

CSAI—Ethical Eating: Food and Environmental Justice for 2008–2012

Congregational Study/ Action Issue (CSAI)

Issue

Religious organizations throughout the world have discussed the production, distribution, and use of food. Some people enjoy many food choices while others remain hungry. The food industry produces wealth, but small farmers and farm workers are often poor. Food production and transportation contribute to many environmental problems.

Background and Reasons for Study

Congregations can develop effective strategies to address two of the world's biggest problems: social inequality and environmental destruction. This Congregational Study/Action Issue is inspired by the work of the several Unitarian Universalist (UU) affiliate and associate organizations that work with congregations in support of environmental justice.

Hunger is both a community problem and an international problem that can be approached in a variety of ways. There is a need for political advocacy in support of government programs that try to feed the hungry. There is a need also for involvement with service programs that deliver food to individuals and families - for example, Meals on Wheels programs.

Significance to Unitarian Universalism

Unitarian Universalists have a vision of environmental justice. One of our principles acknowledges "the interdependent web." Others affirm the importance of human rights. Together our principles form one holistic statement that helps to define liberal religion.

Possible Study Topics

- There are different religious teachings concerning the production, distribution, and use of food. Why is food so important in religion?

- There are environmental concerns and concerns about animal rights and human rights. What moral guidelines, if any, should govern food production?
- Some people have too much food and some have too little. How should congregations address issues like poverty and hunger, nutrition education, and health promotion?
- What guidelines, if any, govern the purchase and use of food and beverages in your congregation? Do you pause for a blessing when you serve food?

Possible Actions

- Support sustainable agriculture and farmers' markets. Encourage organic community gardening.
- Volunteer in support of community food pantries, Meals on Wheels programs, and similar projects that address the problem of hunger.
- Become an advocate for social and economic justice. Support labor unions, farmers' cooperatives, "fair trade" associations, and other organizations that help the farmers and other workers who produce and distribute food in the global market.

Related Prior Social Witness Statements

- [Ending Hunger](#) (1987 General Resolution)
- [Redirecting Economic Resources to Eliminate Poverty](#) (1991 General Resolution)
- [Environmental Justice](#) (1994 General Resolution)
- [Nutrition for a Healthy Start in Life](#) (1994 General Resolution)
- [Earth, Air, Water, and Fire](#) (1997 General Resolution)
- [Toxic Threats to Children](#) (1997 General Resolution)
- [Working for a Just Economic Community](#) (1997 General Resolution)
- [Economic Injustice, Poverty, and Racism: We Can Make a Difference!](#) (2000 Statement of Conscience)
- [Responsible Consumption as a Moral Imperative](#) (2001 Statement of Conscience)
- [Endorse the Earth Charter](#) (2002 Action of Immediate Witness)
- [Economic Globalization](#) (2003 Statement of Conscience)
- [Support of United Farm Workers](#) (2005 Action of Immediate Witness)
- [Threat of Global Warming/Climate Change](#) (2006 Statement of Conscience)

Clarifying Statement: The first paragraph of Background and Reasons for Study has been amended from the original proposal in agreement with the proposing congregation, the previously cited UU Service Committee, and the Commission on Social Witness to identify accurately the source of the work inspiring this proposal.

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