

## **Report to the 29<sup>th</sup> General Synod of the United Church of Christ** **Mindful and Faithful Eating**

The ‘Mindful and Faithful Eating’ Resolution adopted by 28<sup>th</sup> General Synod in Tampa, Florida evaluated the ways in which our dietary choices can have profound implications on the environment, as well as on human well-being and animal welfare. The resolution reminds us that our dietary choices reflect many social, environmental and economic justice issues.

Encouraging Christians to explore and discuss how food choices can accord Christian values and beliefs, the resolution calls for development and utilization of an educational curriculum addressing issues related to food choices. During the General Synod’s delegate discussions, the curriculum titled ***Just Eating? Practicing Our Faith at the Table*** was lifted-up as a resource that churches may use to begin a deeper dialogue on the issues of healthy eating as a moral choice and food security.

The *Just Eating* curriculum was developed by UCC affiliated Advocate Health Care in partnership with Church World Service and the Presbyterian Hunger Program, and was funded by a Practicing Our Faith grant from the Valparaiso Project on the Formation and Education of People in Faith and the UCC Genesis Fund. The seven-sessions of this curriculum call for churches to integrate the commitments and practices of our faith into the way we eat. The study uses scripture, prayer and stories from the local and global community to explore five key aspects of our relationship with food.

- Food sharing as sacramental
- The health of our bodies
- The access others have to food
- The health of the earth, which our food choices influence
- The ways we use food to extend hospitality and enrich relationships

Following discussions with Rev. Kirsten Peachy from Advocate Health Care (resource person for this topic at General Synod 28), Rev. James Deming, JWM Environmental Justice Program Minister, and members of the JWM Hunger and Food Security Task Force, the curriculum was recommended to UCC churches as a Lenten study resource.

The enthusiastic response to Mission One has made UCC members, friends and local churches more aware of the issues of food security both in local communities and in places like East Africa. Many of our congregations have become more aware than ever on how food and food choices are moral concerns that impact all of God’s children. We are inviting and encouraging all congregations, associations and conferences to utilize *Just Eating? Practicing Our Faith at the Table* for Lenten and other study opportunities.

The new Hunger and Food Security Task Force, created by JWM, is working to energize our concerns about hunger and food security. They are helping to promote the curriculum with local churches and are encouraging initiatives at the local congregation level that can effect change in public policy. The Task Force is also helping to evaluate the experiences with the curriculum through a follow-up survey sent to churches participating in the study. The survey gathers feedback on the curriculum’s appropriateness, function and usefulness for our churches. The

curriculum is not taken as the “end-all-be-all” but rather a beginning step to help churches take another bold step and increase dialogue and discussion to explore faith practices related to food and food security and other related issues.

Obesity is a primary health concern that is affecting children, adolescents, and adults of all races, ethnicities and income levels, leading to chronic diseases and illnesses. In response, the Health Care Justice Office continues to support, ***UCC Let's Move: Faithfully HEALing*** (HEAL-Healthy Eating And Living).

The *UCC Let's Move* campaign focuses on the four pillars of First Lady, Michelle Obama's, Let's Move Campaign: Healthy Choices, Healthier Schools, Physical Activity, and Accessible and Affordable Food. Over 200 UCC churches were inspired to walk over 256,000 miles, touching the lives of 2500 individuals. The initiative also included a ***Healthy Eating Cookbook Project***, the practice of spontaneous movement call ***Instant Recess!*** and its vacation bible school curriculum, ***The Best Me is a Fit Me***. The UCC Parish Nurses and the Faith Community Nurse Leadership Team have taken a primary role in leading and coordinating activities to address this project.

***Resources:***

*Mindful and Faithful Eating* - <http://www.ucc.org/news/gs28-passes-resolution-on.html>

*Just Eating? Practicing our Faith at the Table* -  
<http://www.pcusa.org/media/uploads/hunger/pdf/justeatlead.pdf>

Respectfully Submitted,  
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