

**Want To Challenge Your Congregation?  
Reduce Greenhouse Gas Emissions?  
Have Fun And A Good Meal?**

**Do It All With A**

# **100-Mile Church Dinner or Picnic**

Much of a congregation's social life gathers around food, whether it's coffee-hour, a potluck, youth group pizza night, or a more organized event like a church dinner or picnic. Sure, part of the charm of jellied salads comes from no one really knowing what's inside, but when you consider it, how much do we really know about what's in our food and how far it has actually traveled to come to our plate?

100-Mile Church dinners and picnics are events that enable congregations to provoke discussion and awareness amongst themselves about how our food is produced, where it comes from, and how it is transported — all vital issues when working toward a just and viable energy future. Through 100 Mile dinners, churches can become leaders in demonstrating that locally grown food is a viable alternative to the global supermarket.

## **What Is A 100-Mile Dinner (or Picnic)?**

The KAIROS “Re-energize” campaign examines our personal and collective dependence on oil, and the implications of this for all of Creation. It invites us to examine how we use fossil fuels in our every day life, and how we might use them more responsibly. There are many environmental and energy-related factors linked to food production. A tremendous amount of fossil fuels is required for large-scale commercial farms, processing and packing facilities, cross-country and international transport, as well as the operation of ever-expanding supermarkets. Consuming locally grown foods requires 17 times less oil and gas than a typical diet, in which each ingredient has traveled an average of 1500 miles.

There are many other reasons to eat locally. Locally grown foods tend to be better tasting (they are generally picked within 24 hours of being put to sale) and preparing the food yourself means that you know everything that's gone into each dish and are able to avoid many chemicals and preservatives. Knowing the people who produce the food you eat fosters a sense of connection to individuals, your local climate, and the seasons. Supporting local farms keeps money in the local economy and helps support smaller operations. Despite the huge variety of foods available at supermarkets, many foods specific to one's own area are not available, as buying is generally done on a mass-scale. Foods generally come from where they are cheapest — meaning far away, even when the same crop is grown locally, as companies pay less to farmers and processing plant workers in developing countries.

The idea for a 100-Mile Church Dinner/Picnic comes from *The 100-Mile Diet*, a book by Alisa Smith and J. B. MacKinnon, two British Columbians who committed to eating foods grown from within a 100-mile radius from their home for one year. Since then, other people and

groups have, to various degrees, committed themselves to eating more locally grown foods, or locally grown foods exclusively. Most have found that 100 miles is a good distance to work with, as it is enough of a distance to be challenging and foster a sense of connection to foods and food producers yet is large enough to make it possible for those in cities and make a variety of foods accessible. Yet there is flexibility, and depending on factors such as one's location, another distance could be substituted.

## How Do We Do It?

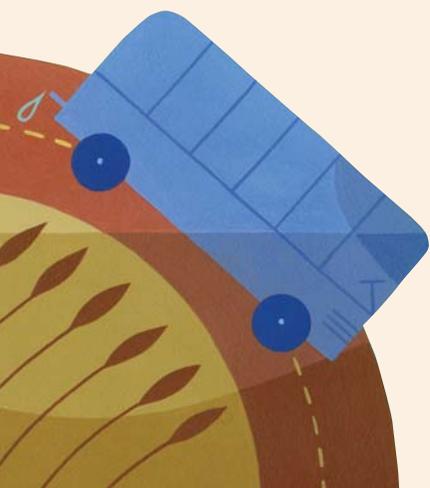
Organizing a 100-mile church dinner or picnic requires a good deal of planning and creativity, but also will set this dinner or picnic apart from others in the past and give it a strong social justice focus — and may even bring your congregation some publicity! The only thing is, you may have to forgo the jellied salad!

Start early, and be sure to be flexible as this year's menu may be quite different than that in the past!

- Gather a group of people who are eager to help with the research, menu planning, and food procurement.
- Determine what your 100-Mile radius includes, and examine the types of agriculture, grazing, fishing, etc. that take place within it.
- Think critically about what you will be able to do. Don't give up if you find it is impossible to make an entire meal from within your 100-Mile radius. Do your best, and identify challenges that you want to overcome next time.
- If you live in a community that farms, forages, or fishes (or is close to such communities), get out there and make connections with the food producers! (This could be a great project in which to involve the Sunday School.)
- If you live in a city, visit local organic markets and farmer's markets and advertise in your church bulletin or announcement page to find congregants with connections to local farmers. Find out about community shared agriculture projects.
- If your dinner is taking place in the winter, it may be helpful to do some canning, freezing, or preserving for the event beforehand.
- Keep track of where your ingredients come from and your recipes so that you will be able to share these at the event. Substitute ingredients when necessary! Start with what you have and are able to find!

Consider how you might make other aspects of your dinner or picnic more ecologically friendly.

- For a picnic, play games with environmental themes such as scavenger hunts or rent an "Earth ball" (a really large inflatable ball that looks like a globe).
- If you are inside, turn the lights off and use environmentally friendly beeswax candles.
- Use re-usable cutlery and plates, have individuals bring their own, or investigate biodegradable supplies if this is not possible.
- Think about the environmental impact of using paper serviettes as opposed to washable cloths. Ask participants to bring their own cloth napkin. Perhaps a group in your congregation would like to make cloth napkins from remnant fabric to be used regularly at church potlucks.
- Challenge the group not to buy any decorations or tablecloths — perhaps just



use bowls of local vegetables or fruit as centerpieces that can be taken — and eaten — at home.

- Encourage participants to walk, bike, or carpool to the event.
- Involve the Sunday School, youth group, or other groups in preparing a dish or a poster/presentation about the 100-mile diet.
- Encourage those at the dinner to join in a congregational 100-mile diet pledge that you can follow through the year.

## Graces

Oh the Lord is good to me  
and so I thank the Lord  
for giving me the things I need,  
within 100 miles indeed!  
The Lord is good to me.  
Johnny Appleseed, Amen!

Gracious God, thank you for those gathered today to share in this rich harvest of food. So often, the food we eat comes from the far reaches of our planet, passing through many hands and travels roads and waterways. With this meal, we especially give thanks for the abundance of food that exists right around us, and for those who work to produce it, often calling for another way. Let us, with this meal, join in that movement for justice, following the example of Jesus Christ in whose name we pray. Amen.

## Other Ideas: The Next Step

- Consider establishing a group in your congregation or community to look specifically at food issues. Challenge yourself to plot the origins of each of the ingredients in a favourite processed product (eg. Kraft Dinner) and place your findings on a bulletin board.
- Have a workshop on gardening, canning, making jams and preserves, etc.
- Create an “eat local” journal to track the locally grown, regionally grown (generally considered to be from within 200 miles), and processed foods you eat, and commit to achieving a certain percentage your total food consumption being locally grown.
- Organize a congregational trip to a local farm, community shared agriculture project, fishery, etc. or have someone involved with local or organic farming come to speak.
- Co-ordinate a farmer’s market challenge where teams go and plan an imaginary meal, and judge these based on creativity, cost, fewest miles traveled, and most appetizing.

- Plant a garden in your churchyard.
- Make a 100-mile church cookbook.
- Set up a board in your church for individuals to share information about local food producers and recipes using locally grown foods.
- Hold a book study on Smith and MacKinnon's *100-Mile Diet: A Year of Local Eating*, Barbara Kingsolver's *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle: A Year of Food Life*, and/or Michael Pollan's *Omnivore's Dilemma*.
- Integrate locally grown foods into all of your congregational food consumption (e.g. weekly coffee hour), and advertise that you are doing so.
- Join or set up a local food-sharing group to divide up bulk foods or large boxes of local produce for small families.
- Work with local food banks to see how your congregation can support their access to locally grown foods.

## Resources

Alisa Smith and J. B. MacKinnon. *The 100-Mile Diet: A Year of Local Eating*. (Random House Canada, 2007) Website: <http://www.100milediet.org/>

Barbara Kingsolver, with Steven L. Hopp and Camille Kingsolver. *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle: A Year of Food Life*. (HarperCollins, 2007) Website: <http://www.animalvegetablemiracle.com/>

Michael Pollan, *The Omnivore's Dilemma: A Natural History of Four Meals*. (Penguin, 2006) Website: <http://www.michaelpollan.com/omnivore.php>

This resource was written and produced in part with the financial assistance of the Canadian International Development Agency.

Written and edited by Sara Stratton, Genevieve Gallant, and Jennifer Henry, with input from the KAIROS Education and Animation Program Committee. Illustrations ©Tracy Walker/www.iziart.com. Published by KAIROS: Canadian Ecumenical Justice Initiatives in support of the Re-energize campaign for a just and sustainable energy policy for Canada. Design and Layout by NOMAD Design.



For more resources and to take action, visit [www.re-energize.org](http://www.re-energize.org) or [www.kairoscanada.org](http://www.kairoscanada.org). For more information call 1-877-403-8933 x 241.



KAIROS unites eleven churches and church agencies in faithful action for justice and peace. KAIROS members are: The Anglican Church of Canada, Canadian Catholic Organization for Development and Peace, Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, Canadian Religious Conference, Christian Reformed Church in North America (Canada Corporation), Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada, Mennonite Central Committee (Canada), The Presbyterian Church in Canada, The Primate's World Relief and Development Fund (PWRDF), Religious Society of Friends (Quakers), and The United Church of Canada.

**KAIROS: Canadian Ecumenical Justice Initiatives**  
 129 St. Clair Avenue West, Toronto, ON M4V 1N5  
 1-877-403-8933 [www.kairoscanada.org](http://www.kairoscanada.org)

Please feel free to copy or adapt this resource for local use. Please credit KAIROS for its creation.