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# HUNGER MINISTRY GUIDE

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Alleviating Food Insecurity in McLennan County



FEBRUARY 25, 2019  
WACO REGIONAL BAPTIST ASSOCIATION  
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**WACO REGIONAL  
BAPTIST ASSOCIATION**

## About WRBA's Hunger Ministry

Awareness of hunger and food insecurity in McLennan County has been increasing over the past several years and the Waco Regional Baptist Association has placed an emphasis on alleviating this problem within its congregations. The coordination of hunger ministries through faith-based institutions and non-profit organizations provide a front-line defense against this problem and the WRBA hopes to guide the formation of these relationships and provide resources to tackle food insecurity.

Hunger Ministry at the Waco Regional Baptist Association exists to support churches in caring for the needs of people who are hungry by connecting them with resources, education and opportunities for collaboration. The program grew out of a relationship with the Garland School of Social Work at Baylor University. Since 2010 the WRBA has received social work interns who have continually encouraged research informed practice and collaboration among churches and other organizations. Today the program is administered by the Hunger Ministry Coordinator and Senior SNAP Outreach Intern. Guidance and direction are provided by the Hunger Committee, a diverse group of individuals from partner churches who are passionate about seeing hunger eradicated within our communities

In McLennan county, over 20% of households are considered food insecure. This means that they either do not have the financial means to purchase groceries or do not have access to affordable and healthy food options. Along the same lines, 17% of households in McLennan County fall under federal poverty guidelines, while 27% earn more than the poverty guidelines, but not enough to afford basic cost-of-living expenses for Texas. These conditions create a community full of individuals in need of assistance with purchasing groceries, meal planning, nutritional education, and transportation.

The Waco Regional Baptist Association's Hunger Ministry is designed to connect local church-based hungry ministries and support them in their mission to care for these individuals by providing education, resources, and opportunities for collaboration. The WRBA helps churches build on their capacity, encourage regular planning and evaluation, and provide resources and training. Not only do these hunger ministries directly contribute to the overall wellness of each church's congregation, they allow the formation of partnerships with organizations already working in our community and provide opportunities to become doers of the Word.

## What is the Church's Role in Ending Hunger?

Over the past few decades, the Christian Church in the United States has become more engaged and involved in social justice issues and sought to alleviate the pain and suffering of its congregations. Although serving others is not new, Matthew 22:39 says that Jesus commanded us to "love thy neighbor as thyself", the coordinated actions and grassroot movements of churches should be examined from a biblical perspective.

Historically and empirically, the primary ministry of Jesus on earth was to preach the truth of God and speak to the almighty power and love of our Creator. The Bible tells us of times when Jesus chose to continue on his journey to other towns to preach rather than stay where He was and perform more miracles for those coming to Him. This is due to the fact that the importance of hearing and receiving the Word of God surpasses the physical acts of miracles. Throughout the New Testament, there are many examples of Jesus performing miracles, but these are merely signs and testimonials to the power of God, which can only take on meaning, if the recipient and onlookers have heard and received the Gospel.

Matthew 25:35-40 is a passage of vital importance when considering how the church plays a role in helping others. It describes the final judgement where Jesus separates the sheep from the goats and tells His sheep that they are blessed by the Father and shall inherit the kingdom prepared for them. "For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me a drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me... Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me." By caring for the well-being of others and extending compassion in the way that Jesus would, we are demonstrating God's will here on earth. Furthermore, we are extending the opportunity for members of the community to come to know the Lord.

The goal of WRBA's hunger ministry to tackle the problem of hunger and food insecurity, is not only to alleviate hardships experienced by members of our community, but to provide an opportunity for people to come to the Lord. The ministry of healing is centered on Jesus caring for the wholeness of a person – body, soul and spirit – and as followers of Christ, we should be empowered by His example. Of all the miracles that Jesus performed, miracles of healing were some of the most abundant and the most magnificent. As the Creator and the Great Physician, Jesus has the power to heal those who call upon him and glorify His name. Mark 6:1-6 tells us how we must believe in order to be healed. Based on this premise, the goal of the church is to lead followers to Christ, but also to care for the wholeness and well-being of the entire individual.

Finally, the health of individuals that make up a congregation is important not only in their ability to receive the Word, but to be servants and perform the good works with which the Lord has given them gifts for. 1 Corinthians 12 describes the Church as one body with many members and how each part is important because it carries out a function that the other parts cannot. God has crafted the body just so “that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. If one member, suffers, all suffer together, if one member is honored, all rejoice together”. Each member has their own unique talent and it should use it to build up each other and the Church, and in doing so, honor God. Individuals suffering from food insecurity lack the ability to cultivate their spiritual gifts effectively and thus the Church should support these people in order to unify the body of Christ into one that is able to reach out to the nonbelievers and show them the future that God has planned for them.

The Church is very significant in the daily lives of citizens in McLennan county, as well as other communities within the Bible Belt. This provides the unique opportunity to provide resources to the community in a setting where people are

comfortable seeking out assistance and are more likely to utilize resources they need. National food assistance programs such as SNAP are fantastic at raising awareness of the issue of food insecurity but are limited in their success of helping food insecure individuals. It's estimated that only 67% of those eligible for assistance use the program and the eligibility requirements of SNAP prevent a large number of food insecure individuals who would benefit from assistance. By presenting similar resources through faith entities, not only will more community members benefit due to less exclusionary requirements, the stigma of receiving any type of assistance will diminish and a more tight-knit community will form.

Overall, the WRBA and its partners hopes to accomplish these 4 major tenets by using a biblically-based approach to hunger in McLennan County.

1. To equip and empower WRBA churches to respond to food insecurity in their communities by connecting them with opportunities, resources and partners for ministry.
2. To equip and empower WRBA churches to respond to food insecurity by providing education and encouraging collaboration.
3. To support WRBA churches in caring for the needs of people who are hungry by connecting them with resources, education and partners for ministry.
4. To support WRBA churches in understanding and responding to food insecurity through resources, education and collaboration.

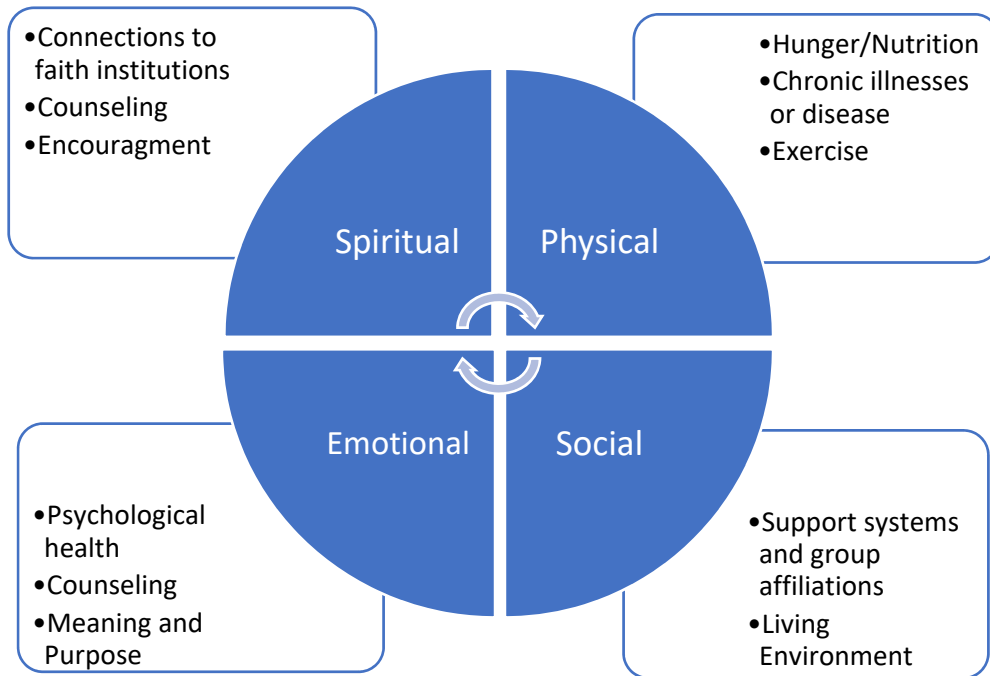
## Hunger and Wellness

The healthcare system in the United States has seen a lot of changes in the past decade with the introduction of The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, often nicknamed “Obamacare”, in 2010. While previously uninsured individuals had better means to gain insurance coverage, premiums also increased significantly for others, some even to the point where they opted to pay the penalty for being uninsured, as it was much cheaper than retaining their insurance. This new legislation has also increased discussion of how social determinants of health impact both health outcomes and disparities in access to care.

Healthy People 2020, objectives created by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to improve the nation’s health, define social determinants of health as “social, economic, physical, or other conditions where people live, learn, work, and play that influence their health”. Albeit a broad definition, it seeks to clarify that there are several extenuating circumstances which influence health and they should be taken into consideration when trying to improve the outlook of a community. More specifically, this means that poverty and food insecurity are closely linked to overall health and well-being. Therefore, it is in the best interest of communities to find ways to mitigate social determinants of health in order to stimulate their economies, decrease healthcare expenditures, increase learning and development of children, prevent obesity and improve mental health.

When addressing these social determinants of health, it is important to look at what contributes to overall well-being as a state of health. The graphic below is a basic example of factors to be considered that make up well-being and how the Church can care for the wholeness of an individual.



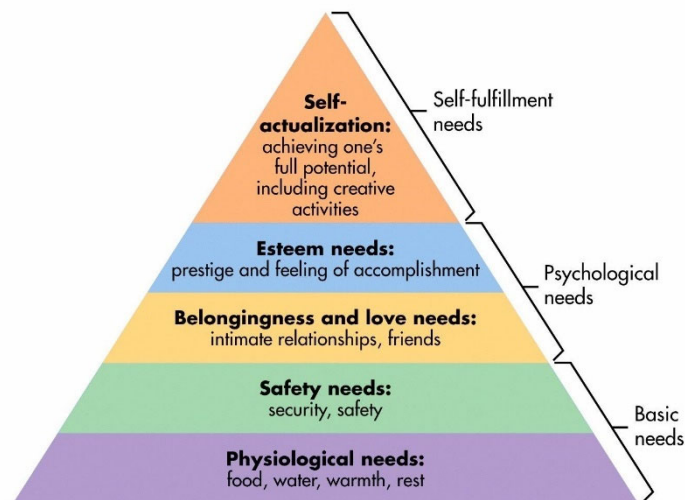


WRBA’s Hunger Ministry has elected to coordinate with other local faith-based ministries to address one facet of these social determinants and take the first steps to alleviate hunger in Waco. Food insecurity has been identified as a risk factor for the top 10 chronic diseases currently affecting Americans including: hypertension, coronary heart disease (CHD), hepatitis, stroke, cancer, asthma, diabetes, arthritis, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), and kidney disease. Amazingly, income level is only linked to three of these diseases, signifying that food insecurity may be a better indicator of overall health, as well as economic hardship.

When individuals are not able to afford or access healthy foods, they often are left with energy-dense food choices from gas stations, convenience stores or fast-food restaurants containing little to no nutritional value and are filled with sodium, saturated fats and cholesterol. This potentially leads to the development of chronic diseases and increased healthcare costs, estimated up to \$1,863 annually, which often times cannot be afforded by food insecure patients. One study found that when individuals become

victim to this cycle, they develop harmful behaviors that exacerbate their health conditions even further by having to underuse/ration medications, stop refilling prescriptions of vital medications, or make trade-offs in using money to pay for utilities instead of treatment. Moreover, food security does not indicate that an individual or family is not in need of assistance as they likely are having to forgo other dimensions of their well-being.

Hunger and overall wellness are categorically essential for a person’s ability to support themselves and have a foundation for growth and development. Abraham Maslow understood this when he developed his hierarchy of needs theory in the 1940s.



He believed that a person needed to fulfill basic needs, such as food, shelter and safety, before being able to meet higher psychological and cognitive needs. This assertion does not mean that *all* lower needs must be met in order to move up to the next “level” but speaks to the underlying notion that human beings are best able to be productive, intuitive, creative, introspective, etc. when they don’t have to worry about their basic needs.

This is what WRBA’s Hunger Ministry initiative is all about – raising our communities through meeting basic needs, allowing our congregations to flourish to their greatest capabilities.

# Ladder of Involvement

This is a visual way of tracking the natural progression of a church's involvement in a hunger ministry. This is depicted as a "ladder" which each level moving down considered more involved and more complex in the ways to participate and engage a hunger ministry. Churches can operate at multiple "rungs" at the same time, but the rungs are not necessarily sequential. Any rung may be a starting point and the goal for all churches should be to evolve their own hunger ministry with more complex ways to alleviate food insecurity, or work in partnership with another church.



## Levels of Involvement Explained

### 1. Financial

- The simplest form of engagement in a hunger ministry is giving financially to an organization that already exists to combat food insecurity. A portion of weekly or monthly tithes/offerings can be dedicated to this cause. Examples of organizations that your church can be involved with are: Meals on Wheels, The Salvation Army, etc.

### 2. Forming Relationships

- The next step of involvement would be to form relationships with hunger-based ministries and organizations within Waco and the Central Texas areas, such as the McLennan County Hunger Coalition. This allows churches to see examples of what is tangible to accomplish within their own hunger ministry and to provide a resource for any inquiries or assistance in creating their own programs.

### 3. Start an Event

- This step requires participation of congregation members in an event or activity directed related to hunger that is created by the church. Monthly community meals at a low cost, running a food drive or packing meals for children or senior adults to eat during the week, or planting a garden could be examples of what a church might do.

### 4. Inform Your Members

- This form of involvement is designed for churches to share information with their congregation regarding the current state of food insecurity within their church and community. The distribution of this information is essential to raising awareness of the issue and the beginnings of creating a hunger ministry. Once members are aware of the problem, they will then be able to

volunteer their time and resources to establishing the ministry or helping the church connect with organizations that they are already involved in.

#### 5. Hunger Ministry

- As the interest or need in your church grows, you may be able to establish your own ministry dedicated entirely to alleviating hunger within your congregation. This can be done through running your own food pantry specifically for your members, planting a community garden to stock your food pantry, teach workshops on how to purchase meals on a budget or how to prepare nutritious meals, etc. The goal of this step is to be entirely self-sustaining and actively helping the members of your church.

#### 6. Advocate

- One of the most beneficial ways to effect change on a community level is through policy legislation. This is accomplished through interacting with our local city council, state legislature, or congressperson. Progress at this level of involvement typically requires the coordination with other churches and hunger ministries within your area and necessitates more time and patience to navigate any potential bureaucratic obstacles.

## How to Get Started

### Congregational Anti-Hunger Advocacy 101: **Getting Started**

Are your church members interested in learning more about how to engage in advocacy related to hunger and poverty? Do you want to grow in understanding how policy decisions affect hunger and to gain confidence in initiating conversations with your elected officials on these issues?

Review the recommended resources below to get started.

#### **REFLECT** about how to engage:

Consult Bread for the World's "The Biblical Basis for Advocacy to End Hunger" or the Christian Life Commission's "Advocacy as Evangelism" which both use Scripture to explore how Christians may faithfully engage people in power and work together on the issues of hunger and poverty.

#### **LEARN** from others:

Best practices in advocacy are effective methods that others have used that you can learn from. Bread for the World's website is full of how-to resources; two great ones are "How to Conduct an In-District Meeting with a Member of Congress" and "Effectively Using Public Meetings to Engage with Members of Congress."

#### **PREPARE** to talk about specific policies:

Familiarize yourself with federal, state, and local policies that may impact hunger. The Christian Life Commission's one pager "Hunger & Poverty: The Basics" contains state-level information. The CLC website has great resources to help you learn more about specific policies and responses:

<https://texasbaptists.org/ministries/clc/public-policy/resources>

## CONTACT your elected officials

Do you know who your representatives are, and the best ways to contact them? Use this tool to find who represents you: <http://www.fyi.legis.state.tx.us/Home.aspx>

Then, based on what you have learned and your selected priorities, plan a succinct, specific, respectful message for your representative. In-person visits are often the most effective means of communication, followed by personal phone calls and handwritten letters, then personalized emails. Mass emails and standardized forms are usually the least effective methods for reaching your elected officials, so avoid those if you want to maximize your impact. If you choose to call, you will likely speak with staff who will relay your message to your representative. Always remember to thank your representative for the work they are doing and for listening to you.

# HOW TO: HUNGER MINISTRY

## 1. GETTING STARTED

Form a team of committed volunteers who are passionate about serving their community. Learn about your congregation and create a ministry based on your strengths and resources. Learn about the community, the needs and who is already responding.

## 2. DETERMINE MINISTRY TYPE

### Type Style Best Practices

Types include: pantries, community gardens, community meals, advocacy, backpack programs, summer meals, etc.

You may also choose to support a local organization or other existing hunger ministries.

Consider style: Would you like to start a ministry that meets emergency needs or seeks to respond to the root cause of hunger?

Find ways to learn from what others have done successfully.

## 3. PLAN AND IMPLEMENT

### Plan Inform Involve

Ask questions like: What is the intended hope/outcome of this ministry? How does it fit within the greater vision of your church? How will you measure the outcome/impact of your ministry?

Before and as you implement this ministry be sure to keep your church informed! Engage your congregation in conversations about hunger and your specific ministry. Be present with and willing to learn and hear from those you serve.

## OBJECTIVE

The Hunger Ministry at the Waco Regional Baptist Association seeks to support churches in developing and sustaining healthy hunger alleviation ministries. These ministries should build on each church's capacity and empower those they exist to serve



[wellness@wacobaptists.org](mailto:wellness@wacobaptists.org)

254.753.2408

Contact the WRBA for resources to guide your congregation through the proves of starting or growing a hunger ministry! We exist to serve your church.

## 4. EVALUATE

On an annual basis evaluate internally and hear from those you serve. What are the strengths of the ministry and what are some areas of growth? Do those you serve see things similarly? Be willing to be objective and obtain honest feedback.



## Evaluation Tools

### Digging Deeper - What Inspires Your Hunger Ministry?

Please place an **X** in the position along the line which represents your response to each statement.

Then, turn to the next page, where you can read about how your selection might inform your experience with hunger ministry in your congregation, and take an opportunity for reflection.

<p><b>A.</b></p> <p>The term that best describes the relationship of hunger ministry to the overall life of our church is</p> <p>Central</p> <p>----- </p> <p>Peripheral</p>	<p><b>B.</b></p> <p>Our congregation's primary motivation for participating in hunger ministry is</p> <p>Evangelism</p> <p>----- </p> <p>Biblical Justice</p>
<p><b>C.</b></p> <p>The programs which we sponsor and support primarily deal with</p> <p>Immediate needs</p> <p>----- </p> <p>Root causes</p>	<p><b>D.</b></p> <p>In the interactions between our church members and those who benefit from our hunger ministry, there is a sense of</p> <p>Us and them</p> <p>----- </p> <p>All of us together</p>
<p><b>E.</b></p> <p>In terms of the way it approaches the community, our hunger ministry program can best be described as</p> <p>Partnership</p> <p>----- </p> <p>Charity</p>	

**A.** In many congregations, hunger ministries are run primarily by interested members who are willing to take the lead. In large congregations, they may even be assigned to paid staff. Both tendencies may move hunger ministry to the periphery of congregational life, where most members know little about the ministry or those who benefit from it. This can make funding difficult to find, and may also deprive members of knowing both the joys and challenges of hunger ministry. **What can be done to move hunger ministry more into the center of congregational life?**

**C.** Hunger is usually the symptom of much larger problems deeply rooted in family, social, political, and economic systems. Many of our hunger ministries offer “symptomatic relief,” addressing the results but not the causes of the problems. There is certainly a place for relief and emergency ministries, because when people are hungry, food is the thing that they need most. It can be valuable, additionally, to think about root causes. **How can your church learn about what other factors are affecting the lives of hungry people, and perhaps move beyond offering food alone?**

**E.** As we reach out to people experiencing hunger in our community, it is important to consider the long term effect of our involvement. We can promote dependency or help build self-reliance. We can come in as experts with all the answers, or we can seek to be long-term partners with those who are the experts on their own conditions. **How might your hunger ministry learn from people experiencing hunger and treat them as long-term partners in your efforts?**

**B.** The Bible emphasizes both evangelism and justice; either value can be appropriate motivators for ministry. If our desire to participate in hunger ministry is vague, however, our ministries may become “nice things to do,” or worse, “things that just feel good.” While there is nothing wrong with feeling good about our work, we must be very careful about whose needs are being met by our ministries. A dual focus on evangelism and on justice may lead us to seek solutions to the root causes of hunger and poverty as we share the gospel, and we may find that evangelism and justice are more intertwined than we think. **What can be done to examine your ministry’s relationship to evangelism and biblical justice?**

**D.** The world emphasizes our differences, but the gospel recognizes our common standing before God. That is why effective hunger ministries begin with the assumption that “all of us are in this together.” When we seek to be in solidarity with those we serve, we find that we have much to learn from them about life, and very often about faith, too. We can increase unity in our community when we look for common ground. **What can your congregation do through hunger ministry to build bridges between those who serve and those who receive help from your**

Presbyterian Church (USA). (1996). *Hunger Ministry Series: Stopping to Think*. Louisville, KY: Presbyterian Hunger Program.



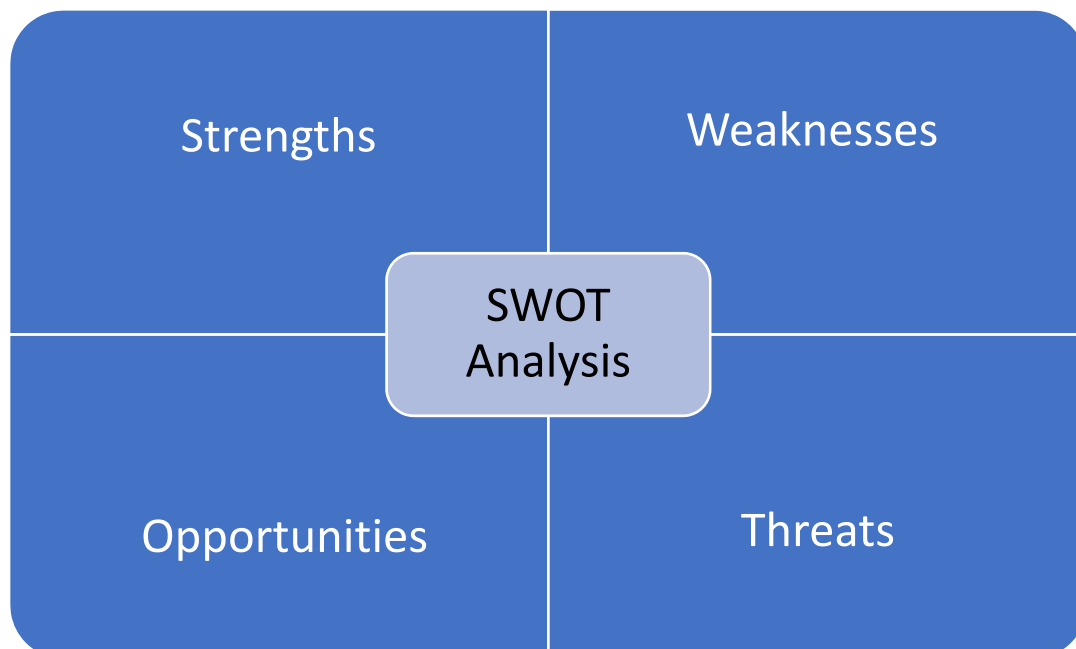
## The Hunger Ministry Check – Up

Just as doctors recommend each of us get a check-up once a year to make sure we are healthy and all of our systems are functioning well, it is a great practice to evaluate the health of a hunger ministry on a regular basis, or at least once per year.

### To gather information, you can:

- Talk with church members who are recipients of hunger ministry assistance
- Ask for feedback from community members who are recipients of hunger ministry assistance
- Hear from congregants who have helped with the hunger ministry
- Have conversations with congregants who have *not* been part of the hunger ministry
- Review financial records
- Read through notes kept about the ministry

As you gather information from a variety of sources, take detailed notes about what you are learning. Then, use SWOT Analysis to place each observation into one of the following categories (see reverse page for a blank chart you can fill out)



<b>Strengths</b>	<b>Weaknesses</b>
<b>Opportunities</b>	<b>Threats</b>

**Once you have filled in the grid, sit down with your team who is involved in the hunger ministry. Take time to review the information together, and talk about what you notice, and how your evaluation can help inform your work going forward.**

Here are some questions you can use to guide your conversation:

1. What about the ministry is strongest?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. What might need to change in order to better suit the strengths or needs of the community or the strengths or needs of your church?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. What else do you need to know to be more effective in your ministry?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
4. What might you like to try that is new or different?



## Community Impact of Addressing Food Insecurity

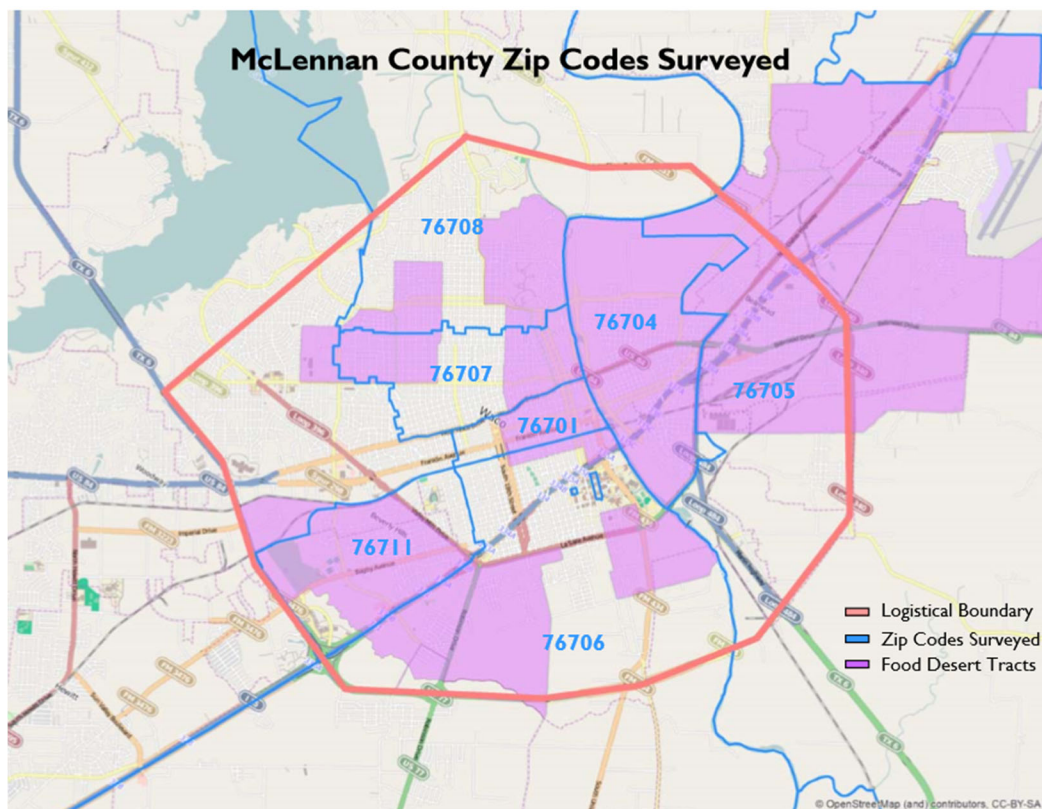
Food insecurity is a problem that plagues low income inner-city communities as well as rural communities, such as the ones that exist in McLennan County. Food insecurity doesn't just mean hunger, it also means the lack of physical and economic access to safe and nutritious foods that meet the dietary needs and cultural preferences of people of all socio-economic and racial backgrounds. It is well known that the world and more specifically, the United States, produces enough food to end all food insecurity and hunger, but the distribution of resources and social disparities that exist prevent this from happening. Current research of the topic has supported the use of socioecological approaches to health promotion, and it is vital to establish the interventions that will successfully target food insecurity.

One important aspect of providing assistance in any context, is the acknowledgment that stereotypes and stigmas are very pervasive and often present barriers to individuals who would benefit from assistance. There are various demographic factors that may act as indicators as to who may require aid, such as income level, geographic location, age, race, household size, etc. but the fact of the matter remains that no single factor is enough to distinguish one person in need from another. One study in North Carolina found that on average, a person was dependent on assistance programs for 1,823 days (5 years), and only 10% of those people were below the federal poverty line in terms of income. This just goes to show that a specific population need not to be targeted at the risk of excluding others, but interventions must be put in place that can provide benefits to anyone and everyone.

It has been shown that a racial disparity exists in access to grocery stores and supermarkets, with non-Hispanic Blacks suffering the most from "food deserts". Depending on the criterion, a food desert can be classified when 33% of a population

reside more than one mile from a supermarket, according to US Department of Agriculture. A national study of 28,000 zip codes showed that the availability of chain supermarkets in Black neighborhoods is approximately 50% that of White neighborhoods (Powell, Slater, Mirtcheva, Bao, & Chaloupka, 2007). It should be noted that income level is not the only distinguishing characteristic between racially divided neighborhoods, but usually is a strong indicator that minorities who are lower income tend to live in areas that can more easily be classified as food deserts.

In 2010, the Texas Department of State Health Services created the Texas Nutrition Environment Assessment Tool dedicated to evaluating and improving the food environments in communities such as McLennan county. With the help of the Baylor School of Social Work and the Texas Hunger Initiative in 2014, surveys were administered to the 7 major zip codes in Waco to evaluate the food environment. The picture below indicates that every zip code in the Greater Waco Area has a significant area classified as a food desert.





Several of the zip codes (76701, 76704, 76706 & 76707) did not have a grocery store and the prices of comparable foodstuffs at corner stores were up to 2-3x greater times than in a grocery store. This inflicts a greater problem of economic hardship of citizens already living at a disadvantage in maintaining their health and wellness.

Furthermore, convenience stores that sold foodstuffs often lacked availability or a variety of fruits and vegetables (whether fresh or frozen) and dairy products. Therefore, although the access to food existed and individuals who were not “food insecure” in the sense that they were not located in a food desert, were not able to effectively meet the dietary guidelines for fruits in vegetables set by the United States Department of Agriculture. In fact, nationally, the US population does not meet *any* recommendations for vegetable sub-groups such as dark green vegetables, legumes, and starchy vegetables. Recommendations for fruits are typically accomplished through fruit juice but are high in added sugars and other chemicals that can be problematic to health.

It has been established that the problem of food insecurity exists in McLennan County, and WRBA aims to form a coalition of churches dedicated to alleviating this problem within their congregations, but what impact will this have on the community?

Firstly, there are the obvious health benefits to the entire community when food insecurity is addressed. With a high prevalence of healthy and available foods, there is a greater likelihood that individuals will be able to choose and maintain a healthy diet and not succumb to chronic diseases previously mentioned in the “Hunger and Wellness” section. From a nutritional standpoint, the preventative effort of maintaining a healthy diet far outweighs medical interventions in terms of success and overall costs, for both the consumer and healthcare entity. In addition, the rates of increasing obesity and BMI levels could be slowed, if not reversed, and once again, lowering the impact of chronic diseases on the local healthcare system.

However, addressing food insecurity alone is not enough to improve population health. It must be supplemented with public works projects such as the addition of sidewalks, bike lanes, street lights and other infrastructure to improve the ability of citizens to exercise free of cost in their own neighborhoods, as opposed to being members at country clubs, fitness clubs, or gyms that may be economically unachievable for those that are food insecure.

Additionally, there appears to be a higher density of liquor and convenience stores in areas with little access to food, and thus there are community-level adverse effects due to motor vehicle crashes, domestic assault, burglaries, and other petty crimes associated with alcohol abuse/misuse. If more healthy options were presented to the members of these communities, perhaps the rates of these crimes could be reduced.

Secondly, there is no better measure of future success for a community than its children. Infancy, childhood and adolescent are marked by periods of accelerated growth – physically, cognitively, and emotionally – more so than at any other point in life. As a result, it is vital to create interventions for children of food insecure families in order to protect their learning and development, as well as their ability to progress forward in life, free of barriers. At the K-12 level, food insecurity in lower-income students is linked to lower academic performance, decreased memory and behavioral problems. In addition, rates of absenteeism are higher, as well as the risk of mental illnesses such as depression due to the hardships these students face. More research is needed on the longitudinal effects of persistent food insecure households on child development, as most of the existing literature focuses on malnutrition or fasting. Lastly, there is limited research on the impact of food insecurity in college-age students, but most students who come from lower-income families work jobs in order to cover their tuition and living expenses, and oftentimes grades suffer as a result.

Finally, add data from Jordan

# The Cycle of Poverty and Hunger

In economics, the cycle of poverty is the "set of factors or events by which poverty, once started, is likely to continue unless there is outside intervention". This theory has been heavily explored by economists, sociologists, and various other professions for decades and one theme underlies every study – the cycle of poverty is very difficult to break, no matter where you live.



\*All rights reserved by the Elizabeth Fry Society

The United States is often quoted as being the “Land of the Free” and thousands of families immigrate here every year in pursuit of the American Dream. While these notions are great, it is important to understand that a large percentage of Americans are one medical emergency or job loss or natural disaster away from falling into poverty and potentially becoming trapped. A common myth surrounding people in poverty is that they have poor work ethic or that they are victims of a highly competitive capitalist society. This is simply not true for a myriad of reasons and dangerous assumptions such as these are one reason that poverty as a societal problem is difficult to fix. Furthermore, poverty is not the bottomless pit that it is often made out to be – with the right assistance and effort put forth by the individual, one can leave the cycle of poverty. This is why it is so vital to have programs like hunger ministries in place to aid the rise of congregation members out of compromised positions.

Although the cycle of poverty can manifest differently for each individual and family, similar patterns exist, and only outside intervention is able to permanently break the cycle. For instance, it is highly erroneous to believe that everyone suffering from poverty engages in criminal activity. Instead, they may be afflicted by constant job loss due to medical illness or transportation issues resulting in their termination. Or perhaps a woman is trapped in an abusive relationship or has multiple children to different partners and is unable to provide for her children and more people then enter into the cycle of poverty. Additionally, it is imperative that churches maintain the objective ability to ascertain who needs assistance and not operate based on stereotypes such as only certain ethnic groups are impoverished, all impoverished people abuse the welfare system or that a certain level of education is needed in order to not be a victim of poverty.

Food insecurity is just one of the complex social issues that accompanies the cycle of poverty. By targeting this area within our community, we may be able to

provide the outside assistance needed to help lift members of our congregations out of poverty. As noted before, individuals on a limited income sometimes are faced with the options to pay for utilities instead of food and by providing resources to eliminate this impossible choice, we can eliminate this burden.

# Resource Guide

## Food Pantries:

### Antioch Community Church Pantry

510 N 20th St,  
Waco, TX 76707

### Rayo de Luz Pantry

900 Maxfield Street,  
Bellmead, TX 76705

### Bread of Life (Bellmead Calvary Baptist Church)

910 E. Loop 340,  
Waco, TX 76705

### Red Door Pantry

1601 Clay Ave,  
Waco, TX 76706

### Caritas of Waco\*

300 S.15th St.,  
Waco, TX 76701

### Robinson Food Pantry

106 W Lyndale Drive,  
Robinson, TX 76706

### Church of the Open Door

900 N. Loop 340,  
Waco, TX 76705

### Salvation Army

4721 W. Waco Dr.,  
Waco, TX 78710

### Columbus Avenue Baptist Church

1300 Columbus Ave,  
Waco, TX 76701

### Second Missionary Baptist Church

2001 Dallas St,  
Waco, TX 76704

### Family of Faith

4112 Memorial Dr.,  
Waco, TX 76711

### Seventh Day Adventist

800 W Hwy 6,  
Waco, TX 76712

### Hands of Mercy

3301 Clay St.,  
Waco, TX 76711

### Shepherd's Heart Food Pantry

Multiple Locations

### Just As I Am Ministries

1415 Chapel Hill Dr,  
Waco, TX 76712

### St Francis Social Ministry

315 Jefferson Avenue,  
Waco TX 76701

### Lakeshore Baptist Pantry

5801 Bishop Dr.,  
Waco, TX 76710

### St. Luke's African Methodist Episcopal Church\*

117 E Church St,  
Waco, TX 76704

Living Word COGIC  
1005 Dunbar Ave,  
Waco, TX 76704

Victorious life Church  
7459 S Hwy 35,  
Waco, TX 76701

Loaves & Fishes\*  
3300 North 22nd Street  
Waco, TX 76708

The Care Center of Highland Baptist Church  
3014 Maple Ave,  
Waco, TX 76707

Mart Mobile Pantry  
123 Texas Avenue,  
Mart, TX 76664

Waco Mobile Pantry  
3314 Franklin Ave  
Waco, TX 76710

Waco Downtown Famers Market  
500 Washington Ave,  
Waco, TX 76701

\*Supplemental Nutrition Assistant Program (SNAP) Location

\*\* For more resources and locations, visit the Central Texas Food Bank website or <https://www.wacobaptists.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/Food-Pantry-2018-revised05252018-1.pdf>

† Inquire at your local school to learn more about breakfast programs or summer and afterschool meals

**Food Assistance Programs:**

<p>Food Stamps Assistance (SNAPs)</p> <p>612 Austin Ave Waco TX 76701</p> <p>Meals on Wheels</p> <p><a href="https://www.mowwaco.org/">https://www.mowwaco.org/</a></p> <p>Meyer Center Community Clinic – Family Health Center</p> <p>1226 Washington Ave, Waco, TX 76701</p> <p>Mission Waco</p> <p>1315 N 15th St, Waco, TX 76707</p>	<p>Mom’s Meals (Medicare/Medicaid)</p> <p>1-877-508-6667</p> <p>Woman, Infants, and Children Program (WIC)</p> <p>1800 Gurley Lane Waco, TX 76706</p> <p>1105 Washington Avenue Waco, TX 76701</p> <p>225 West Waco Drive Waco, TX 76707</p> <p>94 Scott Circle Waco, TX 76705</p>
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## Community Gardens

### **Why start a community garden?**

There are many reasons for starting a community garden. Your garden may be a combination of several of these or focus on only one. It is important to know the purpose for growing to guide your planning and planting for the garden. The following are descriptions of the types of gardens we have encountered.

*Hunger Ministry* - Food grown in the garden is primarily donated to food pantries and other hunger ministries in order to provide access to good food for people in need.

*Education*- Primary focus is to provide a hands-on learning environment for any age to learn about gardening, the environment, nutrition, cooking and food production.

*Mentorship*- Intergenerational or peer-to-peer models focus on community building and developing relationships through gardening.

*Entrepreneurial*- Focuses on the potential for food production to be a source of income and sustainability for those involved, cutting down on grocery costs and developing business skills in the community.

*Therapy*- Targets a specific group of people that would benefit from the healing effects of working in the garden, e.g. elderly, mental health patients, prisoners, etc.

*Demonstration Garden*- Intended as a place to train others in basic gardening skills and a variety of methods for growing food in diverse locations, apartments, rooftops or backyards so people can see and learn techniques to apply in their own gardens.

*Community Development*- Holistic approach focused on the big picture of all the possible effects of gardening on growing healthy communities, and tries to incorporate all the other elements into a program that addresses the needs of the community through organizing and gardening.

### **How do you want to grow your garden?**

Now that you've thought about why you're growing a garden it's important to think about how you will organize and structure your gardening program. The following are some models for community gardens we've encountered.



*Common Garden*- large plot that is gardened communally by volunteers and people in community

*Plot Garden*- large garden where people pay a small fee and/or apply in order to garden a portion of the larger garden.

*Yard Sharing*- arrangements are made to garden people's lawns and share the harvest or proceeds among those involved

### **Where to garden?**

The important things to consider are access to water, ownership of land, accessibility of garden, and city ordinances. With that said you can garden almost anywhere... schools, churches, apartment complexes, rooftops, front lawns, parks, vacant lots. Be creative. You are only limited by your imagination and perseverance.

### ***Community Assessment and Organizing***

As you are thinking about the initial questions surrounding starting a garden, it would be wise to conduct a community assessment. Discover the needs of your community – is a garden needed or wanted? What do people desire from a community garden? How will your garden play a role in bettering your community? Community assessment can be as easy as talking to the neighbors living around the garden, as well as businesses in the neighborhood. Start with questions that will assess their desire for a garden, and avoid leading questions.

- ☉Ask them how they would like to be involved.
- ☉Ask them what they would to see grown in the garden.
- ☉Invite them to work days, meetings and potlucks.
- ☉Have them share about frustrations and joys the community brings them.
- ☉Brainstorm how your garden can be a part of the solution.

After you have assessed community needs and priorities, you can organize neighborhood folks to participate in your garden project. Remember, not all people want to garden but may help in other ways, -such as starting seeds, donating flowers, providing access to water, working with youth, buying produce, spreading the word, cooking demonstrations, and more.

### **Resources for Assessing and Organizing**

- [World Hunger Relief, Inc.](#): has conducted gardening assessments in South and East Waco to better understand the history of agriculture and access to healthy food in these neighborhoods. Reports and data from each of these assessments are available upon request.
- [Building Communities from the Inside Out: A Path Toward Finding and Mobilizing a Community's Assets](#) (Kretzmann and McKnight): a book used by many social workers in preparing for community organizing and assessing – based on building up a community rather than focusing on its flaws and deficits.
- [When Helping Hurts](#) (Corbett and Fikkert): a book discussing the sometimes detrimental role of theology in transformational ministry among the poor. Not necessarily agricultural – but helps in preparing how we work with people from different backgrounds than ourselves. Available in the Village Store at World Hunger Relief.

## Questions to Consider

- Is land available for a garden?
- Is there a strong desire and need for a garden?
- Who will the garden serve?
- Who will work in the garden?
- How will the garden be funded?
- Are you doing something *for*, *to*, or *with* the people you want to serve?
- What is the purpose of the garden?
- What type of role will the garden play - food production, community building, environmental restoration, beautification, recreation?
- Who makes decisions about the garden (democratic vote, consensus, board of directors, etc.)?
- Who are the potential supporters and/or partners of the garden - businesses, neighbors, schools?

- Will space be divided and gardened by individuals and families or will it be gardened collectively by the group - or both?
- Will there be a fee charged to gardeners to cover expenses? Will there be a sliding scale?
- Who is willing to serve on a garden leadership team?
- What is the best way for the group to stay in touch?

*From: "Central Texas Community Gardening Manual," Prepared by: World Hunger Relief, Inc. and the Heart of Texas urban Gardening Coalition, (pp. 10-14), 2011*

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