

# Our Daily Bread: Harvesters of Hope and Gardeners of Eden

**“Sow for yourselves justice: reap steadfast love; break up your fallow ground; for it is time to seek the Lord, till (God) may come and rain righteousness upon you.”**

Hosea 10:12 (NRSV)

**“He will also send you rain for the seed you sow in the ground, and the food that comes from the land will be rich and plentiful.”**

Isaiah 30:23 (NIV)

Every time you sit down for a meal, you're supporting a food system that has reverberating effects on God's creation. Farming policies and practices can help or harm God's creation—it all comes down to who does the farming and how. Does the farmer care about the long-term sustainability of the farm and its ability to produce food and a livelihood for future generations? How the land is farmed impacts air, water, soil, animals, and people and is inextricably linked to the health and well-being of God's creation—human and nonhuman.

## INTRODUCTION

We live in a time of industrial agriculture where, for many of us, family farms no longer hold a current or central place in our own personal family story. The average meal has ingredients that have traveled 1,500 miles to our table. Grocery stores are where most of us get our food, making it hard to connect the items we purchase to the dirt in which they grew. While we fill our shopping carts with pre-packaged commercial produce, we walk through aisles devoid of the true smells and textures of the land from which food comes. Meanwhile those family farmers who “live off the land” and help provide food for our tables are forced to work *off* the land away from the farm, in order to make ends meet. And, farm workers, often underpaid for their work, are exposed to harmful farm chemicals and hazardous working conditions. While we might revel in having any food we want any time we want, the industrial agricultural model is wreaking havoc on God's Earth and on human communities around the world and close to home.



## Our Christian Call

As Christians, we are given instructions about how God intends for us to care for creation. As we read biblical stories about justice rolling down like water, of walking the pathways of peace, and of Jesus and his disciples feeding the 5,000, we get a vision of God's plan for justice. This helps paint a picture of how we can structure our daily living to strive for justice. We are called to seek lifestyles (individual and corporate) that allow God's creation to flourish. We are called to seek lifestyles that seek justice for all of God's creation. When we analyze the contemporary agricultural system, we must evaluate it with Christ-like eyes and find Spirit-filled solutions that bring God's reign on Earth as well as heaven.

## Local Family Farms and Industrial Agriculture

Family farms are farms in which a family makes most of the decisions and provides most of the work to make the farm run. The economic risks and benefits belong to the family. Family farms often stay in the same family for generations and are a central part of the social fabric and economic livelihood of rural communities. Many family farmers work their land with an eye toward long-term sustainability, both economic and environmental. A diverse base of small and mid-sized family farms also supports a stronger and more stable local economy. Unfortunately, the economic land-

scape of many rural areas is changing as farms, including many that are family owned, grow larger and larger. Small and mid-sized family farms are feeling the effects of this trend; in 2002, family farmers in these categories earned their lowest net real cash income since 1940.

Small and mid-sized farms are being replaced across rural America by large-scale farms that aim to produce the greatest output at the lowest cost by using economies of scale (growing large amounts of one thing). Part of the driving force behind this “industrial” agriculture is consumer demand for abundant, cheap food. Unfortunately, in meeting this immediate economic demand, the long-term sustainability of the environment is often not a key concern. In addition, large-scale farming is often intertwined with large agricultural businesses focused on seeds, machinery, and chemicals and on processing and marketing agricultural products. Together, large-scale agriculture and agri-businesses create a market where relatively few corporations and a small number of producers have edged out smaller farms and businesses and control food production “from the seed to the shelf.”

### **Farming and Social Justice**

In 1910, 215,000 African American farmers owned, fully or partially, 15 million acres of land. By 1992, that number had decreased to 18,000 African American farmers owning only 2.3 million acres. Similarly bleak realities exist for Native American farmers. And, Asian Americans historically have been excluded from significant land ownership. The number of Latino farmers is growing, yet many Latinos are employed as farm laborers rather than owning their own farm. Evidence of civil rights violations and racial bias in the delivery of United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Programs is abundant. A 1995

**Commodity Payments** *The government is required by law to subsidize more than two dozen agricultural products. Only certain crops receive payments, including: wheat, corn, sorghum, barley, oats, rice, soybeans, cotton, oilseeds (sunflower seeds etc.), milk, peanuts, and sugar. Commodity payments accounted for 37 percent of farm income in 2001. Payment amounts depend upon the amount of the commodity produced, so the more a farmer harvests, the higher the payment will be from the government. Producers of most agricultural products, including livestock, fruits, and vegetables, do not receive government payments.*

independent report, commissioned by the USDA, found that minority participation in programs was low and that they received far less than their fair share of USDA money for crop payments, disaster payments, and loans.<sup>3</sup>

In addition to the question of ownership of farmland, health and safety concerns abound for farm workers. Total pesticides used in the U.S. have more than doubled in the years 1964-2001, according to the USDA.<sup>4</sup> Studies have shown a link between pesticides and farm worker health including higher rates of breast cancer, prostate cancer, retinal degeneration, and Parkinson’s disease.<sup>5</sup> Often these same workers are also being paid low wages, guaranteed work for only a season, and given little or no health benefits. When farm policies allow more local control of capital, and support family farmers and their more sustainable practices, justice can be served.

### **Rural and Urban Life: Seeking Vibrant Local Economies**

Farm families are part of the social fabric of rural communities. Yet, with the incredible market pressure and the financial stress that these families now face, rates of depression, alcohol abuse, child abuse, spouse abuse, divorce, and suicide are rising.

Right now the global marketplace does nothing to increase the real wealth or wellbeing of local, rural communities around the world. Instead, transnational corporations and agribusinesses make profit from this global food system that disempowers smaller, sustainable units of operation including many family farmers. Governments enter global trade agreements that increase competition, lower the market price of crops below their cost to grow, and put small- and medium-sized farms in danger of foreclosure.

As the modern food system depends more and more on the global economy and favors large-scale industrial agriculture, fewer communities are finding themselves food secure, meaning they do not have access to enough healthy food to meet their daily needs. Small family farmers themselves experience hunger and struggle to make financial ends meet, even while they produce food for our tables.

A single family farm contributes an average of \$720,000 into its local economy. These local growers are much more likely than corporate farming operations to spend their money with local merchants. Money stays in the community where it supplies local jobs and keeps schools running and churches worshipping. These strong rural economies, which help put food on all our tables, are critical for us all.

## Sermon Starters

From the Common Lectionary for Sunday, April 22nd, 2007

By Neddy Astudillo, Presbyterian Pastor and Eco-Theologian, Beloit, WI

**M**om, is the soil dead?" inquired my eight year-old son. I was puzzled by his question since he has been raised on an organic farm. "No, the soil is not dead," I said. "There are billions of living organisms in a handful of soil. Why would you think it is dead?" He replied, "My teacher said it was dead." The teacher had asked students for examples of dead and living matter in nature and my son had mentioned soil as a living example. But, his teacher believed the soil dead and perpetuated a worldview that encourages us to ignore the great diversity of life and promotes careless farming practices. It is this diversity that makes the soil capable of holding and bringing forth life generation after generation.

When we read Scripture with mindful eyes we begin to see and hear a great number of voices and a mystery that lies beyond our human-centered view of the role of creatures in creation. John, the servant of God (**Revelation 5:11-14**) sees the creatures of the Earth singing and leading praises to the Lamb of God. They appear proclaiming and participating in God's plan of salvation. To read more about the land and nature as part of a restored covenant, read: **Ezekiel 47:9-12; Job 12:7-10**.

"What do dolphins have to do with this farm?" an Illinois farmer asks a group of visitors as they inquire about a dolphin shaped weather vane on top of the barn. No one can answer his question, so he adds: "It is a good reminder that we're all connected. Farms in the Midwest export so much soil and chemical fertilizer downstream to the Mississippi and out into the Gulf of Mexico that we've created a dead zone the size of Massachusetts that threatens all sea life. Our organic farm creates healthy soils that keep soil and fertility on the farm and out of the sea where the dolphins swim." How would we understand John's story, in **John 21:1-14**, if Jesus appeared to his disciples today by the Gulf of Mexico instead of by the Sea of Tiberias? It would be a miracle to catch fish in the Gulf, as it was then, and a great example of the way Jesus Christ reveals himself to the world. As we celebrate the miracle, we need to confront the forces that undermine



God's abundance. Christ himself wants us to partake of the bread of life with all those in need, and show us all the miracles that are possible with his resurrection.

**"...after taking some food he regained his strength"** (**Acts 9:19a**). Unfortunately, my words did not echo these when I saw the nurse bringing a hamburger and french fries to my husband who was in the hospital with a yet undiagnosed face paralysis. The biblical words referred to what I imagine was a more mindful meal, given to the new apostle Paul after he regained his sight and was baptized with water and Spirit. I suspect that if a woman had written this passage she would have added what he was fed, but we can only speculate. If you had been blinded for three days or witnessed Christ's transforming love, how would you have celebrated your new life in Christ? Could all meals be as mindful regardless of our condition? Good food allows us to regain strength and sends us out into the world to live out our vocations. Good food promotes healthy people and a healthy land. These principles are worth considering as we make our food choices. Can we eat as if every meal is an invitation to live out Christ's Spirit in the world, as a witness to our Baptism? Can we eat to avoid hurt and destruction to our local ecosystem? (**Isaiah 65:17-25**). What and how is the Holy Spirit calling us to eat?

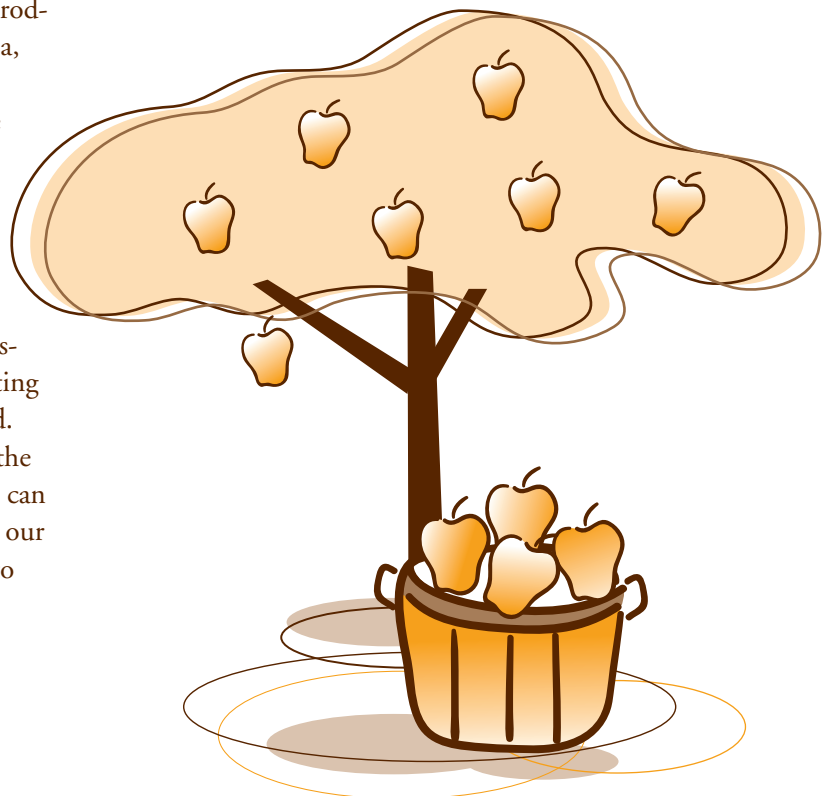
## Environmental Impacts

Food production, conducted on 46 percent of U.S. land, is one of the main uses of land worldwide. Responsible agricultural land management practices, therefore, can have a profound impact on the health of the land and ecosystems worldwide.

- **Soil**—Traditional agricultural practices and current U.S. farm policy encourages the production of crops in ways that cause tremendous damage to the land. Commodity payments are based on the volume of production and are offered only for certain crops. This leads to over-production of certain crops, skews crop choice, can deplete the soil of valuable nutrients, and can damage the soil ecosystem.
- **Water**—Conventional agriculture requires the input of high volumes of pesticides, herbicides, and fertilizers. These chemicals end up on and in our food and, through the processes of runoff and erosion, in our streams and rivers and groundwater. Agricultural nonpoint source pollution, pollution that comes from water that washes off farm land, is the leading cause of water quality degradation in lakes and rivers. It is also the second largest source of damage to wetlands and a major contributor to contamination of estuaries and groundwater. Also, animal wastes from industrial livestock feeding operations contaminate water with excess nitrogen and phosphorus, organic matter, soil solids, pathogens, heavy metals, hormones, antibiotics, and ammonia.
- **Habitat**—Many natural habitats have been lost in the last 300 years. Cultivated land worldwide has increased by more the 500 percent. Demand for consumer products in the developed world, especially coffee, cocoa, sugar, palm oil, and soya, continues to drive deforestation, contributing to species extinction and the loss of important ecosystems.
- **Air and Transportation**—Seventeen percent of fossil fuels used in the U.S. are consumed by our food production system through such activities as: powering heavy farm machinery, processing foods, creating packaging, manufacturing and transporting of chemical inputs like fertilizers, refrigerating of foods during transport, and transporting of food. On average, food travels at least 1,500 miles from the farm to your dinner table. Eating fresh, local foods can reduce our use of fossil fuels, which will help clean our air and reduce carbon dioxide emissions that lead to global warming.

## Call to Action

1. **Buy local foods for your health and to support local farmers.** Buying fresh, seasonal foods from nearby farmers strengthens your local economy, gives more of your food dollar to the actual farmer, and enhances your trust and knowledge of the source of your food. Find local farm stands, farmers' markets, and Community Supported Agriculture (CSAs) at [www.localharvest.org](http://www.localharvest.org)
2. **Consider how foods are produced before buying.** Organic produce is grown without pesticides and chemical fertilizers; organic meat does not contain synthetic hormones or antibiotics. Free range poultry and livestock are pastured for at least of portion of the time and are more natural and humanely raised than large industrial farms and feedlots.
3. **Ask your local institutions—churches, supermarkets, schools—to buy from local farmers.** The Community Food Security Coalition ([www.foodsecurity.org](http://www.foodsecurity.org)) has Farm to School programs that help institutions make the switch.
4. **Support a new and better U.S. farm policy** by writing to your elected officials, talking to friends about injustices in our food system, and writing letters to the editor of your local newspaper. Use the Eco-Justice Program's "Sow Justice" postcard to ask your legislators for a just farm bill. For updated information, visit [www.ncecojustice.org/faithfulharvesthome.html](http://www.ncecojustice.org/faithfulharvesthome.html). To request "Sow Justice" postcards, contact [info@ncecojustice.org](mailto:info@ncecojustice.org)



## TAKE ACTION

- **Buy local foods to support local farmers.** Buying fresh, seasonal foods from nearby farmers strengthens your local economy, gives more of your food dollar to the actual farmer, and enhances your sense of knowing and trusting the source of your food. Find local farm stands, farmers' markets, and Community Supported Agriculture (CSAs) at [www.localharvest.org](http://www.localharvest.org)
- **Think about how foods are produced before you buy.** Organic produce is grown without pesticides and chemical fertilizers; organic meat does not contain synthetic hormones or antibiotics. Free range poultry and livestock are pastured for at least of portion of the time and are more natural and humanely raised than large industrial farms and feedlots. Many of these farming practices are less harmful to the environment and may be a healthier choice for you.
- **Ask your local institutions—churches, supermarkets, schools—to buy from local farmers.** The Community Food Security Coalition ([www.foodsecurity.org](http://www.foodsecurity.org)) has Farm to School programs that help institutions make the switch.
- **Support a new and better U.S. farm policy** by writing to your elected officials, talking to friends about injustices in our food system, and writing letters to the editor of your local newspaper.

## EARTH DAY SUNDAY

Each year, the National Council of Churches Eco-Justice Program with the Eco-Justice Working Group produces Earth Day Sunday resource materials for congregations and individuals wishing to celebrate God's creation and explore issues pertaining to caring for God's creation. This Earth Day Sunday resource focuses on protecting God's creation through good farm policy and stewardship.

**For more information on how you can help protect God's creation visit the National Council of Churches Eco-Justice Program website at [www.ncccjustice.org](http://www.ncccjustice.org)**

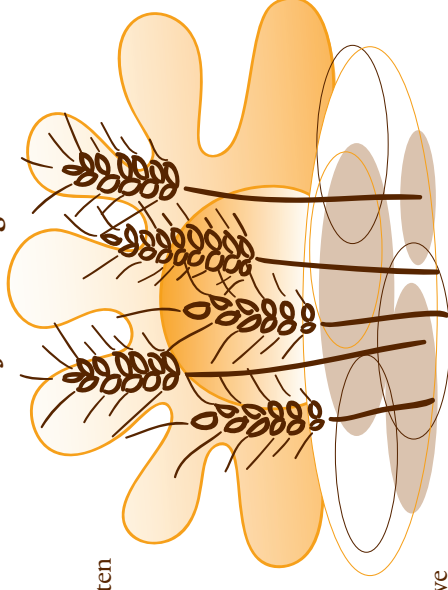
**Contact: [info@ncccjustice.org](mailto:info@ncccjustice.org) / 202-544-2350**

# Our Daily Bread: Being Harvesters of Hope and Gardeners of Eden

## National Council of Churches USA Eco-Justice Program

### INTRODUCTION

**E**arth Day Sunday, often celebrated on the closest Sunday to Earth Day (April 22), offers an opportunity for us, as Christians, to reflect on God's call to care for God's good creation. As people of faith who care for God's creation, we



draw our attention to rural communities and agricultural systems this year. Why? Because the way land is farmed impacts air, water, soil, animals, and people. God's creation can be devastated by poor farming practices. But, God's creation can be made healthy by farming, too. It comes down to the question of who does the farming and how. We explore these issues on Earth Day Sunday as a real and vital issue of eco-justice, where the health and wellbeing of God's Earth and the health and wellbeing of human communities is inextricably linked.

Each spring as we celebrate resurrection, and as we put seed to soil, may we remember to live as a people of hope by spreading justice throughout the land for people and creatures that are powerless and voiceless. With open hearts and minds, and with willingness to act, let us approach God believing in the goodness, grace, and mercy that can transform unjust systems.

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## CALL TO WORSHIP

**Leader:** O God, we come into your gates with thanksgiving.

**People:** We thank you for life, for breath, and for all the blessings you pour upon us.

**Leader:** O God, we come into your gates with praise.

**People:** We praise you for the goodness of all of creation, for farmers and farm land, for grocers and vegetables, for animals and earth, for all that you have made and called good.

**Leader:** O God, we come into your gates to bless your name.

**All:** Alleluia! Praise be to you, God of life!

## Prayers of the People

*(after each intercession, congregation responds, "Lord, hear our prayer.")*

**Leader:** For farm workers whose lives and health are in peril from toxic pesticides and hazardous working conditions.

**Leader:** For those who labor in the farm fields so that all may be nourished.

**Leader:** For rural communities that struggle with economic calamity and the loss of family farms.

**Leader:** For rural communities who provide food for our tables.

**Leader:** For the devastation done at our hands to the land, water, and air by our failure to act as good stewards of your creation.

**Leader:** For the wisdom to use the abundance of your Earth for your glory and for the good of all.

## Prayer of Confession

O God, even as we praise you we know we fail to live as we should. We are a resurrection people and you have given us every reason to be bold and faithful. Yet while you rise triumphant over death, we participate in unjust systems that diminish life—for other human beings, for animals,

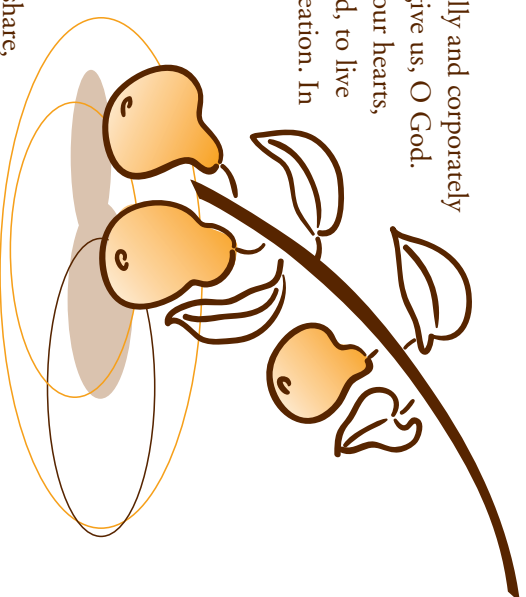
and for your creation. Individually and corporately we have turned from good. Forgive us, O God. Show us how to open our eyes, our hearts, and our arms to your good world, to live faithfully and peacefully with creation. In Jesus Christ we pray, Amen.

## Assurance of Pardon

God welcomes our praise and accepts our humble confession.

The Holy Spirit empowers our desire to live more faithfully.

Hear and believe, embrace and share, feel blessed and challenged by this good news: in Jesus Christ we are forgiven!



## Sending Forth

**Leader:** Knowing that God's abundant love goes with us, let us step out into the fields of compassion, speaking good news to the farmers and laborers amongst us.

**All:** Guide us in compassion, Spirit of God.

**Leader:** Let us embrace God's whole creation—animals, plants, land, water, and air.

**All:** Guide us in love, Spirit of God.

**Leader:** Knowing that we already have been shown how to live justly through Jesus Christ, let us step out in confidence and commitment.

**All:** Guide us towards justice, Spirit of God.

**Leader:** Knowing that the Holy Spirit will go with us to encourage, challenge, and sustain us, let us never fail to live and act as we are called.

**All:** Guide us in action, Spirit of God.

## Learn More

For suggested resources, news, and advocacy alerts stay tuned to [www.nccecojustice.org/faithfulharvesthome.html](http://www.nccecojustice.org/faithfulharvesthome.html)

- The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) is host to an online farm bill discussion open to anyone with an interest. For more information on ELCA farm bill activities visit [www.elca.org/advocacy/issues/environment/](http://www.elca.org/advocacy/issues/environment/)
- *We Are What We Eat* is a Presbyterian Church (USA) policy report that can be used as a study for any denomination or communion: [www.pcusa.org/acswp/pdf/we-are-what-you-eat1021.pdf](http://www.pcusa.org/acswp/pdf/we-are-what-you-eat1021.pdf)

## Youth Activities

- **Take your youth group on a trip to a nearby farm field trip.** Visit a farm that will allow you to harvest some seasonal produce for a fee (apples, pumpkins, blueberries) or visit a farm where a farmer will agree to meet with you and tell you about his/her life, faith, and farm.
- **Make a meal together.** Have parents/youth advisors help find local produce (farmers' stands, church members' gardens) and then have the youth group or Sunday school group cook together. Talk about where the food came from and why it feels different to know where it came from.
- **Farm Web of Life** (*Supplies needed: crayons, magazines, ball of yarn or string, paper, markers, tape, safety pins*)  
**Read out loud Genesis 1:1-13, 20-22, 24-25, 27, 31a.** Discuss with the group how God created a variety of things—air, light, water, land, plants, and animals. Discuss how these created things are reflected on a farm and how they are interdependent. (Plants such as corn and animals such as cows need air, water, and land to survive.) Have each person choose a particular part of creation (air, light, water, land, plants, and animals), making sure that each part of creation is represented. Then, ask each person to, on a piece of paper, write the name of their part of creation and then to draw or tape a picture to represent it. Encourage them to use farm examples (e.g. farm animals such as cows and pigs; plants such as tomatoes and corn.) Attach each person's paper with a safety pin to the front of their

shirt and gather the group in a circle. Hand the ball of yarn to a person who selected "light" and then have that person toss the ball of yarn across the circle to someone who selected a part of creation that is dependent on "light" (e.g., "plants"). Keep the string tight between each person. In turn, each person who holds the ball of yarn tosses it across the circle to someone whose part of creation relies on, or helps, their own part of creation. (e.g., "Plants" can throw to "light," "water," "air," and "animals." "Air" can throw to "animals" or "plants.") Once everyone has tossed the ball of yarn across the circle, ask the group what would happen if God hadn't created their part of creation. Then, declare that all the water has been polluted and everyone representing "water" should drop their strings. (note: you can also choose another part of creation to "eliminate.") Discuss with the group why every part of God's creation is important and how farms represent this interconnectedness.

## Adult Study and Discussion Questions

**Mom, is the soil dead?** (page 3)

- Discuss a memory of digging in the dirt as a child or an adult.
- After reading Revelations 5:11-14, discuss if and how creation sings praises to God.
- After reading Ezekiel 47:9-12 and Job 12:7-10, discuss what it means that creation is described as being part of a restored covenant. What are ways in which this is true?

**What do dolphins have to do with this farm?** (page 3)

- Discuss what currently undermines God's abundance.
- Ask the group what miracles for God's creation they would like to see.

**After taking some food he regained his strength** (page 3)

- Ask the group to describe any relationships or connections they have to a farmer or local farm.
- After reading Acts 9:10-19, discuss what kind and quality of modern day food you believe would allow Paul to regain his strength.
- After reading Isaiah 65:17-25, discuss the vision of a new creation and how that vision could be applied to today.

*Note: Adults may also enjoy the youth activities listed above.*

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## WORSHIP SONG SUGGESTIONS

**Opening Hymns:** All Creatures of Our God and King, Earth and All Stars, Joyful Joyful We Adore Thee, Morning Has Broken, For the Beauty of the Earth.

**Easter Hymns:** Come Ye Faithful Raise the Strain, The Strife is O'er, Thine is the Glory. An additional suggested song is "What Does the Lord Require" (based on Micah 6:8) music by Jim Strathdee, copyright 1986 from Desert Flower Music, PO Box 1735, Ridgecrest, CA 93555. 619-375-2320.

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♻️ printed on recycled paper using soy inks with 100% wind power

## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> National Family Farm Coalition, <http://www.nffc.net/what/familyfarm.html>
- <sup>2</sup> *We Are What We Eat*, report approved by the 214th General Assembly (2002), Presbyterian Church, USA
- <sup>3</sup> Congressional Research Service Report for Congress. The Pigford Case: USDA Settlement of Discrimination Case by Black Farmers. 2005. Order Code RS20430.
- <sup>4</sup> <http://www.ers.usda.gov/Briefing/AgChemicals/pestmangement.htm#pesticide>
- <sup>5</sup> <http://www.grist.org/comments/food/2006/10/18/pesticides/index.html?source=weekly>
- <sup>6</sup> Pimentel, D. and T. Patzek. 2005. *Natural Resources Research* 14(1).



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“Sow for yourselves; reap steadfast love; break up your fallow ground; for it is time to seek the Lord, till (God) may come and rain righteousness upon you.”  
Hosea 10:12 (NRSV)

“He will also send you rain for the seed you sow in the ground, and the food that comes from the land will be rich and plentiful.”  
Isaiah 30:23 (NIV)



# Toward a New and Better Farm Policy

From God's initial command to be keepers of creation to the Prophets' call for justice among governments and nations to Jesus' declaration of concern for poor and hungry people, the Scriptures that inform our common faith also beseech us to work for the common good. Frequently using farms, vineyards, and the people working them as examples, the stories of our faith reveal the profound spiritual dimension of policies fostering good land stewardship, promoting economic justice and generosity among nations, and encouraging an end to hunger.

In 2007, Congress reauthorizes a variety of farm and food laws through a multi-year, comprehensive farm bill. This is the bill that defines U.S. farm policies and gives us the opportunity to look comprehensively at food, agriculture, and rural policy. The most recent farm bill (which expires in 2007) was passed in 2000.<sup>1</sup>

The 2007 legislation is considered by many to be one of the most important pieces of conservation legislation. It is the first step in changing the who and how of farming in the United States. The only way to get to this first step is if ordinary people speak up, and let their legislators know that the status quo in agriculture policy is not working.

Below is a two-sided, cut-out "postcard" that can be used in your congregation or community to make your voices heard. Reproduce the "postcard" and distribute them at events, study groups, congregational dinners, or any gathering of many or few. Collect signed "postcards" and send them in one envelope to the Eco-Justice Program. We will deliver them en masse to your elected representatives as a strong statement about justice for God's creation.

<sup>1</sup>Sustainable Agriculture Coalition—January 2006, <http://www.sustainableagriculture.net/primer.php>

cut along this line

## Sow Justice

Right now somewhere in California, Kansas, Illinois, or Virginia, a farmer is struggling to stay afloat. After farming for generations, the farmer now cannot compete with bigger farms—bigger farms that make large profits, often get large payments from the U.S. government, and that practice farming in a way that disregards the goodness of God's creation. Reform is necessary to restore right relationships, preserve responsible communities, shrink economic inequalities, and allow for all of creation to flourish in its diversity. Join us. Sow Justice.

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## PRINCIPLES FOR A NEW AND BETTER FARM POLICY

- **Any farmer who needs or wants to better care for God's creation should have access to conservation programs.** Currently, 3 out of every 4 farmers seeking assistance through conservation programs are denied access to funding. Any new farm bill should improve, expand, and adequately fund conservation opportunities.
- **U.S. taxpayer dollars should go to supporting small- and medium-sized family farms.** Most farmers and ranchers don't benefit from current farm policies: the bulk of farm payments go to a small number of the largest farms. Any new farm bill should reform the commodity payment system to benefit those who truly need it.
- **Strong rural communities and local food systems are critical to a strong America and a redeemed creation.** Any new farm bill should make a major investment in spurring farmers' markets and other direct farmer-to-consumer marketing innovations.
- **All farmers should have equal access to farm programs.** A long history of discrimination in farm program delivery has prevented many minority farmers from obtaining credit and participating in farm programs, including conservation programs. Any new farm bill should right those wrongs by increasing conservation funding for socially disadvantaged farmers, and by redressing past injustices.

As the 2007 farm bill is shaped, people of faith must speak to the many justice issues of our current agricultural system, urging Congress to adopt a bill that is faithful, just, and sustainable for farmers, rural communities, and all God's creation.

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**We call on our representatives to reform the U.S. farm bill.** It should support family farmers instead of corporate growers. It should ensure that all people have access to fresh, healthy, and locally-grown food. Most of all, it should guarantee that all farmers who wish to be good stewards of God's creation have access to working land conservation programs. As my representative, I ask you to support policy changes that will help American farmers save their farms, nourish all of God's children, and restore God's good creation. Sow justice on family farms everywhere.

Mail this postcard to the National Council of Churches.  
We'll deliver it, along with thousands of others to Congress.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Denomination

\_\_\_\_\_  
Address

\_\_\_\_\_  
City, State, Zip

\_\_\_\_\_  
Email

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