

Congregational Food Audit Checklist

Created by Dr. Presian Burroughs
PresianBurroughs.com

We connect with God, people, other creatures, plants, and non-living things through our eating and drinking. Our food choices, in turn, affect the wellbeing of ecosystems, people, animals, and plants. In light of God’s purpose to liberate creation from its slavery to destruction (Rom 8:21), Christians may reasonably conclude that we follow our Lord’s designs when we minimize creation’s destruction. More specifically, we might extrapolate from Paul’s instructions to the Christians in Rome that we should “not, by [our] eating, destroy that one for whom Christ died” (Rom 14:15b) (Presian’s Translation). Christ’s death liberates human creatures from our slavery to sin and death and nonhuman creation from its slavery to destruction (Rom 5–6; 8:19–21). Such a central theological conviction offers Christians a guiding ethical principle: we are called to live our lives in ways that cause minimal amounts of undue and long-term forms of suffering and degradation to people, animals, plants, and ecosystems. We are invited, instead, to cooperate with God in the divine work of establishing justice and restoring life.

There are countless ways we can decrease destruction and inspire restoration in God’s creation through our food and farming choices. The following set of checklists are provided to congregational leaders and participants to get this daunting process started. Congregations are encouraged to engage in a congregational food audit, in which they strive (over a reasonable period of time) to implement strategic goals related to food production and consumption in their worship spaces and homes.

Strategic Goals

- Serve foods that
 - come from regional sources that practice regenerative forms of agriculture
 - come from animals that are treated with respect and allowed to flourish
 - contain minimal pesticide residues
 - pay fair wages to farmers, farm workers, and processors
 - reduce energy consumption
 - minimize harmful and unrecyclable forms of packaging
 - engage in other forms of sustainability / creation care
- Use serving ware that
 - can be washed and reused
 - is compostable or readily degradable
- Dispose of food waste and compostable materials via compost services rather than in landfills
- Display signs and other forms of communication that clearly explain sustainability procedures
- Provide compost and recycling containers that are user friendly and appropriately accessible
- Install energy efficient appliances

With the above goals in view, leaders and congregants might evaluate the following aspects of the faith community's activities to ensure that love for God and love for human and nonhuman neighbors guide its decisions related to food:

Food-Related Activities to Consider:

- Communion Elements
- Fellowship Refreshments & Meals
- Food Pantry & Soup Kitchen
- Snacks / Food during Religious Education Classes & Youth Group
- Community Garden

Land-Use around the Building:

- Can some land be used for a community garden and perennial fruit tree / shrubs / vines and nut trees?
- Can a pollinator garden and local plants be planted in support of birds and beneficial insects?
- Are synthetic pesticides and herbicides used? If so, what alternatives can be implemented?
- Are insecticides that harm pollinator insects used minimally around the building?
- Are synthetic fertilizers used sparingly and replaced instead with more natural fertilizers (such as compost)?

Faith Community Mission / Outreach:

- Do congregants have food-related skills (such as canning, food prep, gardening) they might teach others in the community?
- Are congregants informed about and encouraged to participate in gleaning opportunities?
- Are there local farmers or ranchers with whom the faith community might establish ongoing, mutually supportive relationships?
- How might congregants promote just regional policies related to land use, land access, and food access?
- Do people in the community have ongoing food needs that the faith community and its congregants might alleviate?
- Do people in the community have access to arable land, and, if not, can the faith community help?
- Might the faith community collaborate with local hospitals, schools, and other organizations to support regional, regenerative forms of agriculture and food production and service?