



**5 Percent Shift
Food Ministries**

Case Example 1

Groups Sustain “Food Justice” Past Emergency Needs

Background

The concept of “food justice” -- making sure that healthy food is available to everyone, especially the poor -- is gaining currency these days.

Congregations, of course, have a long tradition of feeding the hungry by hosting food pantries and gathering donations for food banks.

But Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon (EMO) wanted to go beyond the “emergency food” model by introducing projects that have a more lasting effect. In 2006, the group created the Interfaith Food and Farms Partnership, which strives to increase access to fresh, local food for all, especially people with low incomes.

Since then, the food partnerships has encouraged congregations across the state to launch farm stands, cooking classes, food buying clubs and community gar-dens. “We’re trying to change that emergency food paradigm and create more food self-reliance and equitability of access,” says Jenny Holms of EMO.

Farm to Congregation

A key example is the food partnership’s “farm to congregation” project, which connects new or immigrant farmers with congregations, allowing parishioners to buy fresh produce with SNAP benefits (food stamps), WIC (Women, Infant and Children) vouchers, or senior coupons.

These farmer tables not only provide affordable fruits and vegetables to members of the congregation, but they also ensure struggling farmers a stable customer base. Currently, five congregations in the Portland area have farmer tables.

“For parishioners it’s one-stop shopping,” says Pastor Rick Skidmore, who says the produce, from Great River Farm, is exceptional and exceptionally well-priced. And convenient. “You get your veggies on the way out” after the Sunday service.

First Presbyterian Church

First Presbyterian Church (FPC), a larger congregation in downtown Portland, OR, hosts a weekly Farmer’s Table in conjunction with coffee hour, after services. The Farmer’s Table took place either in the large outdoor plaza, or inside depending on weather. The Farmers’ Table begins in June with a Hmong and Meskitian Turkish farming families selling vegetables and flowers. The congregation also implements a coupon project. \$18 worth of coupons were sold for \$20, with the \$2 profit from each book used to purchase coupon books for homeless guests at a drop-in center affiliated with the church. Coupons could be redeemed at the Farmers’ Table.

“Our connection to the earth and with the people who work so hard to produce our food are key connections with our faith,” said one FPC parishioner.

www.oregonlive.com/foodday/index.ssf/2012/11/groups_sustain_food_justice_pa.html

Before

Volunteers worked exclusively on food emergency pro-grams -- supplying meals to a homeless shelter and supporting the EMO refugee resettlement initiative.

5% Shift

FPC added a farm stand that helped refugees they were connected with earn income for their families while simultaneously providing their congregation, and shelter ministry participants, with fresh food options.

Impact

Economic empowerment and healthier lifestyles are cultivated, resulting in a more resilient community.

Questions for Reflection

How might you use your congregation’s purchasing power to empower local farmers?

How might you build help build a healthier, more resilient local food system?

Case Example 2

Feeding Dreams -- Church-Based Food Co-Op In Atlanta Feeds More Than Mouths

Background

Urban recipe is a food cooperative launched by Georgia Avenue Community Ministry in Atlanta, GA, in 1991. Since its mention in Robert Lupton's Toxic Charity, Urban Recipe has been gaining national recognition for its vision of food security for all people. Here is the story of Urban Recipe in the words of its founder, Chad Hale.

What Did You Do Before?

While serving as an American Baptist pastor, I felt led to move into areas where there was poverty. When I moved to the Grant Park neighborhood in 1979, it was still an area that outsiders feared, because of poverty and crime. Out of Georgia Ave. Church, our food cooperative grew.

What Pushed You Toward a Co-Op?

Some Methodist folks down in Tampa, FL., put out a little booklet called Out of the Pit, which I stumbled on through our local food bank around 1989. I just loved this model, because what we were doing at the time was more like a food pantry with vouchers from local grocery stores. But we could only help a minimal amount. And it just wasn't creating meaningful relationships. So when I learned of this model, I was intrigued! We were given a small grant (\$3,000) that allowed us to launch the cooperative after we consulted with potential members to see if they would even want to be involved in something like this. We ended up voting and launched our first food co-op for low-income families in 1991. We did that with 13 families. Not being able to develop something on a much larger scale helped me realize that I didn't really want to do some-thing "for" people -- I really wanted to do something "with" people.

What Are the Key Components?

The first goal is to create food security. Our sense is that if people have enough food, it frees them in many other areas. Another piece of this program is creating dignity by charging a "membership" fee and contributing energy to help one another. There is no sense of "I'm getting a handout here." It's more "I am making a contribution."

With food pantries, our members report that they often feel humiliated, have to wait in long lines, have no choice of food, and usually receive enough for only three days or less. However, when you create community, it makes a huge difference. When people are working together, there is a sense of ownership and dignity.

We max out our food co-ops at 50 families, and we provide a ton of food to that co-op every other week. On average, the store value of a box is over \$100. So this ends up being a minimum of \$2,500 worth of food for the year for each family.

Before

Church staff and volunteers organized a food pantry and provided food "to" clients.

5% Shift

Former "clients" became "members" after paying \$3. Members also are expected to contribute time to the effort, to vote on the operations of the Co-Op, and to participate in community-building activities.

Impact

Food insecurity is addressed in a way that encourages a sense of community and belonging, thereby increasing "image-baring" in Christ.

Questions for Reflection

How might you begin to move your ministry from a "client" structure to a "member" structure?

How might your food ministry address both food insecurity and dignity in Christ at the same time?

Case Example 3

Eat, Pray, Love: Top Notch Food For A Good Cause

Background

Over the last couple of years, the “pay it forward” dining concept has started to pop up in some markets. Unlike the Panera Bread or similar locations, ONE BISTRO is a non-profit Biznistry® (a business ministry) established for the betterment of Miamisburg, OH. At the core of ONE BISTRO is a place from which staff and volunteers strive to serve a healthy, affordable meal to its neighbors, both those that have the ability to pay as well as those that under normal circumstances would not be able to eat out at a local restaurant. ONE BISTRO serves the privileged and under-privileged alike with the same care and service.

What are the ONE BISTRO Values?

ONE BISTRO provides a place where neighbors eat and come together as one community, regardless of socio-economic background. People in need of a good, affordable meal, can have one. And people in need of friendship and hope can find that at ONE BISTRO as well. All of this happens within a nice, restaurant-style environment. Every menu declares the ONE BISTRO values.

- All neighbors are welcome to sit at our table.
- Good is in the hands that serve.
- Togetherness will satisfy your appetite.
- All may eat with love on the menu.
- Community is the chef’s special of the day.
- Top it off with a “to go” of happiness

How Does It Work?

Customers are given suggested prices for menu items, ranging from pumpkin waffles at Saturday brunch, to fresh grilled salmon at their Friday dinner. Those who can afford those prices pay and enjoy their meal. The “pay it forward” model encourages donation of time in service or a few extra bucks over the suggested price to help cover the cost of those who cannot afford their meals. Those who can not afford the suggested price are equally welcomed to enjoy ONE BISTRO’s delicious food and pay in service hours instead. About 80% of ONE BISTROs budgetary needs are met through guest donations and the remaining 20% is raised through fundraisers and grants. Run by three staff members, most of the people a guest interacts with are volunteers. Regular volunteers gain valuable experience in the food industry. Limited hours reduce overhead costs for a ministry that sees thousands of guests weekly.

What Are the Key Components?

As one guest recounts to the Dayton City Paper, “Everything about this dining experience made me feel warm and fuzzy inside. How often do you get to indulge yourself and help others at the same time?”

Before

Miamisburg, OH only had ministries by higher resourced church members serving the “needy.”

5% Shift

Now, privileged and under-privileged neighbors volunteer, eat, and fellowship around good food together, building community in the process.

Impact

Food insecurity is addressed. And space is provided where people of all backgrounds interact and experience the dignity and love in Christ.

Questions for Reflection

How might your church become an inviting space that brings together the privileged and “needy” together in into one community of neighbors?

How might your food ministry bring out the generosity of those with time or money to contribute?

Reflection

At Your Table:

Introductions and Personal Reflection (15 Min)

Start with a round of introductions where people respond to the following question:

- When you were growing up, where did you most feel a sense of community and belonging?
- If time allows, ask for reflections on common themes across people's individual experience of community and belonging.

Reflect on Your Food Ministry as a Community (30 Min)

Explore people's sense of community within the organization:

- As staff or volunteers, do we feel like members of a community together? Are we united as an "us" or divided into separate camps of "us" and "them" (whether by program, location, etc.)?
- Do we engage with ministry participants as members of the same community we are part of?
- Are participants part of the "us," or are participants a "them"?

Explore the value people place on community-building in the work:

- Do the examples of the difference made by building a sense of community in the three case studies in the report offer any parallels to our organization and programs?
- If we were to emphasize community building more, what benefits or impacts could we imagine being possible?

Begin to Explore Strategies for Community Building (30 Min)

Reflect on the three case studies to consider community building activities your organization could undertake:

- What "community building" activities do we currently have in our organization?
- Are they focused on staff, clients, board, volunteers, or some combination?
- What are the benefits or impacts of these efforts?
- If we were to do more community building, how might we restructure an existing program to achieve that goal?
- Note the groups ideas in the appropriate box on the Four Components of Community handout.
- Are there additional ideas or categories of community building that could be addressed?

Closing and Evaluation (15 Min)

What is one thing that you liked and one thing that you would change about the conversation.

Four Components Of Community

Assess Current Projects

Brainstorm Possible Shifts

Membership

Feelings of belonging and identification

Who participates in the program?

Do they see their participation positively to the program and to each other?

Build collective identity and connection between members. Listening first to discover strengths and build upon them

Influence

Individuals influence the community, and vice versa

How do participants have influence over the program and its outcomes?

Promote self-governance. Allow space for members to provide leadership in program planning -- operating your program WITH others.

Fulfillment

Physical and psychological needs are met

Does the program also pay attention to other human elements the physical and psychological?

Focus on the whole person. Recognizing the interconnected parts of members and their communities (intellectual, relational, emotional, financial, emotional, physical, and spiritual needs and gifts).

Connection

Connect positive affects of membership to the broader community

How are participants' successes celebrated?

How are participants asked to support others?

Cultivate the values of reciprocity and mutual support. Build diverse social networks to decrease isolation and increase diversity and inclusion.