

MINUTE FOR MISSION

One Great Hour of Sharing Gifts Help Increase Access to Nutritious Food and Farming

In a few hours, something is happening that many of us look forward to — yes, I'm talking about ... lunch or brunch. A place to gather for fellowship, laughter, and maybe a few moments of quiet during those first few bites. Food is a good, good thing.

While we give thanks to God for our food, we need to recognize lack of nutritious food is experienced by many of our sisters and brothers at alarming rates. Creating an opportunity for all people to become farmers, gain access to agricultural land, or manage farms are each ways we can secure healthy food systems for all.

Urban communities of color continue to experience diminishing access to fresh and local food. This lack of access to healthy foods, and affordable food prices, also contributes to higher rates of obesity, diabetes, and other diet-related illnesses. According to the USDA, 21 percent of black households and 19 percent of Latinx households face low or very low food security compared to 10 percent of white households.

Leah Penniman is co-founder and co-director of Soul Fire Farm—a partner of the Presbyterian Hunger Program in upstate New York. She says, “Approximately 85 percent of U.S. food is grown by Hispanic and Latinx people, but they only make up three percent of farm management. On the consumer side, people with dark skin are four times more likely to live in a neighborhood without a supermarket or farmer’s market.”

This pattern doesn't have to continue. Presbyterians, through their gifts to One Great Hour of Sharing, support efforts toward giving everyone access to nutritious food by addressing the root causes of hunger.

Soul Fire Farm raises and sells organically grown vegetables and eggs and then sets prices based on the customers' ability to pay. It is seeking to increase the number of

people of color who are farm owners and/or managers. More than 1,000 people attend training opportunities at the farm each year.

Census data show that in 1910, African Americans operated 14.5 percent of the 6.4 million farms. The most recent census revealed that African Americans owned just 1.4 percent of the U.S.' 3.2 million farms. This is no accident. In 1999, in a historical settlement, a judge found that farmers had been systematically denied federal loans solely because they were black.

As people of faith, we can move toward a more just and sustainable food system in which people of color gain access to the land, credit, and training necessary for successful farming. With One Great Hour of Sharing gifts, Presbyterians can nurture a new generation of food growers.

By giving to One Great Hour of Sharing, our gifts help the Presbyterian Hunger Program, Self-Development of People, and Presbyterian Disaster Assistance to engage in ministries that are moving us outside the walls of our churches to help build a more just world.

Let us pray,

*Creator God, in the beginning
you established a garden
for humankind to tend.*

*In our broken world, many go hungry
while many hands that would garden
go without access to land to till.*

*Move our church beyond the doors
through this ministry, sharing what
we have with those in need and
creating a world where all have dignity
and all can gather around the table
with enough to eat.*

Amen.