



# “Setting the Table”

## Meal Experience

The “Setting the Table” Meal is a special experience designed by the Bishop’s Initiative to Eliminate Hunger Task Force for every local church and other ministry settings of the Annual Conference. Ideally, your church will host (or participate in) a “Setting the Table” Meal in April or May and will share your church’s unique “Recipe for Enough” at our 2008 Annual Conference Session in June. What follows is a very basic outline to guide your “Setting the Table” Meal. Be creative, but please follow the pattern laid out below.

### Advance Preparation for the Meal Experience

As soon as possible, convene a meeting that includes your local church hunger coordinator, pastor, and other interested parties; e.g., missions committee, lay leader, United Methodist Women, United Methodist Men, outreach team, etc. to talk about the purpose of the meal, plan a date and assign tasks.

#### Use these guidelines for your planning.

- There needs to be an emcee for the meal who carries major responsibilities. The emcee may be the pastor or some other lay leader in the church with speaking skills. The emcee should review the video provided on the DVD in advance in order to introduce it.
- Our recommendation is that the invitation to the “Setting the Table” Meal is an open one extended to the whole congregation. Churches may also decide to share this experience with neighboring churches with whom they might partner for their hunger work. People should come knowing that this is an event of spiritual discernment and that it may take up to two or three hours.
- You will probably want to have childcare available and will need to decide what ages will be included. (*Optional:* You may also want to provide an experience for some of the elementary age children and youth in your church that is separate from the adult dinner. We have provided some materials and suggestions related to hunger awareness that may be used with children. You may choose to have the children/youth activities in a separate room. Please see the sample paper plate fish.\* You may also visit these websites for some great ideas for children’s activities: [http://www.hungernomore.org/web\\_resources.html](http://www.hungernomore.org/web_resources.html), <http://www.gcfb.org/site/PageServer?pagename=khkforkids&AddInterest=1053>.)
- Display “Recipe for Enough” posters throughout your building.\*†
- Include a newsletter article in your next church publication.\*†
- Invite members of the congregation and other guests to the “Setting the Table” Meal Experience using customizable invitations.\*† Promote the meal in other ways you feel appropriate.
- Make “Setting the Table” sign-up sheets available at all services and other events.\*
- Reproduce materials you’re planning to use during the meal ahead of time.

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## The Meal Experience Set Up

- Please keep the meal simple. We suggest soup and bread in keeping with the general theme of hunger.
- The tables are to be set up in any manner that works best for the host church. However, the following arrangement should be made at *each* table:
  - A bright table cloth or placemat<sup>\*†</sup> to make the event look different from other church meals.
  - Place settings that include:
    - Utensils
    - Napkin
- The “Recipe for Enough” Menu<sup>\*†</sup>
  - An empty chair is to be saved at each table with a place setting that includes all of the above, plus an empty soup bowl. This seat is to have a reserved sign.<sup>\*</sup> Don’t let people remove the sign and occupy the seat filled by someone else. It’s an important part of the experience. The unoccupied chair at each table represents the hungry of your community.
  - Two or three table tents in the center of each table with questions that will be used for table conversations.<sup>\*†</sup>
  - A closed manila envelope will contain the “Recipe for Enough” Recipe Book.<sup>\*†</sup> Write on the envelope the words: “Do not open until instructed.”
  - If you choose the large group discernment process,<sup>\*</sup> you will also need a table attendance sign-in sheet on each table.

## The Meal


Once everyone is gathered, the emcee opens the meeting in the following way:

- Welcome and introduction to the event that explains the theme, the reason for gathering and the empty chair at each table.
- Instructions for table talk based on the questions written on table tents in the middle of the table, and for other procedural items; e.g., how to get food, what’s planned for kids, etc.
- Bless the meal.
- People get their food, get acquainted, and talk about the questions on their table. Plan for about 30 minutes.
- Program
- Emcee introduces video presentation.<sup>\*†</sup>

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\* Included in this packet

† Also available on the Conference website

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- Show video.
  - Refer to the “Recipe for Enough” Menu at each place and explain how all of our churches together can provide the ingredients for a “Recipe for Enough.”
  - Indicate that every local church and ministry setting is challenged to review the “Recipe for Enough” Menu of hunger ministries and select **at least** one “appetizer” from the list, two “a la carte” items—each from a different “a la carte category”—and one “dessert.” These selections together represent a minimum “Recipe for Enough” for each church. Once again, by the end of your “Setting the Table” Meal, the goal is for your church to commit to at least one hunger ministry “appetizer,” two “a la carte” hunger ministries, and one hunger ministry from the “dessert” section.
  - In addition to selections from the list, be sure to lift up any hunger ministries already being done by your church and place them in the right section of the menu. You can claim them as part of the “Recipe for Enough” your church is putting together.
  - Explain the discernment process you will use to determine your church’s “Recipe for Enough” during this meal.\* The process will include:
    - ◇ Each table group considers the items on the “Recipe for Enough” Menu and selects the “appetizer,” “a la carte” items, and “dessert” that seem most appropriate for your church.
    - ◇ To stimulate discussion, give instructions for every table to open the manila envelope that contains recipe cards for each Menu selection.
    - ◇ Set a time limit, perhaps 20-30 minutes.
    - ◇ Large group discernment and decision
    - ◇ Each table reports the hunger ministry selections they’ve made for their church and why.
    - ◇ Following a procedure that you determine is best for your setting, the whole gathering decides which items from the Menu their church will select to include in their “Recipe for Enough.”
    - ◇ Incorporated into the process should be the opportunity for people to sign up to work on whatever menu items are finally selected. Please make sure to include that in the process.
    - ◇ Communion. The event ends with the celebration of the Lord’s Supper at the table of Christ. Please see communion instructions and liturgy.\*†
    - ◇ Clean Up

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## Follow Up

- The “Recipe for Enough” Menu Commitment Card\* should be filled out and brought to 2008 Annual Conference to be placed into a special offering there.
- Create a dinner plate on which you will reflect in words or pictures what your church has committed to do during this “Setting the Table” Meal Experience. The plates should be made of lightweight material that can be hung on a wall and should be no larger than a large dinner plate. Please be sure to include the name of your church somewhere on the plate. These plates will be displayed at Annual Conference 2008 in the Ministry Marketplace, so be creative and have fun!
- Choose task force leadership for each selected menu item and establish timelines for launching each project.
- Make sure to establish a feedback loop to be certain the work is progressing.
- Menu selections are to be undertaken prior to the 2009 Session of the Annual Conference.