life" (FAO) (focus on population level access to food)</p> <p>"a condition in which all community residents obtain a safe, culturally acceptable, nutritionally adequate diet through a sustainable food system that maximizes community self-reliance and social justice." (from above)</p>
Hospitality	Generous reception and entertainment of guests, visitors, or strangers

Household Food Insecurity	Inadequate or insecure access to adequate food due to financial constraints. (focus on poverty, a socio-economic inequality, which increases the vulnerability of households and individuals to food insecurity.)
Social Inclusion	The act of making all people within a group or community feel valued and important, particularly important for individuals who are marginalized due to income, socio-economic status, culture, or health.
Sustainable Food System	The interconnected individuals, organizations and activities that deliver food and nutrition for all that is economically stable and equitable, has broad-based benefits for society, has a positive or neutral impact on the natural environment, for current and future generations. (FAO)
Trauma or Violence Informed Care	Practices that create safe physical, social and emotional environments for all program participants, staff and volunteers.
Universal Precautions	Practices that ensure care and provision of service (including food handling and cleaning) avoids contact with bodily fluids that are potentially contaminated with disease-causing pathogens (i.e. HIV). Practices include wearing gloves when appropriate and sanitizing after any bodily fluid spill.

APPENDIX F: ROADMAP TO PROGRAM TRANSFORMATION

Trajectory of Personal Transformation

Traits (inner and outer) that signal that transformation is happening; what is most important and measurable; emblematic of someone moving from chaos → flourishing; experiences that reinforce → relieve poverty.

	Passive Recipient (Guest)	Active Participant (Volunteer)	Proactive Leader (Staff)
Physical Frame	Enjoys a satisfying, nourishing meal	Enjoys a satisfying, nourishing meal	Enjoys a satisfying, nourishing meal
	Relaxes, feeling safe in a physical environment that honours personal space, does not overstimulate & is aesthetically pleasing	Sustains an appropriate physical environment	Builds a culture that prioritizes an appropriate physical environment, ensures resources to sustain it
	Seeks help to meet basic needs (health, clothing, shelter)	Knows how to help guests access resources on-site & off-site	Ensures resources & connections are in place to address basic needs, so higher needs can be prioritized
Emotional & Mental Frame	Emerging sense of agency & confidence as they begin: (1) to recognize what they have to contribute to the community, (2) to speak into decision processes & occasionally assist with tasks	Increasingly able to see the guests' assets & to build up their sense of agency & confidence	Consistently models Asset Based Community Development
	Low resilience (emotional outbursts, self-harming behaviours)	Gaining practical & soft skills for employment & leadership	Can navigate conflict (which is inevitable) in a way that catalyses inner healing and strengthens the group
		Moderate resilience, flexible attitude	
	With support, able to articulate own immediate & long-term	Able to recognize the immediate & long-term needs of others	Models appropriate self-care, boundaries, Displays humility, curiosity, creativity

	Passive Recipient (Guest)	Active Participant (Volunteer)	Proactive Leader (Staff)
	needs, & knows where/how to find help	Uses social capital to address own & other's needs	Organizes action for flourishing beyond this season & this community
	Beginning to understand trauma & takes steps towards addressing it	Able to provide trauma-informed care	Trauma Stewardship, responding to the cumulative toll on those exposed to the suffering or crisis of humans, living beings, or the planet
Social Frame	Self-oriented	Service oriented	Kinship oriented
	Open to friendly interaction	Pursues mutually transformative friendships with guests & volunteers	Ensures context where isolated individuals establish healthy relationships & build social capital
	Sees that this gathering is somewhere they could belong & take some ownership	Understands radical hospitality & begins to display it	Sets vision for & models radical (transformational) hospitality
Spiritual Frame	Focused on self and immediate needs	Routinely expresses gratitude & makes opportunities for others to do so	Ensures a culture of gratitude & celebration
	Begins to acknowledge that spirituality is integral to human flourishing & that personal transformation requires commitment to God or something larger than oneself	Understands <i>shalom</i> Engages in spiritual practices Respects & learns from the spiritual beliefs & practices of others	Connects all aspects of program to shalom & other sacred frameworks of the host organization Engages in spiritual disciplines
	Increasingly experiences the program as a supportive faith community	Helps make the program into a strong faith community	Ensures accessible pastoral care & a rhythm of communal spiritual disciplines

Trajectory of Program Transformation

While there is no single best practice for all supportive programs, this list aims to capture elements of typical programs that have settled into some unhelpful, status quo rhythms. These are then contrasted with how those elements could be transformative for both the program and the people who engage with it.

	Typical Status Quo	Transformative Program
Vision	No/little connection between organization or program vision and the program logistics	Has an articulated vision and food philosophy that guides decision making
Leadership	<p>Run by volunteers who have little authority to make decisions, or by someone who is part time, so can maintain status-quo, but has little time for evaluation or collaboration</p> <p>Guests & casual volunteers are rarely invited to speak into program decisions</p>	<p>Program Coordinator has authority & confidence to make changes, time allotted in job description to engage with larger systems</p> <p>All guests & volunteers are invited to take part in ongoing program transformation</p> <p>Formal structures/rhythms of feedback & evaluation, possibly with annual hiatus for planning and renewal</p>
Risk Management	<p>Primarily reactive to risks and issues</p> <p>Few/no written policies & procedures</p> <p>Frequently try to support people with needs beyond our capacity to help</p>	<p>Proactive systems, culture & preventive measures to minimize risk</p> <p>Written risk plan & food safety plan</p> <p>Non-violent crisis communication, management of hostile interactions</p>
Creation Care	<p>Reducing waste is not prioritized (composting & recycling)</p> <p>Many single-use disposable dishes, take-away containers, etc.</p> <p>Do not track amount of waste generated (nor cost of dealing with it)</p>	<p>Moving toward zero waste goals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Composting • Recycling • Addressing food waste • Few single-use items

	Typical Status Quo	Transformative Program
Physical Environment	<p>Often crowded, noisy, older furniture, inadequate lighting and sound barriers</p> <p>Overstimulating for someone with social anxiety, fetal alcohol, fatigue, concussion, autism spectrum</p>	<p>Need for beauty recognized: music, art, natural light, nature/plants, space, quietness, adequate (not harsh) lighting...</p>
Working Relationship:	<p>Church volunteers do majority of the work of setting up & serving the meals</p> <p>Guests primarily referred to as “they” or “them;” language used to describe “the others” may be sexist, racist, or other discriminatory terminology</p> <p>Few connections to other service providers</p>	<p>Guests work alongside church volunteers, gaining agency & social capital (may be messier, but it is worth it)</p> <p>Community included and referred to “we” or “us;” intentional about conveying an inclusive, curious and empathetic stance</p> <p>Integrated with network of service provision at the neighbourhood level & preferably also city level</p>
Food	<p>Often high carb, processed, not nutritionally dense, few options for individuals with medical nutrition needs</p> <p>Often donated, or sourced from multiple suppliers, taking up significant time</p> <p>Little consideration given to guests’ various cultures (ethnicity, religion, street culture...)</p> <p>Little consideration given to sustainable, ethical sourcing of food and supplies</p>	<p>Food procured with the larger food system in mind, considering the health of the land, animals & people who farmed & processed the food</p> <p>Written Food Philosophy, which dictates purchasing decisions</p> <p>Menu favours seasonal dishes & local producers</p> <p>Food meets cultural preferences (i.e. vegetarian option)</p> <p>Safe food handling practices in place & reinforced</p>
Administration	<p>Few stats tracked (# people, volunteer hours, value of donations, budget, etc.)</p>	<p>Track stats that capture trends, growth, gaps, etc., & thus help in planning programs, seeking funding, setting goals</p> <p>Budget & funding plan defined and reviewed annually (donor management, grant writing, fundraising events)</p>

Typical Status Quo

Transformative Program

Spirituality	Unrecognized as a basic need for program guests	Spirituality informs all aspects of the program
	May have mandatory religious activity	Prayer (if said) done respectfully; Bible study, etc. is offered but not required
	Not contextualized for marginalized, &/or traumatized people	Pastoral care & discipleship is integrated with broader church, overseen by a person competent in contextualized ministry among the marginalized

Trajectory of Increasing Responsibility and Privileges

Role	Casual Volunteer	Core Volunteer	Lead Volunteer	Manager
Character	Curious Courteous	Flexible Teachable-able to receive help, direction, feedback, team player	Show leadership Humble	Experienced
Faith	Respectful	Respect Host Org's Statement of Faith Small group prayer or conversation (at least 3 people)	Agree with Host Org's Statement of Faith Pray with guests (1 on 1)	Endorse, live & teach Host Org's Statement of Faith
Attendance	Come as able	Come regularly	Come regularly & communicate when not	Come unless scheduled time off
Areas of Building	Room where meal is served	Also kitchen, laundry, supply closet, maintenance...	Also offices	Everywhere

Role	Casual Volunteer	Core Volunteer	Lead Volunteer	Manager
Giving Items	None	Give hygiene supplies, clothes, leftover food...		Benevolent requests
Conflict	Step Back	Stay calm during conflict & address if minor	Manage hostile interactions, Incident reports	Address factors that caused conflict
Privileges		Some contact info or other volunteers Access training (i.e. Food Safe, Managing Hostile Interactions)	Contact info Keys for the shift	Keys Confidential info as relevant to conflict, special requests
Responsibilities	Simple tasks To not work alone Learn safe food handling practices	Complete volunteer orientation + orient others to simple tasks Try new tasks Support Food Safety, ensure cleaning done Create atmosphere of hospitality, welcome and trust (learn names) Creation care Crim check (then can be alone with guests)	Lead groups (i.e. Bible Study, cooking team, etc.) Orient others to the vision Help track stats, trends, needs, feedback	First Aid Address issues Make final decisions (be just and fair) Ensure supplies in place Ensure good boundaries Plan and host training

APPENDIX G: MORE RESOURCES

Christian Perspectives on Food

Creature Kind: Engaging Churches in New Ways of Thinking about Animals and Christian Faith ([Free Small Group Online Course](#))

Food Forethought: A 4-part video series explores the relation of food to Christian faith (Regent College Marketplace Institute, 2013)

Food Sovereignty for All: Overhauling the Food System with Faith-Based Initiatives

Francis Farrar Capon, *The Supper of the Lamb: A Culinary Reflection* (Modern Library, reprint 2002)

Jonathan K. Crane, *Eating ethically: Religion and Science for a Better Diet* (Columbia University Press, 2018)

Karen Giesbrecht, *Happy Colon, Happy Soul: an Exploration of How and Why we Share Food* (Wipf & Stock, 2019)

Kendall Vanderslice, *We Will Feast: Rethinking Dinner, Worship, and the Community of God* (Eerdmans, 2019)

Norman Wirzba, *Food & Faith: A Theology of Eating* (Cambridge University Press, 2011)

Rachel Stone. *Eat with Joy: Redeeming God's Gift of Food* (IVP Books, 2013)

Simply in Season: Leader's Study Guide for Small Groups & Sunday School Classes.

Tim Chester, *A Meal with Jesus: Discovering Grace, Community, and Mission around the Table* (Crossway, 2011). A study guide for small groups is available.

Wendell Berry, *Bringing It to the Table: On Farming and Food.* (Counterpoint, 2009)

Spiritual Formation

Bob Ekblad, *Reading the Bible with the Damned* (John Knox Press, 2005)

Craig Rennebohm, *Souls in the Hands of a Tender God* (Beacon Press, 2008)

Gerald West, *The Academy of the Poor* (Sheffield Academic Press, 1998)

Richard Wagamese, *Embers: One Ojibway's Meditations* (Douglas And McIntyre, 2013)

Shalom + Shared Well Being

Adam Gustine, *Becoming a Just Church: Cultivating Communities of God's Shalom* (IVP Books, 2019)

Curtice, Kaitlin, *Glory Happening: Finding the Divine in Everyday Places* (Brewster: Paraclete Press, 2017)

Perry Yoder, *Shalom: The Bible's Word for Salvation, Justice and Peace* (Wipf & Stock, 2017)

Randy S. Woodley, *Shalom and the Community of Creation: An Indigenous Vision* (Eerdmans, 2012)

Nutrition + Community Kitchens

BC Ministry of Health:

Children: [Eating Cheap & Easy](#)

Schools: [Guidelines for Food & Beverage Sales in BC Schools](#)

Seniors: [Healthy Eating for Seniors Handbook](#)

Community Kitchen Toolkit: A Guide for Community Organizations in NFDL & Labrador

First Nations Health Authority: [Planning for Food Security](#)

Janet Poppendieck, *Sweet Charity: Emergency Food and the End of Entitlement* (Penguin, 1998)

Sabbath as Restorative Practice

Abraham Joshua Heschel, *The Sabbath, Its Meaning for Modern Man* (Farrar, Straus and Young, 1951)

Ched Myers, *The Biblical Vision of Sabbath Economics* (Tell the Word, Church of the Saviour, 2012)

Marva J. Dawn, *Keeping the Sabbath Wholly: Ceasing, Resting, Embracing, Feasting* (Eerdmans, 1999)

Norman Wirzba, *Living the Sabbath: Discovering the Rhythms of Rest and Delight* (Brazos, 2006)

Walter Brueggemann, *Sabbath as Resistance* (John Knox Press, 2014)

Creation as a Practice

Dave Bookless, *Plantwise: Dare to Care for God's World* (IVP UK, 2008)

Laudato Si: On Care for our Common Home (US Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2015)

Leah Kostamo, *Planted: A Story of Creation, Community and Calling* (Wipf & Stock, 2014)

Loren Wilkinson, *Caring for Creation in Your Own Backyard* (Regent College Publishing, 2001)

Norman Wirzba & Fred Bahnson, *Making Peace with the Land: God's Call to Reconcile with Creation* (IVP Books, 2012)

Peter Harris, *Under the Bright Wing* (Regent College Publishing, 2000); *Kingfisher's Fire* (Monarch, 2008)

Randy S. Woodley, *Shalom and the Community of Creation: An Indigenous Vision* (Eerdmans, 2012).

Steven Bouma-Prediger, *For the Beauty of the Earth: A Christian Vision of Creation Care* (Baker Academic, 2010)

Hospitality

Christine Pohl, *Making Room: Recovering Hospitality as a Christian Tradition* (Eerdmans, 1999)

Henri Nouwen, *Reaching Out: The Three Movements of the Spiritual Life* (Image Books, 1975)

Tim Chester, *A Meal with Jesus: Discovering Grace, Community, and Mission around the Table* (Crossway, 2011)

Community Development

ABCD Canada

John McKnight and Cormac Russell, "*The Four Essential Elements of an Asset Based Community Development Process*" (DePaul University, 2018)

John McKnight and Peter Block, *The Abundant Community: Awakening the Power of Families and Neighbourhoods* (Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2012)

The Christian Community Development Association

Steve Corbett and Brian Finkert, *When Helping Hurts: How to Alleviate Poverty Without Hurting the Poor... and Yourself* (Moody Publishers, 2014)

Wayne Gordon and John Perkins. *Making Neighbourhoods Whole: A Handbook for Christian Community Development* (InterVarsity Press, 2013)

