



UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST ASSOCIATION
CONGREGATIONAL STUDY/ACTION ISSUE

ETHICAL EATING

FOOD AND ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

2008-2012



WORSHIP RESOURCE SUPPLEMENT

Updated April, 2010

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INTRODUCTION

When the 2008 UUA General Assembly selected “Ethical Eating: Food and Environmental Justice” as our Association’s Congregational Study/Action Issue (CSAI) for 2008-2012, they created a delicious opportunity for congregations throughout North America, in their ongoing free and responsible search for truth, and quest to respect the interdependent web of existence of which we are all a part.

By holding a worship service on one or more of the themes of Ethical Eating, you join with hundreds of other UU congregations participating in this CSAI. We hope that these worship services will inspire organized study and action in our congregations, and, in turn, that the study and action changes individual lives, local communities, our faith movement and this planet.

Your worship service will be part a CSAI process whose long range goals may be interpreted as threefold:

- On the individual level, the process will provide individual UUs a means to understand the global reach of their personal decisions, and a means to make easy, tasty, affordable, nutritious food choices that fit with their individual ethical and spiritual values and our common principles.
- On the congregational level, this CSAI provides faith communities direct means to engage some of the most challenging social issues of our time: hunger and malnutrition, free and fair trade, labor and exploitation, animal rights and human responsibilities, neocolonialism and globalization, environmental degradation and climate change.
- On the Associational level, the CSAI process provides Association leaders direction in their efforts to build a more just and equitable society.

In this guide, you will find hymns, chalice lightings, readings, and even “sermon starters” to make organizing a worship service on “Ethical Eating: Food and Environmental Justice” easy as pie—or if you prefer, a piece of cake.

We invite you to use any of the written materials included here as you like, with proper credit given where credit is due. We thank the many people who have shared their original materials for inclusion here. In this edition of this guide, we have included new resources and tips for constructing meaningful worship services on the theme of Ethical Eating.

For more information on the CSAI and detailed suggestions for your congregation’s involvement, see the *Resource Guide for CSAI “Ethical Eating: Food and Environmental Justice”* to which this resource guide serves as a supplement. The *Resource Guide* and more can be found at tinyurl.com/eth-eat or www.uua.org/socialjustice/issuesprocess/currentissues/ethicaleating/121903.shtml

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Worship Resources for Ethical Eating: Food and Environmental Justice results from the combined contributions of scores of lay and ordained Unitarian Universalists. The Ethical Eating Core Team’s heartfelt gratitude goes to all who submitted materials; we regret that not all submissions could be included. Special thanks to Core Team members the Rev. Lee Devoe and Vicki Talbert for their tireless content management work, Peggy Clarke and the Rev. Dr. Michael Tino who managed the April 2010 update and redesign, and to the entire Core Team who ultimately produced this resource.

Ethical Eating Core Team

(current and former members, with organizational affiliations noted)

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WORSHIP RESOURCES

Hymns and Music

Hymns numbered 1-415 are in *Singing The Living Tradition*; 1000-1074 are in *Singing The Journey*

Celebrating Earth and Harvest

- #21 For the Beauty of the Earth
- #53 I Walk the Unfrequented Road
- #68 Come, Ye Thankful People Come
- #69 Give Thanks
- #70 Heap High the Farmer's Wintry Hoard
- #71 In the Spring, with Plow and Harrow
- #73 Chant for the Seasons
- #163 For the Earth Forever Turning
- #175 We Celebrate the Web of Life
- #203 All Creatures of the Earth and Sky
- #349 We Gather Together
- #355 We Lift Our Hearts in Thanks



- #387 The Earth, Water, Fire, Air
- #1064 Blue Boat Home
- #1067 Mother Earth, Beloved Garden
- #1073 The Earth Is Our Mother

CULTURAL SHARING AND CONTEXT

A Tip for Effectively Using Multicultural Music

The issue of Ethical Eating connects us to a world community in which food security and environmental justice are serious issues—and one in which power is not equally shared among cultures and peoples. We encourage the use of multicultural music to highlight this connection, and also the practice of introducing such music with cultural context to honor other cultures and our relationship to them. This practice is respectful and deepens our connection to the music and the worship service. Here's an example:

Thula Klizeo was written by Joseph Shabalala, leader of the South African group Ladysmith Black Mambazo. During the era of apartheid in South Africa, the Zulu people had many cultural practices banned by the government as a way to take away their strength as a people. Touring in New York City, Shabalala felt deep homesickness, unsure that he would ever see his family and home again. He wrote this song as a response. Its lyrics mean, "Be still my heart, even here I am home." We sing this song understanding our responsibility to those among us who long for a cultural heritage from which they have been separated, even as they find a home here. Thula Klizeo is a powerful chant that reminds us of the power and possibility of world community.

Cultural context for many of the hymns in *Singing the Journey* can be found on-line at www.uua.org/publications/singingjourney/songinformation/93778.shtml. Information for hymns in *Singing The Living Tradition* is available in the book *Between the Lines*, edited by Jacqui James.

Celebrating "The Goal of World Community"

- #134 Our World Is One World
- #159 This Is My Song
- #164 The Peace Not Past Our Understanding
- #207 Earth Was Given As a Garden
- #220 Bring Out the Festal Bread
- #276 O Young and Fearless Prophet
- #277 When We Wend Homeward
- #298 Wake, Now, My Senses
- #305 De Colores
- #399 Vine and Fig Tree
- #406 Let Us Break Bread Together
- #407 We're Gonna Sit at the Welcome Table
- #1014 Standing On The Side of Love
- #1016 Profetiza, Pueblo Mio
- #1056 Thula Klizeo

Some congregations may wish to supplement hymns with commonly available songs such as:

- "Food, Glorious Food" by Lionel Bart (from *Oliver!*)
- "Ain't You Got a Right? (Tree of Life)" by Guy Carawan
- "Deportees" by Woodie Guthrie
- "Garden Song" by David Mallett

Readings

Numbered readings (416-733) are found in *Singing The Living Tradition*

Opening Readings and Chalice Lightings

- #417 For the beauty of the Earth (Barbara J. Pescan)
- #430 For now, the winter is past (Song of Solomon 2)
- #432 If someone would scatter seed on the ground (Mark)
- #439 We gather in reverence (Sophia Lyon Fahs)
- #451 Flame of fire (Leslie Pohl-Kosbau)
- #453 May the light we now kindle (Passover Haggadah)



- #459 This is the mission of our faith (William F. Schulz)

Today, we light our chalice flame for the beauty of this earth, and for the wisdom to use its blessings for peace and justice.

– Anonymous

We light this chalice for the nourishment of our beings
For the food that feeds our bodies
For the food for thought that feeds our minds
And for the food that feeds our spirits,
The light of our shared time together.

– LoraKim Joyner

As surely as we belong to this universe...to this Earth...
We belong together.

We join here to transcend the isolated self,
To reconnect, to come to know ourselves.
To be at home, here on this Earth, on this planet,
Sustained by the sun, awed by the stars,
Linked with each other.

Come let us worship together.

– Margaret Keip

It is from numberless diverse acts of courage and belief that human history is shaped. Each time a [person] stands up for an ideal, or acts to improve the lot of others, or strikes out against injustice, he [or she] sends forth a tiny ripple of hope; and crossing each other from a million different centers of energy and daring, those ripples build a current which can sweep down the mightiest walls of oppression and resistance.

– Robert F. Kennedy

We light this chalice with hopes for a bright future.
May our children, their children, all children
Intermingle their laughter through the world.
May they be as the rainbow

Color and hope for the coming dawn.

– Reena Kondo

Prayers and Spoken Meditations

Farm Worker Prayer of Praise

United Farm Workers

Bless the hands of the people of the earth,
The hands that plant the seed,
The hands that bind the harvest,
The hands that carry the burden of life.
Soften the hands of the oppressor and
Strengthen the hands of the oppressed.

Bless the hands of the workers,
Bless the hands of those in power above them
That the measure they deal will be tempered
With justice and compassion. Amen

Prayer of Dedication

by Alan Paton, author of *Cry, the Beloved Country*.

O God, open my eyes that I may see the needs of others;
Open my ears that I may hear their cries;
Open my heart so that they may not be without succor;
Let me not be afraid to defend the weak because of the anger
of the strong; nor afraid to defend the poor because of the
anger of the rich.
Show me where love and hope and faith are needed, and use
me to bring them to those places.

And so open my eyes and my ears that I may this coming day be able to do some work of peace for thee. Amen.

Prayer of the Farm Workers' Struggle

(in English and Spanish)

by César E. Chávez,

United Farm Workers Founder (1927-1993)

© César E. Chávez Foundation

Show me the suffering of the most miserable; so I will know my people's plight. Free me to pray for others; for you are present in every person. Help me take responsibility for my own life; so that I can be free at last. Grant me courage to serve others; for in service there is true life. Give me honesty and patience; so that I can work with other workers. Bring forth song and celebration; so that the Spirit will be alive among us. Let the Spirit flourish and grow; so that we never tire of the struggle. Let us remember those who have died for justice; for they have given us life. Help us to love even those who hate us; so we can change the world. Amen.

Oración del Campesino en la Lucha

Enséñame el sufrimiento de los mas desafortunados; Así conoceré el dolor de mi pueblo. Librame a orar por los demás; Porque estas presente en cada persona. Ayúdame a tomar, responsabilidad de mi propia vida; Solo así, seré libre al fin. Concedeme valentía para servir al prójimo; Porque en la entrega hay vida verdadera. Concedeme honradez y paciencia; Para que yo pueda trabajar junto con otros trabajadores. Alumbranos con el canto y la celebración; Para que levanten el Espíritu entre nosotros. Que el Espíritu florezca y crezca; Para que no nos cansemos entere la lucha. Nos acordamos de los que han caído por la justicia; Porque a nosotros han entregado la vida. Ayúdanos a amar aun a los que nos odian; Así podemos cambiar el mundo.

Litany of Gratitude

by Max Coats, Minister Emeritus, UU Church, Canton, NY

The harvest will be an attitude, not a time of year. And maybe I'll be wise enough to feel a sort of litany of gratitude: For seeds - that, like memories and minds, keep in themselves the recollection of what they were and the power to become something more than they are... For soil - that accumulation of lives piled up by death that gives new life... For the justice of the earth - that gave me about as many weeds and wilt and scab and bugs as vegetables but, in the end, gave me enough for what I need... For hands - those miracles on the ends of my arms that let me tend my vegetables and pull my weeds, and for mind enough to know the difference between the two... For calluses - life's defense against that softness that makes survival difficult... For the ability to work and the will to work and the work to do, and

the time to do it in... And, finally, for that sense of kinship to it all, that singleness, that unity that is the basis of faith...

Other Sources for Prayers and Meditations

Earth Prayers from Around the World, Elizabeth Roberts and Elias Amidon, eds. (Harper San Francisco, 1991)

Contains a number of prayers, poems and readings on environmental themes, many of which are relevant to food, agriculture, animals and eating. The authors included are as varied as Ho Chi Minh, Hildegard of Bingen, and William Ellery Channing.

A Grateful Heart, M.J. Ryan, ed. (Conari Press, Berkeley, 1994)

Offers mealtime blessings from several cultural and religious traditions. Many of these prayers can be used with chalice lightings or as closing words.

United Nations Sabbath Service

A collection of themed prayers at

ecologically-found on-line



SERVICE READINGS AND RESPONSIVE READINGS

www.earthministry.org/Congregations/UN_Sabbath.htm

- #461 We Must Be Saved (Reinhold Niebuhr)
- #512 We Give Thanks This Day (O. Eugene Pickett)
- #515 We Lift Up Our Hearts in Thanks
(Richard M. Fewkes)
- #558 For Everything a Season (Ecclesiastes 3)
- #567 To Be of Use (Marge Piercy)
- #568 Connections are Made Slowly (Marge Piercy)
- #576 A Litany of Restoration
(Marjorie Bowens-Wheatley)
- #588 To Loose the Fetters of Injustice (Isaiah 58)
- #593 Liberation is Costly (Desmond Tutu)
- #643 Shout for Joy (Psalm 65)
- #654 Impassioned Clay (Ralph N. Helverson)
- #656 A Harvest of Gratitude (Percival Chubb)
- #668 Faith Cannot Save (James 2)

To me democracy is an exciting, living practice, what we do every day. To most democracy doesn't relate to our daily



lives and it sure isn't much fun. I now see that to engage in democracy, to jump into this living practice we all need something tangible to act on....

Because food is our most primal need and our common bond to the earth and to each other, it can ground us as we stretch ourselves to draw in all the interlaced threads – so we can weave a whole meaningful picture for ourselves.

With food as a starting point, we can choose to meet people and to encounter events so powerful that they can jar us out of our ordinary ways of seeing the world, and open us to new uplifting possibilities.

– Frances Moore Lappé, from *Hope's Edge: The Next Diet for a Small Planet*. New York: Tarcher, 2002.

Declaration for Healthy Food and Agriculture

www.fooddeclaration.org (also available in Spanish)

We, the undersigned, believe that a healthy food system is necessary to meet the urgent challenges of our time. Behind us stands a half-century of industrial food production, underwritten by cheap fossil fuels, abundant land and water resources, and a drive to maximize the global harvest of cheap calories. Ahead lie rising energy and food costs, a changing climate, declining water supplies, a growing population, and the paradox of widespread hunger and obesity.

These realities call for a radically different approach to food and agriculture. We believe that the food system must be reorganized on a foundation of health: for our communities, for people, for animals, and for the natural world. The quality of food, and not just its quantity, ought to guide our agriculture. The ways we grow, distribute, and prepare food should celebrate our various cultures and our shared humanity, providing not only sustenance, but justice, beauty and pleasure.

Governments have a duty to protect people from malnutrition, unsafe food, and exploitation, and to protect the land and water on which we depend from degradation. Individuals, producers, and organizations have a duty to create regional systems that can provide healthy food for their communities. We all have a duty to respect and honor the laborers of the land without whom we could not survive. The changes we call for here have begun, but the time has come to accelerate the transformation of our food and agriculture and make its benefits available to all.

We believe that the following twelve principles should frame food and agriculture policy, to ensure that it will contribute to the health and wealth of the nation and the world. A healthy food and agriculture policy:

1. Forms the foundation of secure and prosperous societies, healthy communities, and healthy people.
2. Provides access to affordable, nutritious food to everyone.
3. Prevents the exploitation of farmers, workers, and natural resources; the domination of genomes and markets; and the cruel treatment of animals, by any nation, corporation or individual.
4. Upholds the dignity, safety, and quality of life for all who work to feed us.
5. Commits resources to teach children the skills and knowledge essential to food production, preparation, nutrition, and enjoyment.
6. Protects the finite resources of productive soils, fresh water, and biological diversity.
7. Strives to remove fossil fuel from every link in the food chain and replace it with renewable resources and energy.
8. Originates from a biological rather than an industrial framework.
9. Fosters diversity in all its relevant forms: diversity of domestic and wild species; diversity of foods, flavors and traditions; diversity of ownership.

10. Requires a national dialog concerning technologies used in production, and allows regions to adopt their own respective guidelines on such matters.

11. Enforces transparency so that citizens know how their food is produced, where it comes from, and what it contains.

12. Promotes economic structures and supports programs to nurture the development of just and sustainable regional farm and food networks.

Our pursuit of healthy food and agriculture unites us as people and as communities, across geographic boundaries, and social and economic lines. We pledge our votes, our purchases, our creativity, and our energies to this urgent cause.

Other Sources for Readings

Brussat, Frederic and Mary Ann Brussat. *Spiritual Literacy: Reading the Sacred in Everyday Life*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996.

In the section entitled “Leisure”, this volume presents excerpts from many authors which consider our spiritual connection to food, and cooking as a spiritual practice.

Union for Reformed Judaism Just Table, Green Table urj.org/life/food/

The Union for Reformed Judaism has collected many resources on Ethical Eating, including a number of Jewish blessings for food.

Humane Society of the United States, Religious Statements on Animals



humansociety.org/about/departments/faith/facts/statements/

The Humane Society has collected statements from different faith groups, including various sects of Christianity, Judaism and Islam (in addition to Unitarian Universalism). Many of these statements can be used as interesting and relevant readings.

Ethical Eating Core Team. *Resource Guide for CSAI "Ethical Eating: Food and Environmental Justice."* Boston: UUA, 2008. Many texts appropriate to excerpt as readings for worship services are included as introductions to the sections of the Ethical Eating Resource Guide available online at tinyurl.com/eth-eat or www.uua.org/socialjustice/issuesprocess/currentissues/ethicaleating/121903.shtml

COMMUNIONS

Communion services are celebrated in many Unitarian Universalist congregations. Though derived from Christian communion rituals, which in turn derive from the Jewish Passover rituals, Unitarian Universalist communions often celebrate our connection to the Earth through food.

A Multicultural Bread Communion

Rev. Frances Deverell

Bread is sometimes referred to as the staff of life. The grain from which it is made comes from the earth, fed by the rain and the sun, just as we also come from the earth, and are fed by the elements. Every culture, everywhere in the world, makes its own bread. Will the ushers please pass the bread brought here today as a gift by many of us. When we bring bread into community we bring ourselves, our individual heritages, to share with one another. Let us celebrate, with gratitude, the bounty of this earth and the blessings of the community that we create together. May all those who are hungry, eat. May all those who seek community find it. May those who seek freedom, or truth, or peace, be satisfied. May the hope of this season lift our spirits.

Partaking in Abundance:

A Thanksgiving Communion

(Written as an antiphonal reading for minister and DRE)

Rev. Dr. Michael Tino

Seeds, scattered on fertile ground, are warmed by the sun and fed by the soil. They sprout and grow, producing great fields of grain.

The grain is harvested and ground into flour and shipped across the nation. The flour is mixed with yeast and water and salt, and kneaded, allowed to rise, and baked to make bread.

The bread is broken in the sacred space of this worship ser-

vice, and shared in this community of love.

The breaking of bread is an ancient ritual of community and memory celebrated in many different traditions and many different ways.

Today, as we approach the American celebration of Thanksgiving, we break bread together to celebrate the abundance of the harvest, the hard work of all who make our lives possible, and the community that gathers here to worship together.

These loaves were baked with love—abundant love, love that multiplies all that is around it. As you pass the basket to the person next to you, we invite you to turn to them and say "I offer you the bread of community."

As the bread is passed to you, take a piece from the basket and eat it, in doing so taking in to you the love of this community.

As you eat the bread, bring to mind those things and people for

which you are thankful at this time of year.

We offer you the bread of community.

Other Resources for Communion Readings

Carl Seaburg, Ed. *The Communion Book*. UU Ministers Association, 1993. 426 pages.

An excellent UU book explaining more than sixty meaningful communion rituals in a variety of styles. Whether Easter, Thanksgiving, or All Souls; whether Apple, Salt, or Bread and Honey; whether children, youth, or adult, you'll find them all here. And yes, that includes coffee. But you'll have to make up your own Fair Trade chocolate communion, then share it with us!

A STORY FOR ALL AGES

A Tale of Two Heads of Lettuce

Rev. Melissa Carvill-Ziemer

I have a story for you. It is a tale of two heads of lettuce. This one (hold up head of lettuce and walk around the sanctuary as I speak) was grown in Salinas Valley, CA. It was grown according to conventional, industrial farming methods by a multi-national corporation. They used chemical fertilizers and pesticides to grow it, low wage migrant workers to quickly and efficiently harvest it and get it into trucks which drove 2,500 miles from Salinas, CA to Streetsboro, OH. I bought this lettuce in the Giant Eagle market in Streetsboro for \$2.19 per pound. This lettuce required 4000 calories of fossil fuels to get to us today (return to front of sanctuary as I finish speaking).

The second head of lettuce (repeat directions for walking around sanctuary) was grown according to sustainable, small scale farming methods in Holmes County, OH by an Amish farmer who used natural fertilizers and no pesticides to grow it. The Amish farmer or someone else in his family or community harvested the lettuce. It was put on a truck and driven 67 miles from Holmes County, OH to Cuyahoga Falls, OH. I bought it at Krieger's market in Cuyahoga Falls

for \$2.39 per pound. This lettuce required fewer than 100 calories of fossil fuels to get to us today.

This morning while you are together in your classes the adults will remain here in the sanctuary to consider an important question. How do we decide which head of lettuce is the better deal?

THE OFFERING



QUOTATIONS AND CENTERING THOUGHTS

Nothing that is worth doing can be achieved in our lifetime; therefore we must be saved by hope. Nothing which is true or beautiful or good makes complete sense in any immediate context of history; therefore we must be saved by faith. Nothing we do, however virtuous, can be accomplished alone; therefore we are saved by love.

– Reinhold Niebuhr

Humans are part of the web of life. What we do to the planet, what we do to other species, and what we do to other people, we end up doing to ourselves.

– John Robbins

A person is ethical only when life, as such, is sacred, that of plants and animals as that of other men and women, and when one devotes oneself helpfully to all life that is in need of help.

– Albert Schweitzer

We share this planet not only with billions of fellow human beings, but also with uncounted billions upon billions of other creatures, with lives, wants, enjoyment and suffering as real as our own. Humans have had and used the power to crowd them out, push them aside, sometimes driving them to extinction, and often, making them into tools for our use, servitors of our desires, food for our tables, clothes for our backs.

– Robert Bass

Many additional quotes and thoughts can be found in the *Resource Guide for CSAI "Ethical Eating: Food and Environmental Justice"* to which this resource guide serves as a supplement. The *Resource Guide* and more can be found at tinyurl.com/eth-eat or www.uua.org/socialjustice/issuesprocess/currentissues/ethicaleating/121903.shtml

SERMON EXCERPTS

The following are excerpts from sermons submitted to us. Please feel free to quote them with proper attribution.

WHAT MY GRANDCHILD WOULD WANT ME TO PREACH

Rev. Scott Tayler

Parish Co-Minister, First Unitarian Church of Rochester NY, April 22, 2007

It's really complicated honey. I'm only now understanding it myself. We weren't really thinking about it like you and your friends do. It's not that we didn't care about how it would impact you; we weren't really thinking about you at all. Oh that's sounds terrible, I'll say. I don't mean that the way it sounds. Again, honey, it's complicated. It wasn't personal; we just didn't think that far ahead. It was more like a blind spot. Our focus was mostly on our daily living, which felt hard and overly complicated as it was. We had our hands full just trying to think about and find the time to spend with your mama and your aunt and uncle. I'm not trying to defend it. I just don't want you to think we were callous or selfish. It's more like we were overwhelmed. And when you're overwhelmed it's hard to have perspective. I mean, a lot was going on. The whole issue of how our military might was destabilizing the world and also undermining our ability to take care of basic services like public schools, and health care was just beginning to dawn on us. And I can't say I regret focusing on that. Without the anti-war effort and the radical changes we accomplished there, things would be a whole lot worse than they are now.

But I don't get that, Grandpa, she'll say. You mean you could only handle one thing at a time? Didn't global warming also feel huge?

No honey, of course it felt huge, I'll say. And it's not that we could only handle one thing at a time. That's not what I mean. Again it's complicated. I guess what I'm saying is that we knew it was a huge and scary problem, we just couldn't

feel it. What we felt was worn out. You're used to things as they are now. These "little things," as you call them, just didn't feel little to us. The idea of a smaller house, going without air conditioning, voluntarily paying \$5 for gas or finding the \$20,000 to install solar panels just seemed too much and too big to wrap our minds and to-do lists around. And nobody else was really doing it.

And more than that: we were hopeful. Ironically that's a part of it too. We weren't just worn out and overwhelmed with our personal lives, we actually believed the tide was changing, that bigger systems would begin to kick in and stimulate the changes for us.

She'll wrinkle her brow at this point showing confusion, so I'll try to explain.

Scientists, you see, weren't just telling us that we were on the verge of causing irreversible and dangerous climate change, they were also telling us we were on the verge of a technological break-through that would soon make alternative energy sources available and affordable... I think the best way to put it is to say that our optimism and our hope, well, it sort of betrayed us. We had hope in technology. We had hope in politicians. And we had hope in our market system. It really felt like they'd save us without us having to do much. There was a saying back then: "Let go and let God." I guess we saw science, politics and the market as our gods-- more powerful and knowing than us tiny normal folk. So we gladly turned the problem over to them and waited for them to change us.



Ethical Eating

Rev. Mark Hayes

Minister, Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Centre County, State College PA, November 16, 2008

Dorothy Blair, whose area of expertise is nutrition education, shared with me a draft of a paper on sustainable food systems from that vantage point. The paper enumerates six goals toward attaining a sustainable food system. They are:

1. Eat lower on the food chain (which would have positive impact on health, land use, water quality, and soil conservation)
 2. Eat and act to promote good farming/fishing practices (that is, reward those who do it right)
 3. Reduce food processing, packaging energy (by eating foods as close to their original fresh state as possible)
 4. Reduce transportation energy (by eating locally produced meats, milk, grains, fruits, and vegetables whenever possible)
 5. Reduce food waste (by buying sparingly and using leftovers)
 6. Eat for social justice (by supporting fair trade initiatives that promote fair prices and sustainable production practices)
- ... The way we eat also intersects with issues of trade, labor,

neo-colonialism, and environmental justice. I encourage you to look into all of these in coming months, with the help of the Resource Guide that I have available.

Before I close, I'd like to touch on one more area directly related to how we eat: hunger and malnutrition. We waste about 3,044 pounds of food per second in the United States. Each year 27% of US food produced for human consumption is lost at the retail, consumer and food service levels. Globally, 4.3 pounds of food are produced daily for every woman, man, and child on earth – enough to make all of us fat. Yet every year, six million children across the globe die as a result of hunger and malnutrition – one child dying of starvation or malnutrition every five seconds. Hunger and malnutrition are responsible for more deaths in the world than AIDS, malaria, and tuberculosis combined.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights recognizes the human right to food, to secure personal health and well-being. The United Nations member states have agreed to reach eight international “Millennium Goals” by the year 2015, the first of which calls for major reductions in poverty and hunger. It has been said that the one major obstacle to eradication of hunger is political will.



Salt of the Earth: Food and Religion Reconsidered

Rev. Robert F. Murphy

Minister, Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Falmouth
MA, December 14, 2008

...Our new conversation about food and religion can bring us to a better understanding of what it means to be a Unitarian Universalist....

...Imagine ... A freethinker...says, "I'm uneasy with this talk about ethical eating. Because I don't want to be involved with a church that tells me what to eat, and how to eat, and with whom to eat. That's not what we do in liberal religion."

Friends, I'm very sympathetic. There are, indeed, many religious organizations that have established dietary codes for religious reasons. Mormons...Seventh Day Adventists...Hindus... Muslims...Orthodox Jews...When I was a boy, the Roman Catholics were told that it was a sin to eat meat on certain days. My Roman Catholic grandmother, who was very devout, asked me on many occasions, "What did you eat for lunch on Friday?"

What do we say to the freethinker, who doesn't want to talk about food and religion? ...Proceed with kindness. Remind him, first, that things are different here. The Unitarian Universalist Association is not a creedal organization...[and promotes] the full participation in all of its activities without "requiring adherence to any particular interpretation of religion or to any particular religious belief or creed." The words appear in our Association's Bylaws and Rules.

Our Association will not establish a dietary code, and, no, you won't be told to stop eating hamburgers, and you won't be told to avoid bacon and pork chops, and, yes, you'll probably be offered a cup of coffee during the church coffee hour. You won't be told to sign a temperance pledge. If you're an adult, and if you want to drink alcoholic beverages at a bar or at a restaurant, you won't be condemned by our Association. If the minister sees a pack of cigarettes in your pocket or purse, you won't be excommunicated.

...Imagine a skeptic..."We're just a small group of individuals," she says, "and we don't understand all of the food issues and, even if we did, we can't do much of anything as a group. Maybe we can swap a few recipes, and...talk about the new restaurants in town, but, please, don't expect us to do anything as a religious community. It's not going to happen."

It's a teachable moment. Once again, proceed with kindness.

...In today's world, even the tiniest fellowship, with only a handful of members, has the opportunity to provide "a vision of the world that might be." Because every congregation, without exception, has to make decisions about the purchase and use of food and drink. Some groups insist on the use of "Fair Trade" coffee and tea. At church suppers, it's expected that vegetarian meals will be available. Sunday school teachers no longer distribute heaps and heaps of sugar candy...

There are rules, in many congregations, that govern the proper disposal of wastes. Bottles and cans are recycled. In some churches, the use of disposable cups and plates is discouraged, because of environmental concerns...Years ago, a woman gave me a sign that's now in my dining room at home. The sign says, "My religion has something to do with compost."

...In the conversation about food and the environment, we are introduced, once again, to a world of paradox and tragedy. Agribusiness produces enormous wealth, on all of the inhabited continents, but small farmers and farmworkers in the developing world are often poor. Some people in the world enjoy many food choices while others are starving or dependent on handouts....

"You are the salt of the earth," said Jesus of Nazareth. "But if salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned?" Even if you're not a Christian, I encourage you to keep that thought in mind. Our churches and fellowships can make a difference in the world. At the very least, we can bring people together and we can provide them with a taste of "the world that might be." We can teach the fragile art of hospitality. Some of you are on low-sodium diets, so, maybe, we should go easy on the saltiness, with just a little bit of heaven provided at meetinghouse breakfasts and suppers. Not too much, but, please, not too little.

Salt is a preservative, and that, too, should be remembered. In these new discussions about religion and the environment, the world needs people of faith who can preserve the old values that need to be preserved. We can speak for the inherent worth and dignity of every person, not just the rich and powerful. We can encourage a free and responsible search for truth and meaning, and we can celebrate, once again, some of the great teachers who have warned us against "idolatries of the mind and spirit."

Imagine ... A freethinker... says, "I'm uneasy with this talk about ethical eating. Because I don't want to be involved with a church that tells me what to eat, and how to eat, and with whom to eat. That's not what we do in liberal religion."

Ethical Eating

Rev. Christine Brownlie

Minister, Unitarian Universalist Congregation, Blacksburg VA, October 5, 2008

I'd suggest that we begin this four-year conversation with the agreement that to respect each person's right and need to make choices that work for them. I might be willing to listen to your concerns about the problems of beef production in America or the link between child slavery and chocolate, but you need to know that my decisions about what I eat belong to me, just as yours belong to you. I like the way Sid Baumel, the editor of the Web site eatkind.net puts it, "Ethical eating, like ethical living, is not about absolutes. It's about doing the best you're willing and able to do — and nurturing a will to keep doing better."

...Some of the things that we can do are obvious even if they are not easy for all of us. Again, food choices are not just a matter of nutrition, health, or economics. Food also says something about our family of origin, our lifestyle preferences, the habits and ways of self-care that we've developed, and how we like to spend our time. This means that changing our food habits can take time and patience.

...My desire to consume a more ethical diet has led to some changes in my behaviors. This year, I grew a variety of vegetables and put flowers on the back burner. I tried to make the most of the garden. What I didn't eat, I put away in the freezer. I not only froze beets, I froze the beet greens too. I started making yogurt to avoid the plastic containers. I eat less meat and try to buy organic meats and eggs despite the higher cost. I buy milk that is produced by a local dairy. I am trying to be more mindful about snacking and to catch myself when I'm tempted to eat because I'm stressed out or bored. Instead, I take a walk, play with my cats, knit, or work on a project.

The food needs of the community got my attention as well. I contributed to a couple of canned-food drives. With the support of our food bank volunteers, I worked with our local interfaith food bank to make it easier for working parents to get food by being open one weeknight a week.

There's nothing very startling on my list. And I consider it

just a warm-up, a little exercise in becoming more mindful about what I eat and the choices that are available to me. A worthwhile beginning, but I know that there is more that I can do to address this issue of Ethical Eating.

We need to study the politics and the economics of food so that new solutions to old problems like hunger can be addressed in ways that really help. I was surprised to learn that the food banks that I'm supporting might not be the best way to help people who struggle with hunger.



I've always thought of the local food bank as a necessary institution, because every community has to find a way to assist those who cannot meet their need for affordable food. I've worked in food banks and for meals on wheels...I continue to believe that this help is important and necessary. But after reading *Closing the Food Gap, Resetting the Table in the Land of Plenty* by food policy activist and journalist Michael Winne, I now know that it is a band-aid approach to the issue. Winne...decries the two-tiered food distribution in our

country. He says that there is one for the well-to-do middle class that gives access to better and more costly food through posh grocery stores, organic food markets like Wild Oats and Whole Foods, and high-priced Farmers' Markets...

Winne believes that food banks should become advocates for changes in our national and local food policies. He offers an example of an effective program of advocacy by a food bank in Oregon. The Board of this food bank developed an advocacy committee that took on some hard issues such as the minimum wage. They encouraged low-income clients to take advantage of the Earned Income Tax Credit. The food bank has taken a strong position in support of expanding the Food Stamp program and other state welfare legislation that directly affect low-income working families.

Winne laments that the organic food movement and the anti-hunger movement have not joined forces to help develop innovative programs that would make organic foods and local produce more readily available to low-income families through government food programs.

Giving Up Bananas

Rev. Peter Friedrichs

Minister, Unitarian Universalist Church of Delaware
County, Media PA, November 9, 2008

...There I was, at the "Big Question:" What is my relationship to the creatures on this earth, and to the earth itself? Are they, is it, here for me, or am I a part of it? How far does the interdependent web extend, and do I really believe that all of us are intimately connected with all of existence?

It has been said that one of the functions of ministry is to comfort the afflicted and to afflict the comfortable, so I want

to be right up front with you. My goal in sharing this story with you and telling you what I'm about to tell you is to raise questions that will haunt you too. I want you to be haunted while walking the aisles in Acme, in Genuardi's, in Pathmark and even Trader Joe's. To be haunted as you unload your groceries from those plastic bags that seem to reproduce like rabbits beneath your kitchen sink. To be haunted as you serve your Thanksgiving dinner to your family, in that Norman Rockwell moment as the browned bird is placed before approving eyes and watering mouths.

I have here before me a bowl of fruit. Bananas, apples, oranges, grapes, even an avocado. ... Delicious and nutritious fruit. Good and good for you. So, let's see, these bananas are from Ecuador. The apple was grown in Washington State and the grapes come from California. These particular tomatoes come from Mexico, and they're still attached to the vine so you know they're "vine ripe." The avocado was grown down in Chile, and these particular oranges come all the way from South Africa. All told, this bowl of fruit has traveled a distance of more than 18,000 miles to be with us here today. Definitely our most far-flung guests in the service!

It's not news to tell you that bananas aren't grown in the backyards of Media or on farms in Lancaster County... Americans consume about 400 gallons of oil a year per person for the food they eat... Author and scientist Steven L. Hopp writes sarcastically that "a quick way to improve food-related fuel economy would be to buy a quart of motor oil and drink it." He then goes on to point out that, if every American family were to eat just one meal each week that was composed of locally and organically raised foods, "we

Americans consume about 400 gallons of oil a year per person for the food they eat... Author and scientist Steven L. Hopp writes sarcastically that "a quick way to improve food-related fuel economy would be to buy a quart of motor oil and drink it." He then goes on to point out that, if every American family were to eat just one meal each week that was composed of locally and organically raised foods, "we would reduce our country's oil consumption by over 1.1 million barrels every week...."

would reduce our country's oil consumption by over 1.1 million barrels every week... Becoming a less energy-dependent nation," he writes, "may just need to start with a good breakfast." [Barbara Kingsolver, et al., *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle*, p. 5]

The whole idea behind the concept of "ethical eating" is that we think about the food that we're putting into our mouths. And by this I don't mean the nutritional value, whether it's good for us or whether it's going to go straight from our lips to our hips. Ethical eating is consumption wedded to awareness and intention. It is about educating ourselves about the true costs of the foods that we buy and consume. It's about

facing up to the ugly facts of the agri-industrial complex. It's knowing, for example, that while we've increased the average yield of an acre of farmland from 24 bushels of corn in 1930 to more than 160 bushels per acre today, to achieve this astonishing improvement we apply about 1.5 billion pounds of nitrogen to the soil each year in the form of fertilizers. And that about half of that nitrogen is taken up into the atmosphere and falls as acid rain or stays up there as greenhouse gases, or it washes into our watersheds, causing massive algae blooms that choke off all other aquatic life. [Amy Hassinger, "Ethical Eating," *UU World*, Spring 2007, p.30.]

...As Unitarian Universalists we proclaim to affirm and support respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part. What does that mean to us? How far does it extend? And what does it require of us? The most recent proposed revisions to our principles elaborate on the Seventh Principle thusly:

Inspired by the beauty and holiness of the Earth, we become more willing to relinquish material desires. We recognize the need for sacrifice as we build a world that is both just and sustainable. We are called to be good stewards, restoring the Earth and protecting all beings.

In the choices we make about the foods we eat, what does it mean to be good stewards who work to restore the Earth and to protect all beings? What does it mean to us when we proclaim the earth to be "holy?" These principles point us toward questions of ultimate reality and meaning, profoundly religious questions like "Who or what made us?" "Why are we here?" and "Who is our neighbor, our brother or sister?"

You Are What You Eat

Rev. Dr. Michael Tino

Minister, Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Northern Westchester, Mount Kisco NY, March 2, 2008

...Our spiritual connection to the food we eat has...been harmed by a modern culture in which over-processed foods are so ubiquitous that we have ceased to think about foods in their whole forms any more.

...Michael Pollan writes, “try this: Don’t eat anything your great-great-grandmother wouldn’t recognize as food.” What he means to steer us away from are heavily-processed foods, foods that make health claims based on one or another nutrient they contain, foods with unpronounceable chemical ingredients, and, high-fructose corn syrup. Don’t even get me started on high-fructose corn syrup.

...Going through the supermarket, it’s not easy advice to follow. I believe this is because we no longer have a connection to the food we eat: Meat comes not from animals whose treatment might matter to us, but from little Styrofoam trays with plastic wrap. Carrots are not long, pointed things that come from the ground—they are uniformly-carved two-inch-long nuggets that come in a bag. Coffee comes from a round red can, not from bushes growing on hillsides that need to be hand-picked.

Our modern society has many ways of removing us from our connection to food....

...To be honest, it doesn’t bother me if a company wants to splice a gene for beta carotene production into a rice crop, or if molecular biologists find ways to do things that used to be done with careful cross-pollination. To be honest with you, I wouldn’t even mind if scientists could figure out how to put pig genes into plants so that my collard greens don’t need fatback to taste yummy.

It bothers me, however, when the genes that are being put into plants that cause those plants to secrete pesticides—creating plants that could wind up killing monarch butterflies or ladybugs or honeybees.

It bothers me when the genetic modifications produce sterile plants just so that farmers can’t save seeds from one year to the next—forcing an ongoing dependence on newly-ordered seeds, and fattening the wallets of giant agribusiness companies.

It bothers me when companies are producing genetically-modified crops that make our farmers dependent upon chemical herbicides to grow their crops....

...The perils of agribusiness for our connection to the Earth through food hardly end with vegetables—I just figured I’d start there so that the vegetarians among us didn’t get smug when I brought up the horrible world of meat processing.

A search of the *Times*’ website for “beef recall” turns up 570 articles. Five hundred and seventy. I learned this when I was looking for information on the latest beef recall—an order issued two weeks ago that recalled some 143 million pounds of processed beef that made its way through a plant in California.

The beef was recalled after an undercover investigation by the Humane Society documented workers using such techniques as picking up sick cows with forklifts in order to pretend they could walk.... (Andrew Martin, “Largest Recall of Ground Beef is Ordered,” *New York Times*, 2/18/08)

Why is our food supply riddled with meat from cows so sick they cannot even walk? Why have enormous corporate hog farms become reservoirs for antibiotic-resistant bacteria even as seventy percent of the antibiotics used in this country are fed to livestock?

Why are Australian honeybees, perhaps carrying foreign bee viruses (and no, I am not kidding) shipped to California every spring to pollinate almond orchards, and then shipped home once that job is done?

It is because our system of factory farming has become unsustainable, and we, far removed from any connection with our food, fail to notice....

What we eat and why are profoundly moral, ethical and spiritual questions. You are, after all, what you eat.



Eating to Transform Lives and Care for the World

by Rev. Duane H. Fickeisen

Minister, Unitarian Universalists of the Cumberland Valley, Boiling Springs PA, February 3, 2008.

...What you choose to eat is important to both parts of how you live out the mission of our congregation — transforming your life and caring for the earth. ...How many of you have heard that “an apple a day keeps the doctor away?” Apples (and other fresh fruits) are healthy foods, and eating them every day can indeed help you get and stay healthy.

When many people had apple trees in their backyards, there were many, many different local varieties of apples. Now most of the apples you find in the stores are one of about half a dozen commercial varieties, and most of them are Red Delicious. It's hard to imagine a less satisfying apple than the Red Delicious — it looks pretty, it's nearly always uniformly bright red, and it has a pleasing shape. But they are almost always mushy and bland with tough skin that's often bitter.

But not only has the apple become much less than delicious, it has also become less nutritious. You'll have to eat three apples today to get the same amount of iron that was in one typical apple grown in 1940...

With the focus on processed foods, the cost of sweeteners and fats has gone down 20% since 1980 while the cost of fresh fruits and vegetables has gone up 40%. We spend about half as much of our income on food as we did in 1960, but we're spending three times as much of our income on health care. There just might be a link!

We're eating a lot more processed foods with those cheap added sweeteners and fats and a lot less fresh whole foods. That has the hidden expense of causing us to consume too many calories and get too little nutrition.

We're eating foods that have traveled a long way. The trucking industry is fond of saying that if you bought it, it came by truck, and that's becoming ever so true of most supermarket foods. All that hauling is hard on the environment. It contributes to the greenhouse gasses and it puts more fine particulate matter into our air, which is already unhealthy.

By eating locally grown foods, we'll reduce the need for some of

that transport and preserve more of the local farms that give our valley much of its charm.

It might be a stretch for most of us to become locavores, eating only (or almost only) foods that were grown in Central Pennsylvania. But it's not impossible to create a balanced and interesting diet from locally produced foods. Last month — in the middle of winter — Amy Farrell and John Bloom hosted a dinner of almost exclusively Central Pennsylvania foods.... Amy shared their menu with me, featuring cheeses, fresh vegetables, chicken and eggs, even cornbread made with locally grown and ground cornmeal and flour, and sweet potato pie, along with local wines, beers, sodas, cider, and water.

...Recognize food as more than a source of nutrition. It is part of many relationships — with your companions (by the way, that word means those with whom you share bread), with the growers, and with the planet, for example. It can also be a source of pleasure, a feast for all the senses, and a reason to sit down with others in a shared meal. For centuries shared food has been a strong symbolic way to celebrate community....

Making good choices about what and how we eat matters. It matters to our bodies and to the planet. And like many of the choices we face — what's good for us is often what's good for the Earth. By choosing to eat more locally produced foods and more whole foods, we're also choosing to do a little less damage to the Earth by our living here.



Priceless!

by Rev. Hilary Landau Krivchenia

Minister, Unitarian Universalist Church of Lafayette, IN
October 3, 2004

... Wealth, bounty, scarcity, money, are complex – layered with meaning. We use money all the time, frequently worry over it, try to manage it – but to really think about it is pretty daunting. Money is a tool in a world based upon exchange.... It can't be avoided. At one time people exchanged goods, services, labor, poultry – but today we use money in our transactions. As in any event in the world we can look at our transactions on the surface or we can see beyond the surface to the deeper layers – where meaning lives....

... Seldom do we – especially in this powerful nation – have transactions which begin and end between two people....

Nilton Bonder, in his book *The Kaballah of Money* describes four layers of meaning – I'm taking liberties because theologically Bonder and I are on different pages – but overall his book echoed my own reflections about the nature of wealth.

On the material level our transactions are this for that – four dollars and a *molto vente* *caffè latte*. On the emotional level the *molto vente caffè latte* may bring us a moment's warmth, energy, and some pleasure. If I buy from a small businessman it will contribute directly to his financial well-being. Here the layers get wider – his well-being is involved in my

choice to buy my coffee there and not at a mega chain – and that will touch the world on a spiritual level. That means that I choose to make my four dollars mean more than it will mean at a huge chain that where my four dollars will be four of millions. The good will that I offer along with my money may go unspoken – but it is experienced by the businessman who knows exactly what he is up against. I have included a moral perspective in my choice of where to spend my four dollars. Let's say that I ask the owner about fairly traded coffee and ask if he might be willing to sell some. I offer that I would be willing to pay more to benefit more people and to buy my bulk coffee from him. We commiserate over the risks of small businesses. No matter what



he does I am expanding the circle of moral and spiritual awareness by asking him about it. The final layer of the transaction may take place out of my sight – he may choose to offer fair trade coffee – he may choose not to do that for years or ever. The eventual ripples of the transaction happen out of my sight – and perhaps, even, after my lifetime. But they exist whether I see them or not.

... Nilton Bonder says – “the world is, for conscientious human beings, a world of ever more intricate systems of livelihood – our family feeling is larger, wider, and our perception of hospitality is sharper.” Hospitality – as though we all share one home and make our stay in that home sweeter, more wonderful, if we live in hospitality toward one another. I feel a strong sense of hospitality when our share of the organic farm co-op comes in each week. I feel pleasure that the land is being loved and that small farmers are making a living. The circles of hospitality are very wide – as food comes to me and I'm nourished both by the food and the interactions with the other co-op members.... Ultimately, I am investing in the well-being of my family, the farmer, the other people in the co-op, and the future of the earth and that is priceless in the long run – the layer of transaction which is out of my sight. We're making our home more hospitable.

... The Rabbis call this *yishuv olam* – settling the world. It's acting and living justly so that the household account of the world is settled... It means being ... willing to see beyond the superficial level of money to the deeper layers where the

world is balanced or out of balance. It means knowing ourselves well enough to know what it is we really want – or what's needed to make the world a better place.

To settle the world, to make of the world a hospitable place with enough for everyone – this requires a sense of our relationship with one another and the rearrangement of our desires into something that connects each person back to the common wealth. So that each person sees themselves as in partnership with the world.

So much of what we desire – what we really hunger for – is priceless. Still we set the conditions for those things by settling the world – by making the world more fair – more just. Not simply in our own corner but for all creatures...

A Crowd At The Table: A Thanksgiving Sermon

Rev. Lilli Nye

Minister, Theodore Parker Church (Unitarian Universalist), West Roxbury MA, Nov. 23, 2003

I [do not] mean to present myself as some kind of bodhisattva of compassion. However, in my better moments—at least in my more conscious moments—while I'm eating, I do try to imagine the lives and even the deaths of the creatures who nourish me.

I try to think of the freedom and exhilaration of the wild Atlantic salmon leaping up a frigid mountain stream. I try to imagine its distress as it is pulled from the water and slowly suffocates in the air. I try to imagine the big soft eyes of the dairy cow hooked up to the milking machine and wonder if her udders are sore or if her legs ache as they support her enormous body on the cement floor all day. I try to imagine the bright red-gold eye of the hen who produced the beautiful brown eggs I'm breaking into my cast iron pan, and remember that her laying days will be numbered.

Such thoughts may seem perverse, but simply remembering these beings seems to be one of the few ways that I can express my indebtedness to them. Wendell Berry mentions that the thought of the calf contentedly grazing in the good pasture flavors the steak, that such knowledge calms, and relieves, and the frees the eater.

But knowledge of the factory farm also flavors the meat, in a different way. Imagining the lives of the animals steers me away from meat and eggs produced in the cruel and grotesque conditions that are typical of industrial livestock farming. The thought of the animals' suffering curbs my appetite. It guides me, according to my conscience and financial capacity, to spend the extra money it costs to support humane farming practices.

But since I cannot always be the purist I might like to be, I try to integrate even the awareness of suffering into my eating meditation. It is part of the energy that I am ingesting, and I feel some responsibility to recognize it.

...Let us imagine that we are going to eat something that we've prepared at home using a number of ingredients, in-



cluding some prepared foods that come in bottles or cans or boxes. Imagine all of the hands that have participated in bringing to food to the table for this one meal:

Who are the faceless hundreds who planted and harvested, who cleaned and packaged and canned, who shipped and stocked, who perhaps combined and repackaged, and shipped a second or third time, then stocked the supermarket, ran the cash register, and bagged our groceries? If we also imagine the extended network of relationships that sustain the farming, factory, and freight industries, that web of connections reaches out indefinitely in our global economy. So many hands, so many faces, so many stories, now connected to your own because you decided to use raisins, or bananas, or

salmon, a European cheese, or coffee or soy sauce (although, I hope to God, not in the same dish!).

Consider the migrant workers who harvest so many of our table fruits and vegetables. Their labor is indispensable to the farming industry, yet they are some of poorest, most powerless, and most exploited people living within the borders of our nation. That they are often denied fair compensation for their work is a factor behind the moderate prices we enjoy.

Imagine all those faces, those hand, those stories. When we eat mushrooms, or apples, grapes or tomatoes, we are, in a sense, ingesting their labor, their life, their deferred dreams and lack of choice... We cannot escape our interdependence....

Yet, these truths need not ruin our dinner. They need not bring gloom to our Thanksgiving table. Part of being spiritually open is simply understanding that our lives, our blood, our beating hearts, live because we are sustained by other lives. The great life force flows without interruption through everything. Being conscious of these realities deepens our thanksgiving... would that we could live without taking or using life, but we cannot. Therefore let our eating be an act of worship. Let our table stand like an altar.

Doing Food Justice

Rev. LoraKim Joyner, D.V.M.

Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Gainesville, FL
December 3, 2006

A meat eater comes up to a vegan: “Did you hear about the new study saying vegans are more likely to go blind? I guess it’s because you don’t get the proper nutrition.” The vegan replied, “Nah, it’s just from reading all of those tiny ingredient lists.”

Vegans (vegetarians who don’t consume any animal products, such as milk, cheese and eggs), aren’t the only ones watching carefully what they are consuming. The amount of choice before the modern omnivore is bewildering. We’re not like Koala bears who only eat eucalyptus leaves. Omnivores always have had to balance trying new foods and loving food with the potential that they could hurt you. These days with agribusiness, globalization, science and socioeconomic analysis, we know that the food we eat can hurt others.

Especially in the U.S. under the barrage of food fads and choices, our anxiety builds with every passing year. There are so many kinds of food we can buy: Bioregional food, Local Food, Seasonal Food, Slow Food, Green Food (Green Cuisine), Humane Food, Fair trade Food, Smithsonian Bird Friendly Food, Health Food, Sustainable food, Good Food, Organic Food, Macrobiotic Food, Non Genetically-modified Food, Raw Food.

How do we achieve the right diet that is just for all beings and the earth? It seems impossible, and it may be. For instance, let’s say you are vegetarian or vegan. Even though more fish are off the hook, you still aren’t. Soy comes from monoculture, a form of intense agribusiness that uses pesticides, reduces biodiversity, causes great pollution and moves people off land as agribusiness moves in. One billion folks are without adequate food because monocultures rob them of livelihood.

OK, let’s say you go organic. Organic farming is harder work than regular farming, is being done intensively like soy in some areas, and the people often earn nonliving wages.

...So what’s a person to do? It is so difficult to eat justly that most of us, myself included, tend to give up, shut down, quit learning, refuse to talk to others about diet choices and

won’t even come to a service of this kind. Giving up on learning and growing in compassion is a religious concern. It means we live in denial which disconnects us from the abundance of being in honest, open, caring and knowing relationship with the web of life. This leads to despair, unhappiness, depression, tension and fear. As a religious people, as Unitarian Universalists, what can we do? . . . We need an energizing sense of interconnection. To feel connected, we can think of all beings as guests at our table . . .

....Ask the underpaid immigrants who worked in the fields or in the farms or slaughter houses how their lives are.

Maybe you’d change your food choices, maybe not. But your life would be more whole knowing how your food got to your table.

Let’s mosey on to a more informal dining setting—perhaps a barn or picnic. Now imagine that the guest at your table is another species that helped bring you food. Ask how her life is. The cow’s answer *mu* is quite instructive. In Buddhism it means that we are living under incorrect assumptions by thinking our lives are separate from any being, human or non-. If you don’t understand animal-speak, research how that animal lived and died before parts of it came to be

your dinner. Michael Pollan in the Omnivore’s Dilemma suggests that all slaughterhouses and factory farms be built with glass walls. Seeing clearly what goes on we’d all use a lot less animal products and treat animals more humanely while they lived.

...I don’t object to death. I object to how these animals live. They suffer greatly. We save a little money per meal while the agribusinesses pocket millions.

...Half of the dogs in the U.S. will receive a Christmas present. Pigs, as intelligent as dogs, as able to suffer as dogs, as socially complex as dogs, become Christmas hams. More to the point, during their lives, pigs are treated as unfeeling machines. ([Michael Pollan, *The Omnivore’s Dilemma*, p. 306](#)) If you haven’t already, have a pig as a guest at your table. Maybe you’d make some changes. The important thing is to be in touch with the worth and dignity of every being.

...Gratitude is so easy to forget. If we could just remember that we are part of the web of life and are therefore never alone, never without the earth’s abundance, then maybe we’d have more energy and joyfulness to face life’s difficulties.

It is so difficult to eat justly that most of us, myself included, tend to give up, shut down, quit learning, refuse to talk to others about diet choices and won’t even come to a service of this kind. Giving up on learning and growing in compassion is a religious concern. It means we live in denial which disconnects us from the abundance of being in honest, open, caring and knowing relationship with the web of life. This leads to despair, unhappiness, depression, tension and fear.

Food for Thought: UU Values and Sustainable Food

Vicky Talbert

Bradford Community Church Unitarian Universalist, Kenosha WI, June 22, 2007

I expect that some of you can remember back to the 50's and 60's when, once a week, your mother would don her shirtwaist, climb into the family car, and make her way to the A&P. How did she choose her groceries then? In our family, in New England and a long way from the fertile, productive valleys of California, proximity was a huge factor and choices were limited. I don't believe I had an avocado until I was 20 and certainly not a mango. Cost counted when our parents made out the grocery list, as did cultural and family habits and, perhaps religious practices. Some parents were ahead of their time, so nutrition may have been in the equation, too.

How things have changed! Today, it's not just that food is abundant. We can get almost any food, from almost anywhere, in any season. We have a cornucopia of choices. It truly seems a grocery shopper's paradise, the land of plenty.

But at what cost? People are beginning to recognize that the true cost of food is far greater than what we pay at check out. For many of us, what and how we eat is part of our spiritual practice, a moral or religious act....

Throughout developed countries, people want to know



where their food comes from and how it is produced. Is the food grown with pesticides or herbicides? What about the polluting runoff from fertilizer and manure? What is the contribution of corporate agriculture to the degradation of our planet and what are the

best food choices to protect our environment? Are the farm workers paid a fair wage? What are their living conditions? How are the animals involved treated? In what conditions are they raised and do they suffer? How does a meat-based diet compare with one that is plant-based...?

... Is water being diverted from local usage to irrigate crops to feed food animals? If the food was grown in another country, were local people displaced from their land? How have their lives and culture been disrupted so that food could be raised to feed us? If we have an ethical obligation to reduce emissions that contribute to climate change, is locally produced food better, is organic? What about fair trade and workers' rights? What are the justice issues related to corporate agriculture's use of the land of indigenous peoples? And the biggest question – how will we feed the world if we continue our unsustainable eating patterns?

Choosing our food may not be so easy – if we want to live in right relationship with Earth and all its inhabitants. The grocery store may not be that glorious paradise after all.

So ... how do we choose? ... Of course!! ... Our principles will guide us....

...Much attention has been given to our 7th principle. We know that industrialized agriculture as it now exists flies in the face of this principle and threatens the interdependent web. It causes massive pollution, reduces biodiversity, and destroys land integrity at an alarming rate

But, let's not overlook how our other principles fit into the equation of ethical compassionate and sustainable food choices. When we consider the inherent worth and dignity of every person, how can we ignore the family in a poor village in Asia whose culture has been degraded with their land when it was taken over by a multinational corporation to produce wheat for snacks for us? What about the migrant workers here in our own country who are exposed regularly to dangerous pesticides and then can't get decent medical care? Don't these people have worth and dignity equal to ours? Recent research confirms what many people know instinctively - that animals think, feel, and have complex social relationships - and suggests that the worth and dignity of those beings is as inherent as they are for human beings. Should we not extend this principle to them?...

Eating Ethically

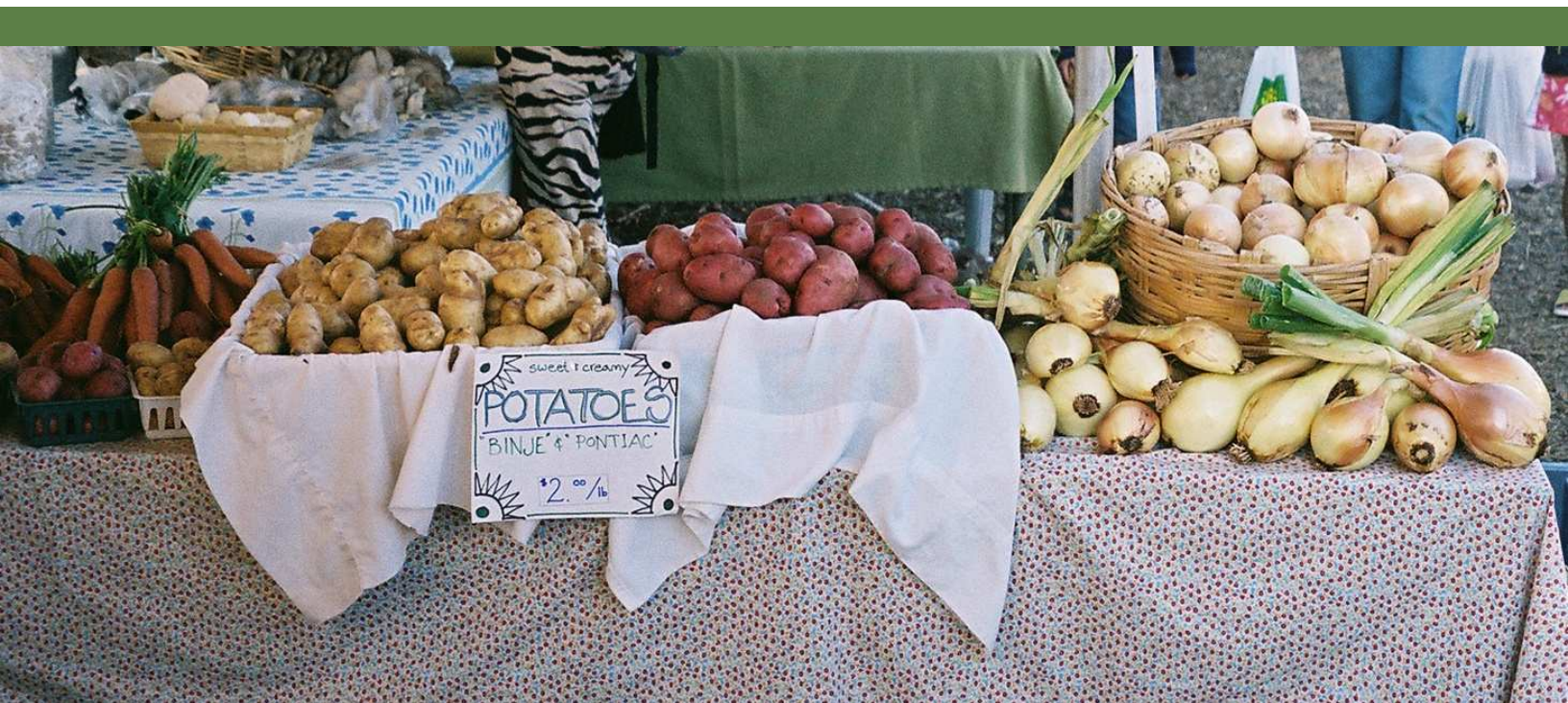
Rev. Alison Wohler

Minister, Unitarian Universalist Society of Amherst MA, April 22, 2007

...It matters because how we eat is not an isolated issue. While we would like to think, and often do think, with our independent human personalities, that what we eat is our own business, the truth is that what I eat, what you eat, has further reaching consequences than merely staying alive and being healthy. In this world of infinite connections, our interdependent web, there is no such thing as an isolated event, and because of that fact it matters what we do. It matters what we eat. It matters where our food comes from. It matters how it's grown. It matters how an animal is slaughtered. It matters that the earth is heating up and that eating food that has been transported long distances (the average is said to be 1500 miles) is contributing to the greenhouse effect because of carbon dioxide emissions. It matters that raising livestock produces copious amounts of methane, another carbon compound, which is twenty-three times more harmful to the atmosphere than carbon dioxide. (The Cheeseburger Footprint, <http://www.openthefuture.com/cheeseburger_CF.html>) It matters if the food we are eating was harvested by people being paid less than a living wage. Nothing is an isolated act.

But, it also matters that eating is one of the most intimate and pleasurable of human experiences. The food we eat becomes a living part of us. We are literally what we eat. It is ethically important to feed ourselves and our loved ones food that makes us healthy and happy. Yes, I think enjoying our eating matters, too. Why would our taste buds have survived evolution if tasting and enjoying our food were not beneficial to our survival in some way? And, it matters very much that eating with friends is fun and a way to get to know each other better. These kinds of things may all play into our decisions about how, when and what we eat.

The cost of buying food involves more than dollars and cents. [And] the benefits of food involve more than protein and carbohydrates....



Ethical Eating

Meri Gibb

Open Circle Unitarian Universalist, Boulder CO, November 9, 2008

...For the affluent, sitting down to a dinner derived from perhaps twenty-five different food sources is taken for granted.... Filling the plate and eating and drinking to fullness is a social event, an opportunity to admire the art before you, to pay your respects by consuming it.

For those suffering from malnutrition, if they are lucky, powdered milk and a cup of cereal, provided by an international aid organization, may be all they can look forward to, meal after meal. And perhaps, clean water to drink with it.

In the US, we waste 3,044 pounds of food per second. Per second! All the imperfect food that is culled from the fields and the food that is left in the fields after mechanical harvest, the blemished and bruised food that comes to the grocery store, the food that doesn't get purchased and begins to decay on the shelves. The edible by-products of the production of foods are discarded. Food that is over produced and cannot be sold is discarded. The food on our plates that doesn't get eaten that goes down the disposal or to the landfill. If we believe that providing adequate food is a human rights issue, then we must understand the imbalances of food delivery, acquisition, and consumption and the damage that is done to all living things by the industrialized growing and transporting of food and the raising of farm animals in unnatural circumstances.

...It may surprise you that it is estimated up to 37% of greenhouse gases are produced in the production of food...If we believe that we live in the interconnected web, that life is of value, that our environment is worth saving, that the disappearance of species in record numbers is unacceptable, then we have choices to make. You hear a lot about driving

less, turning the heat down, using less hot water and insulating your house. Did you know that by making choices about what you eat, you can change the course of the environmental and human degradation that we are now experiencing?

I'll make a few suggestions....

Buy organic and natural. I've heard folks claim that because organic products cost more, buying organic is unaffordable and elitist. I've read articles in which the writer claims that organic foods don't taste any better than commercially grown food and you should save your money. I believe that, as people who care about the world outside of ourselves, when we look at the toll that commercially grown foods take on the environment and the health of the people who do the work in the fields, we can't afford not to buy organic foods...

Eat less meat. If you are worried about getting enough protein in your diet, educate yourself about how to combine grains and legumes and dairy products to create complete proteins. Use meat as flavoring rather than as the main dish. Seek out meat that has been grass fed and finished and humanely raised... You could even go vegan if you learn to eat the proper foods needed for a balanced diet.

Become a food activist. Educate yourself about food production and distribution. Talk to your government representatives when farm bills and aid bills are being considered. Tell them to think democratically and environmentally when considering food subsidies and aid to foreign countries.

...Consider packaging when you have the choice to purchase food or drinks packed in plastic or not...

Educate yourself by reading food labels, choose nutritious foods over over-processed, over-sweetened and over-salted foods. They are healthier for you and, from a public health standpoint, reduce the pressure on our health care system to treat illnesses that could be avoided by choosing wisely.

... Compost your food waste. Rotting food waste in landfills creates methane – a greenhouse gas 22 times more potent than carbon emissions...

Eating ethically and sustainably sends a message to food growers and producers. You vote with your bucks. Not too long ago, you couldn't find organic or sustainably-raised animal foods in the marketplace. Now, [many supermarkets have] choices available....



Mind the Mules: Theology and Justice in the Food Chain

Rev. Dr. David Breeden

First Unitarian Church of Alton, IL, March 30, 2008

...I grew up on my family farm in the southern part of Illinois....

There was nothing about it that was a golden age. And I'm NOT nostalgic about the good old days.

I don't like carrying water from the well out back.

I don't like going to an outhouse at 4am in the snow.

I don't like the wasps that always seem to build nests in the outhouse in summer.

I don't like living in close proximity to snakes.

I don't like the suffering of animals. (Those of you who grew up on farms know that it's the kid's job to kill the chickens, because it takes some energy to catch 'em.) I really don't like killing chickens. Or hogs or cows. I don't even like hunting. I hate the smell of hot blood. As far as farming is concerned I—as my grandmother would say—turned up in the wrong turnip patch.

...The sad fact is that, for the most part, our society does not know where its food comes from; nor do we know the true cost of that food....

...Fact is the way we produce our food has caused irreversible environmental damage; has created an insupportable food chain; and has destroyed a way of life. And...it doesn't have to be that way.... Let's look at just once cause of this problem.

The National Labor Relations Act of 1935, the law that provided most US workers with the right to collective bargaining, excluded domestic workers and agricultural workers, and by implication small farmers. This was an instance of *realpolitik* for the Roosevelt administration, since it needed to keep southern, plantation-owning Democrats in the coalition. But that compromise had a couple of disastrous consequences.

First, since in the 1930s a sizable number of African Americans were domestic servants, agricultural laborers, or small farmers, the compromise postponed the civil rights movement for another generation. It also insured the suffering of



millions of migrant workers to this day, despite the best efforts of people like Caesar Chavez.

Second, the compromise insured that farm workers and small farmers would have no voice in government policy concerning agriculture. The consequences of THAT killed the family farm, damaged the environment, and is now killing the US population with bad food laced with corn derivatives....

...I vividly remember the last time I saw my grandfather alive. He was sitting on his front porch, an old scraggly chicken resting between his feet. My grandfather was rubbing the chicken's head with his cane. He respected living things—because they kept him and his family alive.... I

learned that when I had to do harm or kill I should do it without hesitation because that is the kindest, quickest way. I learned to see the interdependent web and to live in it as lightly as I could....

...When it comes to agriculture, no magic occurs: everything we eat is part of the soil and the sun. There is no free lunch. When we eat, we consume life, and the life we consume becomes part of us.

We consume plants and animals...and the labor of the human beings who raised the plants and animals, processed the plants and animals, hauled the plants and animals, and served the plants and animals to us.

There's nothing magic about our food, no matter the wonders of the advertising or the packaging. Though economies of scale and the welter of advertising obscure the reality, eating is a sacrificial act; a holy act: for us to eat, even when we are vegetarian, living things suffer and die.

Next time you sit down for a meal, consider praying an old Buddhist prayer that my teacher, the poet Allen Ginsberg, taught me:

*We take this food
The labor of many people,
The suffering of many forms of life.
We wish to be worthy....*

Finding Meaning In The Mundane

Brian Ferguson

First Unitarian Universalist Society of San Francisco CA, July 3, 2005

...For many of us this Sunday service is where we come together to examine what gives our lives worth and to make sense of the seemingly incomprehensible events around us. Our time in this sanctuary is not mundane, it is a special time where we wrestle with many of the fundamental questions about life.

Now the mundane aspects of our lives are the making of breakfasts which we ate this morning, how we traveled here, and the writing of checks for the bills we'll pay tonight. Our lives are made up of these ordinary but necessary tasks of living but I believe with a deeper understanding we can find greater meaning from these seemingly unfulfilling tasks. As Stephen said earlier we must create the value that gives meaning to our lives.

For me, religion is about connectedness, about our relationships with ourselves, our local community and the world at large. It is these relationships that give my life worth and I explore these relationships by taking a deeper view of my everyday actions and how these are driven by my values...

John Marsh our former minister had a wonderful blessing which captures this sentiment: "As we sit down to enjoy this food, let us remember that this food is brought to us through the labors and struggles of our brothers and sisters throughout the world, may we wish the same for them as we ourselves have today."

This brings a connection on the global scale to people we will never know but we depend upon daily. This gives us such a greater appreciation for the meal we often eat while absorbed in some other activity. Just by having this awareness of the origins of our food already provides a human connection and a wonder for our existence...

This is a great untapped area of financial influence we all have. Even if only a small percentage of our purchases buy products resulting in improvement in our society this would have a profound impact. Our religious society has taken steps in this direction with the Fair Trade coffee we drink after the service in our coffee hour. Now coffee may be just one product but it is the second biggest import to the U.S. after oil therefore the Fair Trade of coffee is already having a significant positive impact on a global scale...

If we think in greater depth about these purchases beyond the price, quality and style of the product to the conditions of the workers involved, the environmental impact, and the ethics of the company involved this gives far greater meaning

to many of our simplest actions.

A friend of mine once said "I like paying my taxes because I feel I'm contributing to a civilized society." Now I don't think he represents a typical view but I really like the idea. Can you imagine if every time we bought something we felt we were contributing to a better world?

This socially responsible buying is only possible because we have choices in our product decisions. There are wonderful organizations such as COOP America and San Francisco-based Global Exchange who provides plenty of information about socially responsible products. The Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility is an organization of many religious groups, including our own, and is one of the most important resources for activism today. It is involved on such issues as access to health care, opposing sweat-shops, human rights, environmental justice, violence in our society and global poverty...just our presence is all that is required to make a difference in this world whether it is to correct an injustice, to comfort a friend or inspire others. It is often the most mundane act that can have the most profound effects.

...I firmly believe to truly find meaning in the mundane we need to open our mind to the wonder and depth of the world around us and take creative actions consistent with our highest values. Even our most ordinary actions can have an impact both on ourselves and our community far beyond what we can ever imagine. Being alive is a gift from nature but living a meaningful life is a gift to [ourselves]. Amen and may it be so.



Bringing Home the Bacon

Rev. Dr. Michael Tino

Minister, Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Northern Westchester, Mount Kisco NY, January 11, 2009

...Before Christmas, I volunteered with a number of people from this Fellowship at the Mount Kisco interfaith food pantry.... Together, we packed over a hundred bags full of food for the hungry people waiting in the cold outside.

We figured a hundred bags might do for the two days the pantry was open that week—it was significantly more than had been distributed last year. Our efforts would barely last the first day of the two, though, and some seventy more bags had to be packed the next day.

...With the economy hitting the skids, and the number of unemployed and underemployed increasing dramatically, the number of hungry people in our community is increasing.... Food banks have been straining for years under the burden of providing nutritious food for communities across our country, and this strain is only getting worse.

“For the year 2006, the U.S. Department of Agriculture reported that 35.5 million Americans lived in households considered to be ‘food insecure....’” (UUA)

In fact, 10.4% of New York households are labeled “food insecure,” meaning that they do not have access to enough food for “an active, healthy life for all household members.” (Bread for the World, USDA Food Security websites) Some 4% of New York households experience chronic hunger and malnutrition.

And the numbers on food insecurity and hunger are bound to rise when statistics for 2008 and 2009 come out. We cannot wait... to do something.

We must seek both short- and long-term solutions to issues of food insecurity in this country, and in this community. People must be able to eat now, and they must have access to adequate, nutritious food from now on.

You might be wondering, whether there aren't programs to help people who don't have enough food to eat? Programs like Food Stamps?



Yes, these programs exist, but they are woefully inadequate.

Consider the hypothetical “average” family on the US Department of Agriculture’s own website for the program formerly known as Food Stamps.... This family of four has \$1,500 a month in earned income: \$18,000 a year.

They get a little bit from Social Security because of this low income, an amount that pretty much goes right out the door for child care expenses. You can imagine what they must spend on rent to live in New York—actual housing expenses don't count.

They don't own a car.... Nor do they have any money in the bank. They're living paycheck-to-paycheck....

...The program is pro-rated based on income, so they get \$239 a month, which works out to a little under \$2 per day per person in their family. (USDA SNAP website)

The average food stamp benefit for those poor enough to be eligible for assistance until recently has been just about \$1 per person per meal. \$3 a day, \$21 a week. And last year's Farm Bill didn't raise the amounts by much. (Congressional Food Stamp Challenge website)

When was the last time you had a meal that cost only a dollar for all of the ingredients?

The Federal Food Stamp program is so inadequate

that it has led many...to participate in what's called the “Food Stamp Challenge,” in which people try to live on food costing only \$21 for a week.

Almost uniformly, the people who have tried this challenge have found it difficult at the very least; most have found it impossible to obtain adequate nutrition, even if they can manage adequate calorie intake. [As Journalist] Sarah Barr... ended her article reflecting upon her challenge....

“Like I said, I haven't been extremely hungry, and while I know the diet isn't nutritious it's enough to keep me going. One more confession though.

“Saturday is my last day, and I plan to quit as soon as I scarf down an early dinner so that I can go out with my older brother for his birthday. I'm willing to bet drinks and dinner (take two) are in order. The conclusion of my week spent on a food stamp diet will be a celebration.

“Hardly a realistic end.” (Barr)

Tomato, Tomahto

Peggy Clarke

Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Northern Westchester, Mount Kisco NY, July 19, 2009

Tomatoes are arguably the most consumed fruit or vegetable in our country.... 28% of Americans eat a meal every day that contains at least one tomato. It is estimated that every American eats about 29 pounds of fresh tomatoes a year and an additional 73 pounds processed in tomato sauces, ketchup, etc.

But tomatoes only grow locally in the summer....

Immokalee, Florida is the tomato capital of the nation. It's a desolate shanty town 10 minutes from Bonita Springs, a wealthy coastal town, and about 45 minutes from Naples, the 2nd wealthiest metropolitan area in the country. The heart of the town is a 9 block grid of dusty, potholed, empty streets, lined with trailers fit for 1 or 2 with 10 or 12 pairs of shoes by the door.... Per capita income in Immokalee is \$8,500. 90% of all the tomatoes eaten in the US are grown there.

I know something about Immokalee because I've spent some time there working with – and along side of – migrant workers over the course of a few years.... [W]hat happens in these fields is not open to the public. But we went and I was able to get out there year after year to learn what life as a tomato picker was really about.

Pickers stand in line on the street waiting for the buses in the dark of the morning. This makes sense to me, not because tomatoes need to be picked at 5am, but because most citizens don't want to see the faces of the men who work these fields. They pile onto the buses, hoping to get a space. Not everyone will have work every day. Once on the fields, they're given a pair of gloves and a barrel and they'd head out to the rows of hedges.... Once full, they hoist the bucket onto their heads or shoulders and carry them to a very large, open back truck. The foreman is standing at the top of the truck.... The pickers then throw the buckets over their heads and the foreman catches it, dumps the tomatoes and throws it back to the worker who runs back to the rows.

They were paid, believe it or not, 44 cents for each 32 pound bucket. Working at breakneck speed, some of these



guys are able to pick a ton of tomatoes in a day, netting as much as \$50 for their 12 hours. Everything has to go very right for that to happen, including not having this sorry white girl in the fields to trip over. I was able to sustain 2 buckets an hour which gave me a total of \$7.04 a for my eight hour day. I wasn't once able to throw that 32 pound

bucket to the foreman, so as I approached the truck, someone else would throw it and I'd give him my 44 cents.

The tomato fields of Immokalee are also ground zero for modern slavery. ...[O]ne

slavery ring was broken and the slaveholders were convicted, but that's a rare occurrence. It happened because one slave who's name is Lucas was able to break free. He was looking for work in the fields and didn't know anyone in Florida, so he arranged a deal with a man for a place to live. The man offered credit for weeks there wasn't enough work along with room and board. But when Lucas showed up, he found that the room for which he was paying \$20 a week was actually the back of a U-Haul truck that he shared with a dozen other men.... There was no light or

water or toilet of any kind in the truck and the door was locked. For his \$20 he also got 2 meals a day of eggs, rice and beans and was charged for everything including \$5 per use of the cold hose for cleaning and drinking. Lucas worked the field and his paycheck went directly to the slaveholder who then gave Lucas a few dollars a week while adding up the debt.

When Lucas tried to leave, he was beaten badly. He and the other slaves were slashed with knives, tied to posts and shackled in chains.... Early one morning after several years in this hell, Lucas saw a

small hole in the roof of that u-haul and was able to break his way free.

More than a thousand people have been liberated in the past 10 years, but there are thousands more locked into slavery in Florida right now....

All this so our supermarkets can have bins overflowing with ripe tomatoes in January.

Pickers stand in line on the street waiting for the buses in the dark of the morning. This makes sense to me, not because tomatoes need to be picked at 5am, but because most citizens don't want to see the faces of the men who work these fields. They pile onto the buses, hoping to get a space. Not everyone will have work every day.

Are you what you eat?

Geri Kennedy

Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Redwood City, CA

On a deeper level, do we consider what we are eating and whether its origins are compatible with our personal values?

Since the beginning of time, dietary practices have been incorporated into the religious practices of humanity. Some religious sects abstain, or are forbidden, from consuming certain foods and drinks; others restrict foods and drinks during their holy days; while still others associate dietary and food preparation practices with rituals of the faith. The early biblical writings, especially those found in Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy of the Old Testament outlined the dietary practices for the Jewish faith. We heard some of these earlier this morning. Practices such as fasting are a part of many religious traditions.

There are many theories about the origins of some of these restrictions and customs, but that is for another day.

Our relationships with food are very complicated. We have family and ancestral traditions, religious rules, dietary restrictions for health and much more.

Many people have lost the connection to the origins of our food. Very few Americans have ever visited a farm, much less had personal contact with a pig, cow or chicken. There are children growing up in inner cities who have never even seen a living, growing vegetable plant, much less know that peanuts come from the ground and walnuts grow on trees. They can be shocked to learn that carrots are actually roots! We change the names of our food to avoid thinking about where it comes from – we eat beef and pork, not cows and pigs. Livestock growers talk about units of production, not individual animals. In Spanish, the gallina walks around,

the pollo is on your plate.

My Journey

Diane Waltner

First Unitarian Universalist Church of Wichita, KS

I grew up on a farm, about 6 miles outside of Moundridge, KS... [O]ne of my cousins and one of my uncles had dairy farms, a neighbor raised sheep, and my dad owned Central Kansas Hatchery, which hatched chickens and turkeys. So I came from a decidedly non-vegan background, firmly entrenched in animal agribusiness. Growing up, I spent many hours at the hatchery and would sometimes play with the baby chicks and turkeys, but never really saw them as feeling beings, more like animated stuffed toys.

Over the years I've seen thousands upon thousands of chicks being de-beaked, de-winged, vaccinated in the neck, and thrown around like objects. Personally, I have also de-combed chicks and de-toed turkeys. I now look back in horror at some of the things I did, saw, and heard. And, of course, outside one of the back doors at the hatchery was the big barrel, where the cockerels (male chicks) were dumped to suffocate. I think gas was sometimes added so they would die more quickly. But that was a place I pretty much avoided.

Now my parents were certainly not evil people. Dad was a pillar of the community and could always be counted on to help out when needed. Mom was the closest person to a saint that I have ever known. I don't recall her ever really saying a bad thing about anyone, although she did express irritation at some. I can't really imagine a more loving family. And although we certainly had our disagreements and differences, I always felt loved and supported, and I miss them terribly. I'm just very saddened that humanity has reached a point in which this treatment of animals is considered acceptable, even normal, and that even good and compassionate people seldom extend their compassion beyond the human race...

[O]ver the course of the last couple of years, I've become increasingly uncomfortable with my consumption of eggs and dairy. I couldn't completely allow myself to see the realities and kept thinking that I was doing enough to reduce unnecessary suffering. I would tell myself the lies that the agribusiness industries spew - for example, that eggs and dairy were necessary to be healthy. I really didn't want to know any differently. I sought out "humane, organic" cheese and "cage free" eggs, thinking at the time, that was a good compromise. But things just didn't feel right, and I have since learned terrible things about the fallacy of "happy eggs and cheese..."



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

HOLIDAYS

Thanksgiving

In the Americas, the first harvest festivals were celebrated by native peoples long before the Europeans arrived. The Spanish, the French, the English, and others, brought new harvest traditions to the Americas during the 1500s. Modern Canadians celebrate Thanksgiving Day in October, which is a traditional time for harvest gatherings in the Northern Hemisphere. In the United States, Thanksgiving Day is delayed until late November. Although the American holiday is surrounded by myths and important controversies, it's significant for Unitarian Universalists (and here's a bit of trivia: organized in 1620, the Pilgrim congregation in Plymouth, Massachusetts, became a Unitarian congregation during the early 1800s). The Core Team recommends the following websites as resources to help congregations reflect more deeply on Thanksgiving:

- Resources for deconstructing the myth of the first Thanksgiving from Oyate, a Native organization working to ensure that Native lives and histories are portrayed honestly: www.oyate.org/resources.html
- Teacher and student resources for *American Indian Perspectives on Thanksgiving* from the Smithsonian's National Museum of the American Indian: www.nmai.si.edu/subpage.cfm?subpage=education&second=thanksgiving
- University of California Los Angeles news video by Chiara Sottile (daughter of Ethical Eating Core Team member Robette Dias) on the 2008 National Day of Mourning on the island of Alcatraz, rejecting myths of Thanksgiving and honoring the heritage of native peoples: www.dailybruin.com/dbtv/2008/dec/03/713/
- The *UUWorld* (Winter 2008) article "Dinner Dilemmas: Ethical Issues at the Thanksgiving Dinner Table" by John Gibb Millspaugh www.uuworld.org/ideas/articles/121289.shtml, available in unabridged form at tinyurl.com/dinnerdilemmas

Earth Day (April 22) celebrations began in 1970. Labor Day, the first Monday in September, honors "the strength and esprit de corps of the trade and labor organizations," according to first U.S. proposal of the holiday in the 1800s.

St. Francis Day (October 4) honors St. Francis of Assisi, Catholicism's patron saint of animals and ecology.

The Feast of Booths (Sukkot) is the Jewish harvest festival.

International Human Rights Day, established by the United Nations, is December 10. By a happy coincidence, it is also the day when the Nobel Peace Prize is awarded. Some congregations honor December 10th as one of their December holidays.

Great American Meatout - March 20

www.meatout.org

World Vegetarian Day - October 1

www.worldvegetarianday.org

World Farm Animals Day - October 2

www.wfad.org

World Food Day - October 16

www.worldfooddayusa.org

World Vegan Day - November 1

www.worldveganday.org



WEBSITES

The Earth Charter is a beautiful statement celebrating ethical eating and environmental justice. The preamble affirms the need for “a sustainable global society founded on respect for nature, universal human rights, economic justice, and a culture of peace.” www.earthcharter.org

The National Farmworker Ministry. Has an extensive library of worship materials in English and Spanish; particularly appropriate for holiday celebrations of Labor Day and Thanksgiving. www.nfwm.org/worshipresources/wrshpmain.shtml

UU Ministry for Earth (UUMFE). Offers a broad array of environmentally-themed worship resources, including material appropriate for intergenerational worship. uuministryforearth.org

UUs for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (UFETA). Sermons, quotations, and readings for worship, and even a “Blessings of the Animals Resource Packet.” www.uua.org/ufeta

“The Universal Declaration of Human Rights” is the statement of human rights identified with the United Nations. www.un.org/Overview/rights.html

UUA Worship Web, has an extensive collection of readings, chalice lightings, and other service materials. www.uua.org/spirituallife/worshipweb/



WORSHIP TIPS FOR SERVICE LEADERS

Rev. Victoria Weinstein, Minister of the First Parish Unitarian Church of Norwell MA, teaches Unitarian Universalist Worship and Liturgy at Andover-Newton Theological School. Rev. Weinstein was happy to support this CSAI process, and provided a special updated version of her worship guide, recognizing that Social Action committees, Green Sanctuary committees, and other groups of laypeople may lead worship services launching the “Ethical Eating: Food and Environmental Justice” CSAI in their congregations.

Why do we worship? Before you lead a service, be sure you have your own understanding of this question. If you have no sense of deep purpose, neither will the congregation.

Preparation equals love. Leading worship should look easy and natural, but it is neither. Before you participate or preside, know every element of the service, be intimately familiar with “what goes next and WHY” and be extremely prepared. Your preparation will not guarantee perfection, and shouldn’t. It will guarantee your confidence in leading the congregation through a reverent worship experience.

Energy equals love, hospitality and inclusion. No matter what your personality type, you must bring a vitality and presence to worship with your body and voice that includes and embraces all who enter the worship space. Find your leadership persona and practice it until it feels authentic to you. This includes rehearsing with microphones, studying your reflection in the mirror, watching video of yourself, asking friends for feedback, or leading parts of worship for a few observers sitting in various parts of the worship space. P.S. Do not assume that because you have a “big voice” that you can be heard. Enunciation and pacing are at least as important as volume. Use microphones if they are available and learn to modulate your voice to get the best use of them. People using hearing-assisted devices will thank you for it.

When leading worship, you are a conduit of the Holy, so get out of your own way. Worship is no time for debilitating self-consciousness, excess self-deprecation, or sarcastic asides. Keep your own feelings pure and your actions focused as you preside or participate. This is a congregation, not an audience. They are not there to assess or judge you, but to share worship together. Avoid nervous commentary between elements, “whoopsie-daisie” confessions of error, and sarcastic asides.

When leading an issues-oriented worship service, remember that the service should minister even to those who come with no acquaintance with, and no particular interest in, the topic. Find places in the service that address the spiritual needs of all those in attendance and be sure that your sermon has more spiritual and religious relevance than a mere lecture.