

2 Cents - A- Meal

A Spiritual Discipline and Shared Ministry
For Reducing Hunger



*“Just as you cared for one of the least of these who
are members of my family, you cared for me”*

A Call for Prayer, Pennies... and Commitment to Impact Public Policies

This pamphlet contains ideas and materials for followers of Christ to implement hunger ministries within their families, congregations, and judicatories:

- Instructions for starting and maintaining a 2 Cents-a-Meal Program
- Sample exercises for including young people in hunger ministries
- A wrapper for a container used to collect pennies

2 Cents-a-Meal: An Overview

What is 2 Cents-a-Meal?

This is a program within congregations designed to remind us of the poor and needy at mealtimes. It encourages individuals and families to engage in a daily devotional exercise of collecting 2 cents per person for shared hunger ministries as they give thanks for their own food. Some people also include their snacks.

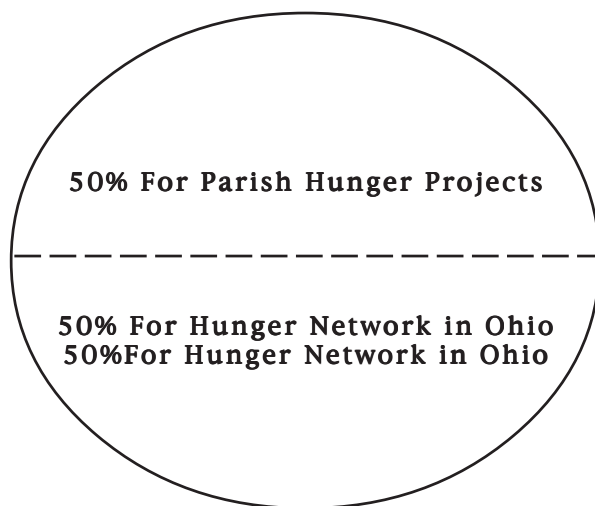
How Does a Household Do 2 Cents-a-Meal?

Each household keeps an offering container for the “2 Cents-a-Meal” offering in the kitchen or on the dining table. One suggested ritual prior to the mealtime blessing, one member of the family may begin with, “Let not the needy, O Lord, be forgotten.” Then the rest respond, “Nor the hope of the poor be taken away.” Numerous other options are available, adaptable to each family, each person who leads the prayer, and each meal.

What happens to the 2 Cents-a-Meal Offering

Each congregation designates a Sunday of the month to receive the 2 Cents-a-Meal offering from their households. This is usually done at the time of the offertory. One cent is to be given to a local hunger ministry in which the parish is involved and/or supports. The other one cent is sent to the judicatory to be forwarded to the Hunger Network in Ohio.

OF EACH DOLLAR COLLECTED:



The Need

Most of us rarely spend a day with nothing to eat. Yet hunger is an everyday fact of life for an epidemic number of families. More than 800 million people in the world go hungry. Along with dramatic scenes and statistics of starvation in developing countries, lack of food and malnutrition is a problem even in our neighborhoods.

In the United States, 12 million children live in households where people have to skip meals or eat less to make ends meet. That means one in ten households in the U.S. is living with hunger or are at risk of hunger. That number grows weekly.

In Ohio, over one and a half million persons--over 13% of the population--are living in poverty and experiencing "food insecurity." Over 300,000 Ohioans are chronically hungry, 1/3rd of which are below the age of eighteen with one in six children going to bed hungry or at risk of hunger every night.

Poverty, of course, is largely responsible for hunger and unemployment--and underemployment -- is the leading cause of poverty. The state's unemployment rate recently hit a 25-year high of 9.4% as job losses continued in both manufacturing and services. This was up 8.8 percent in just a month.

How do we as Christians respond to these, our neighbors-in-need?

The HNO provides a unique ministry of advocacy for the "poorest of poor" in this State, including those regularly deprived of food and malnourished.

What is the Hunger Network in Ohio?

The Hunger Network in Ohio is dedicated to eradicating hunger. Our unique mission to change conditions causing hunger—in Ohio and around the world. Working with other hunger-related human service and advocacy organizations, we equip people to act individually and in concert on hunger and poverty issues. Founded in 1978, Hunger Network in Ohio informs concerned citizens about hunger and helps individuals and groups work on immediate and long-term solutions to hunger. Participants receive publications, have opportunities for education on policy issues, and are given tools to become public advocates for those who are hungry.

We are governed by a board of trustees from the West Ohio Conference of the United Methodist Church and Episcopal Dioceses of Ohio and Southern Ohio, Northeastern and Southern Ohio Synods of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in American, Eastminster Presbytery of the Presbyterian Church (USA), and Central Southeast Association of the Ohio Conference of the United Church of Christ.

For assistance or more information, please contact

**Hunger Network in Ohio
82 East 16th Avenue
Columbus, Ohio 43201**

**www.hungernetohio.org (Web) Info@hungernetohio.org (email)
614.424-6203 (Phone); 614-268-4623 (Fax)**

Prayers, Pennies, and Persuasion

A Spiritual Discipline and Shared Ministry for Reducing Hunger

Recognizing the widespread desperation of persons deprived of food, the Hunger Network in Ohio is a ministry for reducing hunger. Whether closeby or around the world, starving and malnourished neighbors call to people of faith for help. More than providing occasional meals or groceries to temporarily relieve hunger, the Program offers a strategy for reducing and preventing hunger through legislative change. It relies on persons willing to offer prayers, gather pennies, and influence public policies.

Prayers

Commitment to relieving hunger begins with prayer, acceptance of ourselves as stewards of whatever we possess and treatment of persons in need as equally deserving recipients. For people of faith, stewardship means understanding that what is ours is meant for all. This recognition may be regularly expressed in Grace before meals. Not only grateful for our own blessings, we welcome those deprived of life's essentials at least symbolically to join us at our table. Whether parents and children, church school classes, or worshipping communities, we thereby broaden the meaning of "grace" and embrace the larger human family as part of our own.

Pennies

Reducing hunger also involves self-giving. By keeping a container for collecting pennies at our dinner table, we are reminded at every meal to share. We recommend the discipline of regularly collecting 2 Cents-A-Meal from each person. With one of every two pennies going to local projects and one to the Hunger Network, families participate in a modest but effective way to make a difference through both immediate service and long-range remedies to reduce hunger.

Persuasion

Along with providing prayers and pennies, interested persons are encouraged to address reasons for poverty and impact public policies that either cause or tolerate hunger. Joining with those who offer their prayers and pennies, the Hunger Network supplies critical information and assistance to act on behalf of the hungry.

<p>Name or Partnering Group Address Phone(s), Fax, Email</p>

**REMITTANCE FORM:
2 CENTS-A-MEAL PROGRAM**

(Make Multiple Copies)

Date_____

Please send a copy of this form, together with a check made payable to (name of partnering group), with “ 2 Cents-A-Meal” written on the memo line, to

Name and Address of Partnering Group

Total amount collected \$_____

Subtract 50% for local hunger projects \$_____

Amount enclosed with this form \$_____

Parish Reporting_____

Address_____

City & ZIP Code_____

Parish Representative_____

Address_____

City & ZIP Code_____

Phone (_____/_____)

Area Code

Comments or Suggestions:

2 Cents-a-Meal

Responding to Hunger in the World

A Sample Exercise for Young People

“Feed My Sheep”

(Picture)

We are called to serve those in need. Students should be able to tell about the source of that call and to explain how the 2 Cents A Meal program works.

GATHERING

1. Set a date for a regular 2 Cents A Meal gathering in your parish. Asking the children to bring their canisters forward during the offering works well. They especially like to pour their coins into a nice, noisy soup kettle.
2. Prepare Object Lesson. Scatter several pennies around the classroom ahead of time for the children to find (reserve two for yourself). When all are gathered, ask what a penny can buy. Is it worth much? Then hold up your two cents and tell the class that today they will learn how two cents can change someone *else's life* as *well* as their own.
3. Lead the children in prayer (here is a suggestion):
“Almighty God, Whose loving hand hath given us all that we possess, grant us grace that we may honor thee with our substance, and, remembering the account which we must one day give, may be faithful stewards of thy bounty, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.”

4. Select someone to read John 21:15-17 (RSV)

- a. Consider the Scripture: *When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said, "Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." He said to him, "Feed my lambs." A second time he said to him, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." He said to him, "Tend my sheep." He said to him the third time, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" Peter was grieved because he said to him the third time, "Do you love me?" And he said to him, "Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Feed my sheep."*
- b. Introduce the theme by retelling in your own words Jesus' prediction of Peter's denial and Peter's subsequent three denials of Christ. Help the children to imagine how devastated and lost Peter must have felt when the cock crowed (Mt. 26: 30-35, 69-75).
- c. Now introduce the story from John. This is one of the greatest displays of love and compassion on the part of our Lord found in the Bible. Retell in your own words how Jesus gave Peter three chances to publicly declare his love for Jesus, where previously he had denied him. Note Jesus' response each time Peter speaks. In giving the command to "Feed my sheep," Jesus shows his forgiveness of Peter and entrusts him with a task. That responsibility is a great gift. It also suggests that statements of faith are not enough. We must act on them.
- d. Explain that the "sheep" referred to in this passage are all those in need and that this command is addressed to all of us, Christ's church. While this passage can be interpreted on many levels, the simplest way to respond to this command would be to feed the hungry. But this task can seem overwhelming. How can we feed so many people?

5. Introduce the 2 Cents A Meal program.

This is one way we all can respond. Explain that in this program, one places a 2 Cents A Meal container on the table where family meals are shared. Each family member then puts at least two cents in the container for each meal they eat. Note that two pennies aren't good for much else. Most stores even keep dishes of them to use when customers don't have any when making a purchase. Tell them that two cents a meal for a year is over \$21.00 per person. This may not seem like much, but what if you multiply it by the number of people in your family? Then what if we could multiply that by all the families in the congregation, denomination, or in the church at large? Suddenly, all our small gifts put together may be considerable and potentially make a real difference to those in need.

Discuss contrasting strategies that "feed my sheep," including providing direct emergency services on one hand and trying to change public policies that are indifferent to hunger and inhibit persons from becoming self-sufficient. Consider how students might become involved in each or both approaches.

Now stress that this is only half the program. The other half is to say a prayer at the family meal for those in need. This can be added to your usual grace at meals. If the family doesn't usually say a grace, this would be a good time to start. Now we have both myriad dollars and prayers offered for the hungry. They are fed and we have responded to our call.

EXPLORING

Make a 2 Cents A Meal container. Ahead of time gather containers with removable lids. Coffee cans, cocoa, etc. work well. It is best to have straight sided containers. The children could be asked to bring these in for a couple of weeks before this lesson is done. Supply colored paper, markers, glue, felt, cotton balls, or other materials to use in decorating the containers. Each should say "2 Cents A Meal". "Feed my sheep" would also be appropriate. Any number of symbols would work, cotton ball sheep seem especially popular. Help the children cut a coin slot in the lid.

Ask the children to write a brief prayer for those in need. This could be done as a group or individually. Instruct them to place their containers and prayers on the dining table so they are handy at mealtime and let them know when the gatherings will take place.

CONNECTING

Option 1- Ask if anyone has ever done anything they know they shouldn't have done. How did they feel? Were they forgiven? How does it feel to be forgiven and trusted again? Note that we are in just such a position. We are forgiven and trusted to respond to those in need.

Option 2-Using magazines, newspapers, or TV. reports, ask the students to find examples of hunger in the world. Note any information on ways the world is responding to those needs. Are any class members participating directly in one of these responses?

GOING FORTH

Gather the group for a final prayer. An option might be, "Almighty and most merciful God, we remember before you all poor and neglected persons whom it would be easy for us to forget: the homeless and destitute, the old and the sick, and all who have none to care for them. Help us to heal those who are broken in body or spirit, and to turn their sorrow into joy. Grant this, Father, for the love of your Son, who for our sake became poor, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen."

Teacher: Let us go forth in the name of Christ!

Students: Thanks be to God!

2 Cents-a-Meal

Responding to Hunger in the World

A Sample Exercise for Young People

FEEDING THE FIVE THOUSAND

(Picture)

FOCUS

We are called to serve those in need. Students should be able to tell about the source of that call and to explain how the 2 Cents-a-Meal program works.

GATHERING

1. Set a date for a regular 2 Cents-a-Meal gathering in your parish. Asking the children to bring their canisters forward during the offering works well. They especially like to pour their coins into a nice, noisy soup kettle.
2. Prepare Object Lesson. Scatter several pennies around the classroom ahead of time for the children to find (reserve two for yourself). When all are gathered, ask what a penny can buy. Is it worth much? Then hold up your two cents and tell the class that today they will learn how two cents can change someone *else's* *life* as *well* as their own.
3. Lead the children in prayer (here is a suggestion):
"Almighty God, Whose loving hand hath given us all that we possess, grant us grace that we may honor thee with our substance, and, remembering the account which we must one day give, may be faithful stewards of thy bounty, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen."

4. Choose one of the children to read John 6:1-14(RSV)

After this Jesus went to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, which is the Sea of Tiberias. And a multitude followed him, because they saw the signs which he did on those who were diseased. Jesus went up on the mountain and there sat down with his disciples. Now the Passover, the feast of the Jews, was at hand. Lifting up his eyes, then, and seeing that a multitude was coming to him, Jesus said to Philip, "How are we to buy bread, so that these people may eat?" This he said to test him, for he himself knew what he would do. Philip answered him, "Two hundred denarii would not buy enough bread for each of them to get a little." One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said to him, "There is a lad here who has five barley loaves and two fish; but what are they among so many?" Jesus said, "Make the people sit down." Now there was much grass in the place; so the men sat down, in number about five thousand. Jesus then took the loaves and, when he had given thanks, he distributed them to those who were seated; so also the fish, as much as they wanted. And when they had eaten their fill, he told his disciples, "Gather up the fragments left over, that nothing may be lost." So they gathered them up and filled twelve baskets with fragments from the five barley loaves left by those who had eaten. When the people saw the sign which he had done, they said, "This is indeed the prophet who is to come into the world!"

5. Engage the children in discussion.

Note that this is the only miracle story which appears in all four gospels. Now introduce the the story from John. This story tells us a great deal about Jesus' own view of ministry. Having withdrawn to the hills, no doubt in search of some rest, Jesus and his disciples became aware that a large crowd had followed them. As it was late in the day, the people would soon need to be fed. Jesus challenged the disciples by asking them how they planned to solve this problem. Philip clearly saw the problem as overwhelming, noting that 200 denarii, better than half a year's pay for a laborer, would not even buy enough food to make a dent in the problem. Further, the only food on hand was five barley loaves, meager bread of the poor, and two fishes. Yet Jesus took these, blessed them, and provided abundant food for all five thousand guests, with twelve baskets of leftovers! He showed us that when

we freely offer what we have to God, wondrous things happen, no matter how meager our offering. It is our place to respond to the needs of those around us with whatever resources we have, no matter how inadequate to the task. God provides the sufficiency! Further, he showed us that we are to respond to the whole person. Teaching and sharing our faith with others is not enough. We must respond to those around us with compassion and meet physical as well as spiritual needs.

6. Introduce the 2 Cents-a-Meal program

This is one way we all can respond. Explain that in this program, one places a 2 Cents-a-Meal container on the table where family meals are shared. Each family member then puts at least two cents in the container for each meal they eat. Note that two pennies aren't good for much else. Most stores even keep dishes of them to use when customers don't have any when making a purchase. Two cents seems very inadequate in the face of world hunger. Yet, two cents a meal for a year is over \$21.00 per person. This may not seem like much, but what if you multiply it by the number of people in your family? Then what if we could multiply that by all the families in the parish, in the diocese, in the church at large. Suddenly, all our small gifts put together have made a very large one which can make a real difference to those in need. Through the faith of his church, God has supplied the sufficiency to make a difference.

Now stress that this is only half the program. The other half is to say a prayer at the family meal for those in need. This can be added to your usual grace at meals. If the family doesn't usually say a grace, this would be a good time to start. Now we have myriad dollars and prayers offered for the hungry. They are fed and we have responded as Jesus did to the needs of those around him. He trusted in God and fed, body and soul. This is his charge to us.

EXPLORING

Make 2 Cents-a-Meal containers.

In preparation, gather containers with removable lids. Coffee cans, cocoa, or Kool-aid containers work well. It is best to have straight sided containers. The children could be asked to bring

colored paper, markers, glue, felt, tissue paper, sequins (fish scales) or other materials to use in decorating the containers. Each should say "2 Cents-a-Meal." Any number of symbols would work, such as loaves and fishes. Help the children cut a coin slot in the lid.

Ask the children write a brief prayer for those in need.

This could be done as a group or individually. Instruct them to place their containers and prayers on the dining table so they are handy at mealtime and let them know when the in-gatherings will take place.

CONNECTING

Option 1: Ask the students if they can remember a time when they were really hungry, perhaps after school. How would they have felt if no one offered them a snack, or even dinner, but gave them a lecture instead? Would they feel cared for?

Option 2: Ask the students if they have ever been confronted with a problem that seemed too big for them to solve. How did they feel? What would have made a difference for them?

Option 3: Using magazines, newspapers, or T.V. reports, ask the students to find examples of hunger in the world. Note any information on ways the world is responding to those needs. Are any class members participating directly in one of these responses?

GOING FORTH

Gather the group for a final prayer (here is suggestion):

"Almighty and most merciful God, we remember before you all poor and neglected persons whom it would be easy for us to forget: the homeless and destitute, the old and the sick, and all who have none to care for them. Help us to heal those who are broken in body or spirit, and to turn their sorrow into joy. Grant this, Father, for the love of your Son, who for our sake became poor, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen."

Teacher: Let us go forth in the name of Christ!

Students: Thanks be to God!