JUST CHURCH
A project of Church Action on Poverty

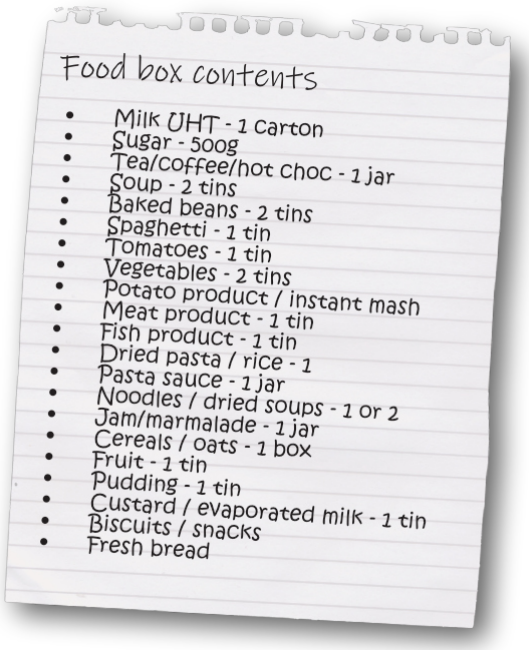
Service plan

Making voices heard:
a service plan for Pentecost

plan

Prepare a visual display
On a table near the front of church, gather together the contents of a food bank parcel. The items listed on the right would make up a typical three-day parcel for one adult or two children.

If there are many families in your church, try to make your display reflect what a family would get for three days. If there are many single people, make the display what a single person would receive. Try to use basic brands.



Other things you will need...
- A bell or gong for the all-age activity
- Labels for responding to the word, with different actions, e.g. "Your nearest food bank is ..... To volunteer phone ..." or "Donate to support people in your community at ...." or "Sign up for Church Action On Poverty's e-actions at church-poverty.org.uk/act"
- The script for the Corinthians reading and data projection equipment for the Acts videos.

Supporting people
Remember that there may be people in your congregation who are affected by the issue of food poverty. Some could be worried about losing their jobs, or looking for work, struggling on a low wage or using a food bank. Others will have no experience of poverty, and many will have no idea how a food bank works.

Do some research as a church so you know how to signpost someone who needs help, and people who want to help. Offer that someone would be on hand to listen if anyone wants to talk about issues you discuss.



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gather

Call to worship

Come to the table...
those who are hungry for food
and those who are hungry for justice.

Come to the table...
those who are afraid of the future
and those who long to bring peace.

Come to the table...
those who do not know their need and
those who do not know their gifts.

Come gather,
Here we talk and share
Here we pray and laugh
Here we plan and build
Here together, all are welcome.
God's Spirit is here.

Confession

If you asked us to walk in another's shoes and we did not
Holy Spirit,
Forgive us and give us your peace

If you asked us to listen to another's story and we did not
Holy Spirit,
Forgive us and give us your peace

If you asked us to witness an injustice and we did not
Holy Spirit,
Forgive us and give us your peace

Forgive us and inspire us, to do the work you call us to,
Empowered with confidence and hope.

Display

Explain to people that the display represents three days' food for... a family... a single person... a parent with two children.

We will be thinking more about food and hunger. What difference would it make to someone with no money to receive this donation?

share the word

Here are suggested ways of presenting some of the readings for Pentecost from Common Worship:

Acts 2:1-21

There are animations available on YouTube, telling this story through Lego or shadow puppets.



youtube.com/watch?v=TpU8GM32EOc



youtube.com/watch?v=lwleZAG5Z7M&t

1 Corinthians 12:3b–13

Give sections of the passage to nine people in different parts of the church, so voices are spread out. A narrator reads verses 3–8, 11 and 12. Other voices read each of the gifts listed in verse 9, and all the voices join in together for verse 13.

John 20: 19-23

Ask a woman to read this as if it is an eyewitness account:

The day I saw Jesus in the garden, heard him speak my name, "Mary"; I have never known such joy. I saw my friend die a cruel and horrible death yet he was with me, doing what he always did, turning your world upside-down.

Those men, I could not make them believe me. They were sat in the house with the door locked, fearing the mob may come at any moment. He had changed their lives forever and they were lost without him.

Then, in an instant, the atmosphere changed. He was with us, standing in the middle of us smiling. "Peace be with you", he said. And it was as though we were all frozen, paused. He showed us his hands, his side. His execution had been real, not some terrible nightmare from which we had awoken. But we knew then, it had not been enough to defeat him; not this man, not his Spirit.

Everyone spoke at once, meaningless joyful celebration. I knew they shared the joy I had felt that morning. "Peace be with you" he said again and a hush fell in the room, we waited for him to speak. "As the father sent me, so I send you," and I understood. He was charging us with his task: his dream of a kingdom like none we have ever known, a kingdom of peace and justice where the sick were healed and the hungry fed. This is our task now.

He breathed on us and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit" and I knew we were going to take his message to the ends of the earth. With his Spirit, we would build his kingdom, on earth as it is in Heaven.

Making voices heard: a service plan for Pentecost

explore the word

Acts 2:1–21
Jesus' followers gathered together for Shavuot, 50 days after the Passover, to celebrate the giving of the Torah to God's people at Mount Sinai. The festival is part of the story of God's people: at Passover they were released from slavery, 50 days later they became a people with their own law. Jews meet together on this festival to study the Torah and give thanks for it. Jesus' followers may have been studying scripture when they received the Spirit. Shavuot is also an agricultural festival. The pilgrims in Jerusalem who hear the disciples' message in their own languages have come to the Temple to bring grain offerings, to give thanks for a good harvest and plentiful food. While there, they hear a powerful message that draws them closer. The disciples have not planned a mission, they are inspired by the Spirit to speak and this attracts people.

1 Corinthians 12:3b–13
In the church at Corinth, the gift of tongues has become quite a prestigious gift that goes with status in the church. Paul points out that it is one gift among many. He talks about discernment: previously the people had been moved to worship idols, now they must be aware of what sort of speech comes from the Spirit, and which does not. The Spirit inspires people to say "Jesus is Lord." Words that deny Jesus do not come from the Spirit. The community is being asked to consider where truth comes from and what truth is. In the same way we must know what we are speaking is truth, before we can hope to speak truth to power. We have to listen to the rest of the body of Christ; those who are hungry, those who have knowledge, those who have wisdom and understanding, those who have experience. We will be called to be prophets about that truth, to speak to people in languages they can understand.

Numbers 11:24–30
The reading takes place when the people are in the middle of a food shortage, they are worried about what they shall eat and craving food they enjoyed in the past. Moses asks for help in bearing the burden of caring for the people, and God's reply is that more of the people shall receive the spirit and be prophets. When this happens outside of the set boundaries, Moses' response is not to quieten them but to wish all of God's people were prophets. Who are the prophets of today? Who are the people who speak up outside the established systems of power? Are we called to speak out with them on behalf of the hungry?

John 20:19–23
The disciples are locked in a house because of fear: Jesus their leader has been killed, there are strange stories from the women about his body being missing, and Mary Magdalene claims to have seen Jesus. They have locked the doors and stayed together, afraid. Jesus' response to their fear is to be amongst them, to wish them Peace. It is no accident that he says this twice. He knows that they are afraid but wishes them peace and empowers them. As he has been sent, they must go out into the world; they have a job to do. The Spirit he gives them is the same Spirit; they go out in his place.

Fear can make us turn in on ourselves; we can lock others out and concentrate on ourselves instead of looking outwards. Jesus' response to that is to wish us peace and also to give us a task to do. To restore others to right relation, to forgive sins and hold people accountable for sinful behaviour. Sometimes fear can stop us speaking out for justice, fear of authority, fear that our voices won't be enough to make a difference. What might we do if we were not afraid? Who would we speak up for? What injustices would we speak out against?

Read the quotes on page 6 of the Walking the Breadline report. The people accessing food banks are living with fear and anxiety. What would peace look like for them? What do you think Jesus might say to their situation? Are we called to speak up for them?

The Spirit calls us into deeper understanding of one another; through the Spirit we are able to understand different languages. How can the Spirit help us to recognise languages of power and languages of oppression? To speak out on behalf of the oppressed?

all-age activity

Appoint someone to stand at the back row with a bell or gong, and explain that this will be the signal for quiet.

Give everyone on the front row a simple sentence: a line from today's scripture, a cry for justice, or a fact:

- "Peace be with you, as the Father sent me so I send you"
- "Would that all the Lord's people were prophets"
- "I will pour out my spirit on all flesh"
- "Four out of five teachers report that children come to school hungry"
- "Over half a million people in the UK are now dependent on food banks"

Explain that the people on the front row are going to say a sentence and keep repeating it. Once the second row have heard and understood the sentence being said, they can join in. Once the back row has the sentence, the bell can be sounded.

Do this a number of times; can people do it faster? Louder? What happens if we say it very quietly – is it still effective?

Imagine if people heard us and came to join in, how far the message could be sent. Sometimes we can feel powerless to speak out against injustice, we wonder who will hear our small voices. But if we can reach the people closest to us, and they reach the people closest to them, how loud can our message become?

respond to the word

Give

Ask people to estimate the cost of a typical evening meal in their household, or a takeaway if they have them often. Don't forget the cost of getting the food to your house: did you drive to the supermarket? Did you pay a delivery charge? What about the energy used to heat the food?

If you can afford it, please consider giving the cost of this meal to support the Your Local Pantry network, which Church Action on Poverty coordinates.

Pantries are neighbourhood hubs that bring people together around food. They look and feel like local shops. They enable people to save on shopping, but also lead to improved health, new friendships and relationships, better community connection and reduces anxiety.

You can donate at
give.church-poverty.org.uk/page/166142/donate/1

Act

The readings today showed that we have many different gifts. Some people may have the time to volunteer, some can write a good letter, others can share the word on social media, and others would be good event organisers. People may like to do a simple thing like pledge to take part in Church Action on Poverty's e-actions, others might be inspired to do something bigger.

Have some examples that are relevant for your local area. If possible, print this information on labels so people can take an address or a phone number or a URL explaining how to take action.

Give people a gift tag and encourage them to share their gifts to help people who are hungry. Play some music and ask people to write down something they pledge to do as a result of this service or to take a label and stick that to their tag. Explain that in the next few weeks there will a saucepan at the back of church to remind people of the injustice of hunger; when people have done their action they can put their tag in the saucepan. Until then, encourage them to hang on to them as a reminder.

Pray

Come Holy Spirit
We live in a world where there is plenty for all, yet many are hungry
Help us to share the riches you have given us
Your kingdom come
Your will be done

Come Holy Spirit
You give us a vision of better world
Give wisdom to those with the power to change it
Your kingdom come
Your will be done

Come Holy Spirit
You call us all to be prophets of your truth
Inspire us to speak out for justice
Your kingdom come
Your will be done

Come Holy Spirit
You heal the sick and bind up the broken-hearted
Lift up those who need your care
Your kingdom come
Your will be done

Come Holy Spirit
You bring peace to those who are afraid
Send us out with your message of Hope
Your kingdom come
Your will be done

send out

Jesus stands among his followers when they are gathered together
He leaves them his Peace and his Spirit.
Do not be afraid
May your dreams and visions be bold enough to see his Kingdom,
And may his Spirit strengthen you to build it.
Amen

Church Action on Poverty
This resource was originally written by Rev Marie Pattison, who is part of Church Action on Poverty's worship and theology collective.
email: info@church-poverty.org.uk

JUST CHURCH
We have further worship materials, reflections and resources to help your church become a more just church.
Use the QR code here, or visit
church-poverty.org.uk/justchurch