

Resource for congregations and faith communities

World Food Day

16 October 2026



Uniting Church in Australia
SYNOD OF VICTORIA AND TASMANIA



The Uniting Church in Australia
QUEENSLAND SYNOD

World Food Day

16 October is [World Food Day](#). This year the theme is 'Innovate Today. Nourish Tomorrow'.

This resource is for congregations and faith communities that wish to include material related to World Food Day in their services, most likely on **Sunday 11 October or Sunday 18 October**.

World Food Day Poster Contest

The UN Food and Agriculture Organisation want children and young adults to create a poster that shows what "Innovate today. Nourish tomorrow." means to them. Show them how innovation - big or small, old or new - can help feed the world, protect the planet, and build a better future for everyone.

To participate, you must be aged 5-19. The deadline for entries is **6 November 2026**.

More details can be found here: <https://www.fao.org/world-food-day/contest/en>



Food-Related Prayers

Call to worship

Leader: Come, let us worship God, who gifted us with Life and food to sustain life.

Response: We praise God for the wondrous creation.

Leader: Come, let us follow Lord Jesus Christ, who inspires us to hunger and thirst for Justice and Righteousness.

Response: We give glory to God, who restores the weak and the hungry.

Leader: Come let us move with the Holy Spirit, striving to establish food justice.

Response: We praise God for the abundant life that is assured to all.

<https://www.oikoumene.org/resources/documents/prayers-and-action-to-overcome-hunger>

Opening Prayer

The earth is the Lord's and all that is in it, the world, and those who live in it; (Psalm 24:1)

God visits the earth and waters it, Greatly enriching the earth

.... softening it with showers, and blessing its growth.

God provides the people with grain. (Psalm 65:9-10 adapted)

God grants peace within your borders;

God fills you with the finest of wheat. (Psalm 147:14)

The Lord watches over the strangers;

God upholds the orphan and the widow, but the way of the wicked, God brings to ruin. (Psalm 146:9)

O give thanks to the Lord, for God is good;

God's steadfast love endures forever! (Psalm 118:1)

O Lord, who may abide in your tent?

Who may dwell on your holy hill? (Psalm 15:1)

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Prayer: Our bread

Reader 1:

Give us,
God of the earth and of the wheat fields,
our daily food.
That food that does not belong to us,
that is yours and given generously.
Food to share,
food that is blessed,
satiating each person.
Satisfying hunger and solitude,
without hoarding or hiding.

Reader 2:

Do not give us just the food,
give us also the dignity that we are denied.
To overcome
walls and war,
greed and ambition,
privatisation of public knowledge and resources.
They exclude, marginalise,
condemn, expel, and kill.

Reader 1:

Give us safe spaces where we can meet,
to celebrate our human diversities.
Give us the ability to embrace,
with compassion and the willingness to share,
with outstretched hands, and sensitive hearts,
committed to the fullness of life.

Reader 2:

Give us words that encourage,
actions that are inclusive and just,
gestures that give hope and instil courage.
With songs that inspire us each day,
with tenderness and sustenance.
Our glasses overflowing
with Justice, Peace and Equity.

Gerardo Oberman, Argentina
Translated and adapted by Greta Nania
Montoya Ortega, WCC

[https://www.oikoumene.org/resources/
documents/prayers-and-action-to-overcome-
hunger](https://www.oikoumene.org/resources/documents/prayers-and-action-to-overcome-hunger)

Responsive prayer

Reader 1: Lord, help us to recognise you in the
hungry, thirsty and vulnerable amongst us;

*All: Lord, help us to worship you by serving
the needy.*

Reader 2: Lord help us to strive for Justice
and Peace;

*All: Lord, help us resolve conflicts and help
people live safe and fulfilling lives.*

Reader 3: Lord, help us to share each
other's burdens;

*All: Lord, help us to unite to face our common
struggles to overcome hunger and injustice.*

Reader 4: Lord, help us to strive for the rights of
small farmers and fisher folk;

*All: Lord, together, help us to protect and promote
the biodiversity of our world and the richness of
indigenous wisdom.*

Reader 5: Lord, help us to live responsibly and
tread gently on this earth;

*All: Lord, together, help us to reduce food waste,
irresponsible consumption, promote healthy and
active lifestyles and diets and increase the use of
renewable energy, to preserve and protect the
environment.*

[https://www.oikoumene.org/resources/
documents/prayers-and-action-to-overcome-
hunger](https://www.oikoumene.org/resources/documents/prayers-and-action-to-overcome-hunger)



Benediction

May we always be hungry for righteousness;
May we overcome injustices that bring about vulnerability!
May we always be thirsty for peace;
May we overcome insecurity, suffering and displacement!
May we always yearn to care for each other and the environment;
May we share each other's burden;
May our prayers lead to action and transformation!

<https://www.oikoumene.org/resources/documents/prayers-and-action-to-overcome-hunger>

A prayer for food justice

Lord Jesus,
You understand what it is like to be hungry.
Teach us to have grateful and generous hearts.
Forgive us when we make selfish choices
or remain silent in the face of injustice.

Lord Jesus,
You welcomed all to your table.
May we recognise our interconnectedness,
with our common home and our global neighbours,
so all are invited to share the feast.

Lord Jesus,
You come to us as bread and wine.
Fill us with your compassion.
Nourish us as we advocate for change,
and seek to make your Kingdom a reality in our world.

Amen.

<https://cafod.org.uk/pray/prayer-resources/a-prayer-for-food-justice>



An Invocation

Loving God, bless all those gathered here today as we come together in friendship and fellowship. Thank you for the blessings of our individual and collective God-given gifts. Place in our hearts the desire to make a difference to our families, to our community, to our country, and to the many cultures and peoples worldwide. Give us balance in times of distraction and uncertainty. Help us move towards our goals with determination and always with an abundant sense of humour. Thank you for food in a world where many know only hunger; For our faith in a world where many know fear; For friends in a world where many know only loneliness. Please bless this food we are about to share, those who prepared it, those who serve it, and those who have worked to make today the special occasion that it is. For all of this we give you thanks.

– Izola White from <https://www.xavier.edu/iesuitresource/online-resources/prayer-index/mealtime-prayers>

For the Good of All

May we be strong in virtue
firm in time of trouble,
and always ready to help others in time of need.
May we be blessed by God
as we share this food
and as we work and live together
for the good of all.

– Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops,
A Book of Blessings, 183.

Prayer for Sharing

John answered, “Anyone who has two shirts should share with the one who has none, and anyone who has food should do the same.”
Luke 3:11

Father, help us to share what we have with those in need.

Thank You for this food and for every gift You place in our hands.

We do not want to keep Your blessings to ourselves.

Teach us to notice others and give with love.

May this meal remind us that we are called to care and share.

Bless our hearts and our table as we honour You.

Amen.





What you eat can help the planet

Eating less meat is healthier for most people and the planet.

The global food system has a huge impact on the planet, with a third of greenhouse gas emissions tied to it. It also uses 70% of the world's freshwater and causes 80% of river and lake pollution.

A study of the diets of 55,000 people in the UK from 2023 found that a vegan diet resulted in 75% less climate-heating emissions, water pollution and land use than diets in which more than 100g of meat a day was eaten. Vegan diets also cut wildlife destruction by 66% and water use by 54%.

The biggest difference in the study was methane emissions, which sheep and cattle produce. Methane emissions associated with a vegan diet were 93% lower than for high-meat diets.

The study also showed that low-meat diets – less than 50g a day – had half the impact of high-meat diets on greenhouse gas emissions, water pollution and land use. However, the differences between low-meat, pescetarian and vegetarian diets were relatively small.

An Australian study published in 2024 found that the three largest contributors to greenhouse gas emissions from foods consumed in Australian homes were meat and meat products (49%), dairy (17%), and non-alcoholic beverages (16%).¹ The authors recommended that Australians could cut the greenhouse gas emissions associated with what they eat by eating less meat, meat products, and confectionery, and increasing their consumption of fruit, vegetables, nuts, and legumes.

¹ Alison Gaines, maria Shahid, Daisy Coyle, Eden Barrett, Michael Hadjikakou, Jason Wu, Fraser Taylor, Simone Pettigrew, Bruce Neal and Parashevi Seferidi, "Switches in food and beverage product purchases can reduce greenhouse gas emissions in Australia", Nature Food, 28 May 2024.

Healthier Diets for Better Mental Health

A 2024 study by Victoria University highlighted the link between a healthier diet and better mental health.²

Depression and anxiety disorders, typically referred to as Common Mental Disorders (CMDs), are a leading contributor to global disease burden, with significant social and financial costs associated with their treatment and management. In Australia, depression and anxiety are the most prevalent mental health disorders. Based on data from the 2020-2022 National Survey of Mental Health and Wellbeing, the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare estimated that 4.3 million Australians aged 16-85, or 22% of the population, experienced a mental health condition in the 12 months before the survey. Antidepressant use in Australia is among the highest in OECD countries. Despite advances in mental health treatments, the prevalence of CMDs has not decreased, and there remains unmet treatment need. Accessing preventive and ongoing mental health care in Australia is complex, difficult to navigate, incurs long wait times, and is financially inaccessible for many. Additional strategies for the prevention and treatment of CMDs in Australia are urgently needed.

Concurrently, poor diet quality is one of the leading risk factors associated with early death and preventable disease. Australians report poor-quality diets that fail to meet national guidelines. Dietary factors that affect diet quality are complex and result from interacting systemic, social, geographical, accessibility, and education-related barriers to a healthy diet. Those experiencing socioeconomic disadvantage have especially high dietary risk factors.

Despite known links between dietary risk factors and poor mental health outcomes, and recognition that poor quality diets are an important modifiable risk factor for depression, diet is under-utilised as a preventative/management/treatment strategy. Current evidence supports the role of diet in reducing the risk of depression. For example, diets higher in whole foods, such as fruits, vegetables, whole grains and fish, are associated with a lower risk of depression; conversely, poorer quality diets higher in discretionary foods are associated with increased risk of mental health concerns. These relationships have been shown across the lifespan, from early life to old age. Evidence from randomised controlled trials has shown that dietary change can be effective in reducing the severity of depressive symptoms and clinical depression.

Thus, whenever possible, we should provide healthier food at church events, as well as meals with family and friends.



² Sarah dash, Tetyana Rocks, Nina Van Dyke and Rosemary Calder, "Dietary approaches to support mental health: Policy Evidence Brief", Australian Health Policy Collaboration, Victoria University, 2024.

Take Action – Curbing Marketing of Foods that cause harm for the Majority of People

Theologian Kathryn Tanner, in her book *'The Politics of God'* (1992), pointed out that all people are valuable to God. Because they are valuable to God, all people should have a right to minimum standards of well-being. In his work *'A Public Faith. How Followers of Christ Should Serve the Common Good'* (2011), theologian Miroslav Wolf made the case that if we believe God is love and we are created for love, we will care for our neighbours' well-being for their own sake. He stated (p.71):

Our concern will then be not just to lead life well ourselves. Instead, we will strive for life to go well for our neighbours and for them to lead their lives well, and we will acknowledge that their flourishing is tied deeply to our flourishing.

We should be able to enjoy safe and healthy environments that support our wellbeing. Currently, businesses selling products that are harmful to our health continue to profit from the vulnerability of people by using a flood of marketing to tell us to eat more of their products, drink more alcohol and gamble so their profits will increase. Instead, the aggressive marketing of these products means we experience more cancer, heart disease, liver disease, mental ill health and financial hardship. The vast amount of online marketing of harmful products normalises them and makes them more acceptable. Everyone would benefit from less marketing of foods that are unhealthy for the vast majority of people, gambling and alcohol.

Targeting Children

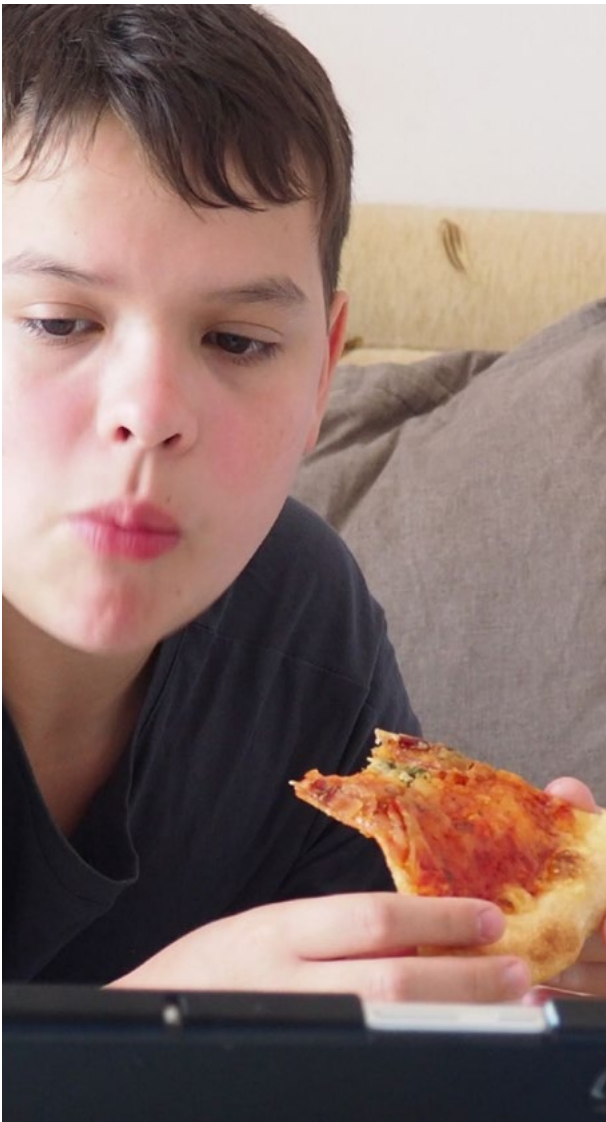
Research conducted by Deakin University found that children as young as eight years old are bombarded with ads for unhealthy foods, including when they search for scooter tricks on social media and play online games. On average, children aged 8 to 13 years old were targeted with approximately 13 unhealthy food ads on a typical day they spend online. Teenagers aged 14 to 17 years old see an average of one gambling ad, six alcohol ads and 24 unhealthy food ads every day.

Many ads targeted at children and young people were interactive. For example, ads prompted them to install a gambling program, to learn more about alcoholic drinks, and to order immediately for confectionery and unhealthy takeaway foods – directing children to platforms where these products are sold.

In May 2025, a University of Oxford team found “strong and consistent evidence” that digital marketing of unhealthy foods and drinks is widespread on social media and influences children and teenagers.

The first three years of a child's life are critical in terms of their nutrition. However a February 2025 report by the Food for Health Alliance found that food manufacturers were using marketing to dupe parents into buying unhealthy food for their toddlers. It was found that 70% of toddler foods on supermarket shelves do not meet international best nutrition standards. Toddler food products can be marketed as natural and organic even when they contain 50% sugar and very little fruit. For example, Strawberry Yoghurt Rice Cakes, which have images of strawberries on the pack, contained only 2% strawberries added as a powder. Kiddylicious products have images of fruit on the pack but contain as much sugar as marshmallows, at 70%.

A Commonwealth Government-funded study by the University of Wollongong and the Institute for Health Transformation at Deakin University published in November 2025 reported that few Australian children currently consume a diet that is aligned with national dietary guidelines, with high and frequent intakes of unhealthy foods and sugar-sweetened beverages and inadequate intakes of some core food groups, such as vegetables and fruits. Poor diet directly impacts children's oral health and chronic disease risks. Poor diet is also the major contributor to the development of excess body weight, leading to related metabolic, respiratory and orthopaedic diseases and exacerbating mental health conditions.



It does not have to be this way

The Australian Government can act now to put our community's health and wellbeing before commercial profits by shielding it from the onslaught of marketing by harmful industries.

The National Obesity Strategy 2022-2032, National Preventative Health Strategy 2021-2030, and National Diabetes Strategy 2021-2030 all identified restricting unhealthy food marketing to children as essential to improving population diets and weight and preventing disease. These strategies called for comprehensive restrictions on marketing content across all media and settings where children live, learn and play. This aligns with World Health Organisation guidance, which recommends governments implement policies to protect children from the harmful impact of food marketing across all media and settings and identifies them as a global "best buy" for reducing unhealthy diets.

The Australian Government is now lagging behind leading governments in other parts of the world in protecting us from exploitative marketing by corporations peddling harmful products. The governments of Italy and Spain have banned gambling advertising. The governments of Norway and Lithuania have comprehensive restrictions on alcohol marketing. The governments of Argentina and Chile have banned advertising of unhealthy food to children.

What You Can Do:

- Serve healthy, non-ultraprocessed food at church functions;
- Encourage conversations about the food choices that we can make; and,
- Write polite and respectful letters to:

The Hon. Mark Butler MP

Minister for Health and Aged Care

PO Box 6022

House of Representatives

Parliament House

Canberra, ACT, 2600

Salutation: Dear Minister

The Hon. Anika Wells MP

Minister for Communications

PO Box 6022

House of Representatives

Parliament House

Canberra, ACT, 2600

Salutation: Dear Minister

Points to make in your letter:

- Express deep concern at the harm corporations pushing unhealthy food and alcohol are doing to public health due to a lack of restrictions on their exploitative marketing practices.
- Request that the Government introduce a *Harmful Products Marketing Act* to further regulate the way unhealthy food and alcohol corporations can promote their products and to prevent them from marketing their products to children.

- Ask that the new law be modelled on the successful *Tobacco Advertising Prohibition Act 1992*, which, since its introduction three decades ago, has made a significant contribution to the reduction in harms from tobacco use in Australia, which has saved many lives.

- The Act should include measures to:

- Make online environments free from unhealthy food marketing;
- Ensure television and radio are free from unhealthy food marketing at all times of the day and night when children are watching and listening;
- Make public spaces, public events and public retail environments free from unhealthy food marketing; and,
- Prevent companies from marketing unhealthy food directly to children by using tactics like cartoons on product packaging, toys and prizes.

- Note that the National Obesity Strategy 2022-2032, National Preventative Health Strategy 2021-2030 and National Diabetes Strategy 2021-2030 all identified restricted unhealthy food marketing to children as essential for improving population diets and weight and preventing disease.

Please send a copy of any reply you get to jim@victas.uca.org.au



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