

All-age talk

FOOD, GLORIOUS FOOD

World Food Day falls on 16 October and we're marking the occasion with a foody theme this month. The first half of this activity is a taste-bud-tingling talk to involve everyone in your church, featuring a story from a family in Kenya that is finding new ways to grow more food in a challenging environment. The second part has a variety of food-related activities for children and young people to get their teeth into.

You will need

- *Food, Glorious Food* PowerPoint presentation available from christianaid.org.uk/childrens-resources
- photographs of different components of common meals, for example one photo of sausages and another of mashed potato; one of beans and another of toast; one of spaghetti and another of Bolognese sauce. Include photos of ugali (maize) – see recipe at end – and pigeon peas, which form a traditional meal in Kenya.
- a sticky-backed note on one in every seven chairs in the congregation.

Presentation

Show slide 1 from the PowerPoint presentation. Place photographs of food under some of the seats in the congregation before people start to enter church. (If you have an area where the young people usually sit, concentrate the pictures here.)

Challenge people to find whoever has the other part of their 'dinner' and to come to the front as soon as they have found them to show the meals to the congregation.

Ask: if they could only eat one of these dinners every day for the rest of their lives, which one would it be? Which one is the most popular meal?

Ask: did they take into account what is good for their bodies or simply what tastes the best? Did anybody choose the ugali and pigeon peas? Does anybody even know what they are?

Show slide 2. Explain that these form the staple dinner of many people who live in Kenya. Lots of people around the world don't have nearly as

much choice as we do when it comes to food, and many have to eat the same food every day.

Ask people to stand up if they grow any of their own food. Ask anyone else to stand if they are able to buy straight from the grower, or know the people who grow their food. Finally, ask how the other congregation members get hold of what they need to eat? If they could only eat what they were able to grow for themselves in their back garden, what do they think would happen to their diets?

Ask everyone who has a sticky-backed note on their chair to stand up. Explain that if your congregation was the world's population, these represent the people who would not have enough food. Almost 1 billion people go to bed hungry every night because they can't always get enough to eat, and even more people are malnourished; the food they have doesn't contain all the essential vitamins that their bodies need.

World Food Day is on 16 October. We can use it as an opportunity to think about our food, and what it's like to not have enough.



Christian Aid is a charity that works with organisations and communities in many countries around the world, supporting people to find ways to make their lives better. Many Christian Aid partners work to help communities grow more food, or find other ways to afford enough food. Lilian and Albert Nthiga (show slide 3) live in Kenya and have been married for more than 50 years. They farm the land around their house in order to feed themselves and make money by selling the



crops. But in recent years they have experienced more droughts than ever before and were starting to struggle.

'Our biggest challenge here is the shortage of rains. The rains do not fall and we have crop failure. Last season we planted more than 10 acres but we harvested nothing,' explains Albert. Show slide 4.

Christian Aid partner Christian Community Services of Mount Kenya East (CCSMKE) helps farmers like Lilian and Albert use scientific weather forecasts alongside local knowledge to allow them to decide what to plant and when, so they will get the best results.

Show slide 5. CCSMKE has worked with farmers for many years teaching them about seeds that can do without as much water as the crops they normally grow, how to build terraces to catch the little rain that falls, and to prepare the ground with manure.

Show slide 6. 'We have learnt about soil conservation and it has also encouraged us to plant early,' explains Albert. 'By planting early,

even when the rain starts and fails, we have at least something.'

With a little help from Christian Aid, Albert believes that: 'We can have enough to eat and there would be joy, no tension, no stress.'

Food is so important to our lives that not having enough has an effect on everything else that we do. Many times in the Bible, Jesus uses food either in his stories or as illustrations to help people understand what he means. He describes himself as the 'bread of life' – something we couldn't possibly live without. He also says that when we help feed people who are hungry, we are doing it for him. It's such an important task; it's as if we are feeding Jesus himself.

Ask people to join you in praying that we don't take our food, or the people who work to produce it, for granted, but appreciate the strength that it gives us to go about our lives.

Extra activities for children's groups

- Play 'My friend went to market...'. Ask each person in the group to finish the sentence 'My friend went to market and she bought me a...'. The first person must name an item of food beginning with 'a', and the next person must repeat that sentence and add something beginning with 'b' and so on. Reflect on and celebrate the variety of foods that we are able to buy.
- Bring in a 'shopping basket' of everyday and slightly more unusual foods. Hand them out and ask the young people to look at the packaging, shape and texture, and think about the following questions. Is it something they have bought before? What would they make with it? Where has the food come from? Do they think it is food that is good for them or bad for them? Do they think the person who grew the ingredients or made the food got a good deal?
- Show the group the Fairtrade Mark and ask if they know what it means (it is included as the final slide in the PowerPoint presentation available from christianaid.org.uk/childrens-resources). Ask them if they can name any



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Fairtrade products that are available, and challenge them to find one new Fairtrade product this week. (The Fairtrade Mark guarantees that the farmers who grew the key ingredients were paid a fair and agreed price, and that their community received some money that they are able to invest in important facilities such as schools or health centres. You can find out more about Fairtrade at fairtrade.org.uk)

- Ask the group to think about the Lord's Prayer and to tell you the line that mentions food. This is the prayer that Jesus taught us to use, and bread was a very important part of people's diets in Jesus' time. Why do they think Jesus included a line about food in his prayer? Without meeting our basic needs we cannot fulfil the plans that God has for us.
- Ask the group to think about what it's like to be hungry. When was the last time they were hungry and really wanted to eat? How did it make them feel? Would it be easy to concentrate at school every day if they had not had enough to eat? Show two pieces of paper – one with the word 'hunger' and the other with the word 'food' written at the centre. Ask everyone to come and write something on the sheets that they associate with that word in each case. Reflect on the difference food makes to how we feel.
- The Love Food Hate Waste campaign (lovefoodhatewaste.com) estimates that 'wasting food costs the average family with children around £50 a month, and has serious environmental implications too. If we all stop wasting food that could have been eaten, the [carbon dioxide] impact would be the equivalent of taking one in five cars off the road'. Encourage your group to do what they can not to waste food (not buying too much, using up leftovers, and so on), and reflect on what we can all do to care for the environment and reduce food waste.
- If appropriate for your group, hand everybody a chewy or boiled sweet and ask them to pray while they eat it. Use the sweets to focus thoughts on what we eat, and to pray for those who don't have enough and for ourselves that we may all work towards a world without hunger.
- Why not make some ugali with your group?!

Ingredients (4 servings)

4 cups water

4 cups maize meal or corn meal flour

Instructions

Bring water to the boil in a pan.

Add the corn or maize meal and stir with a wooden spoon until the mixture is thick and smooth. Make sure it is not too stiff. Add boiling water if it is too thick.

Gather the mixture in the middle of the pan and turn the heat to low. Cover the pan and leave it on low heat for 15-20 minutes, turning occasionally.

Flip the ugali onto a plate and, after it cools a bit, form it into a 'cake'. Serve with green vegetables or beans.

