

2023 EARTH DAY SUNDAY RESOURCE

# SOWING SEEDS

PROPHETIC ACTION TO CLIMATE-CHANGED LANDS



CREATION JUSTICE MINISTRIES

# Message from Our Executive Directors



We are excited to share with you the 2023 Earth Day Sunday Resource, "Sowing Seeds: Prophetic Action to Climate-Changed Lands."

In this resource, we explore the current state of climate and its impact on our food system, while answering our biblical call to seek justice for all of God's creation.

There are a number of resources for you to take to your community and church, including sermon starters, songs, stories, and opportunities to take action.

We hope you find this resource to be helpful to you and your community as we all continue to grow to protect, restore, and rightfully share God's creation.

In faith,

Karyn Bigelow and Avery Davis Lamb  
Co-Executive Directors  
Creation Justice Ministries

# CONTENTS



Introduction .....	<b>4</b>
Stories .....	<b>8</b>
Theological Framing & Sermon Starters .....	<b>13</b>
Action Recommendations .....	<b>18</b>
Liturgy, Prayers, & Songs .....	<b>25</b>



# INTRODUCTION





In 2022, we saw climate-induced events that jeopardized our food system. We witnessed record-breaking extreme heat numerous times throughout the country, an unprecedented cold winter in Texas, a historical drought in California, an unseasonal flood in Kentucky, and far too many wildfires to be normal in the western states. Such events are only to name a few of the catastrophes that climate change exacerbates— each with a threat to our food system in the United States.

Climate change creates instability for food production, but the current industrialized food system contributes to climate change as well, creating a cyclical threat to food security, especially for low-income households. The food system includes all stages that food goes through from farm to table to waste bin and all the steps in between.

In the U.S., agriculture was responsible for 11 percent of total greenhouse gas emissions in 2020, nearly doubling just 6 percent in 1990. Additionally, 170 million

metric tons of carbon dioxide are released into the atmosphere from over 100 billion pounds of food waste each year in the U.S., yet more than 38 million people in our country experience hunger.

The current common practice of industrial farming in the U.S. creates unhealthy soil, perpetuates heavy pesticide use, destroys biodiversity, exploits human labor, and leaves millions of people hungry. When one type of crop is planted on large plots of land, the lack of diversity in plants strips the top soil of its nutrients and carbon storing capabilities, requiring large quantities of pesticides, herbicides and fertilizers for growth. Preparing soil through mechanized tilling stimulates microbes that convert organic matter into greenhouse gasses, contributing to overall emissions. Tilling, a commonly used farming technique, disrupts top soil, which causes the organic material to convert into greenhouse gasses, further contributing to emissions.

These practices not only hurt the land, but the people working the land and those communities where farms reside. These workers are subject to exploitation, poor working conditions, and experience disproportionate negative health outcomes with little to no health care access. Farm workers are exposed to extreme heat that can cause negative consequences and unsafe amounts of pesticides, often not warned of the negative health effects. Additionally, runoff of these toxic chemicals contaminates water in neighboring communities.

As Christians and consumers, we must advocate for a food system that is good for the planet and for people. Our food system should reflect our Biblical call to care for our neighbors and the rest of God's creation—by prioritizing what is best for the land and equitable for people. A regenerative food system that rightly shares and celebrates the biodiversity and inherent design of creation would allow for a more resilient food system in the face of climate change.



The upcoming Farm Bill in 2023 has the ability to set an environmentally conscious precedent for the food system that would have an impact for the next five years and beyond. A Farm Bill that embraces sustainability could redraft a food system that is equitable, seeks justice, and considers the care of God's creation. There are Christians everyday that are doing the work in order for this vision to become a reality. Now is the time for policy that creates an equitable and sustainable food system on a national scale.

**We invite you to use this resource to learn more about the people who are doing the work to care for our planet through the food system. Use this resource in your church community for worship, collective study, and advocacy!**



# STORIES





Ray Archuleta developed a love for agriculture when he was fifteen years old, spending summers on his uncle's ranch. After getting degrees in Livestock Science and Agricultural Biology, he became a soil scientist, agronomist, and farmer. During his thirty-year career with the USDA, Ray had an epiphany. He saw the model of agriculture in which he had been trained as the cause of sediment-filled rivers during the irrigation season. He saw his neighbor, a good farmer with five hundred prime acres, unable to afford to bring his son into the operation. It all suddenly seemed very wrong. He started to hate agriculture and lost hope in it.

When Ray was at his lowest, he met farmers Gabe Brown in North Dakota and Ray Styer in North Carolina. These men had also seen the futility of conventional, industrial models and a necessity to shift into a more ecological and holistic approach called regenerative agriculture. This was when Ray's life completely changed.

Ray realized he had been indoctrinated in a model based on controlling and forcing nature rather than mimicking the patterns, designs, and principles of God's creation. He saw we live in a regenerative, natural system designed to be very good. It works well. We just need to work with it instead of against it—as stewards and nurturers of God's complex creation.

# God Creates a Regenerative Creation

Ray also wants to make sure people understand the difference between sustainable and regenerative farming. Sustainability keeps things the same, but what if you are barely getting by? Regenerative practices improve conditions and facilitate life.

By mimicking God's design, Ray says we can do this by revegetating the planet. Twenty to twenty-nine percent of the Earth's surface is bare ground, and you cannot have the right climate or habitat for animals or capture energy without plants. It's that simple.

It involves a new thought process, one that goes beyond simply choosing a particular diet like vegetarian, vegan, organic, or omnivore, and focuses on a systems way of thinking. Regeneration of God's creation comes from no longer plowing up the ground and disrupting its ecosystem. It comes from drilling the food crop seeds directly into the ground, planting diverse cover crops to smother the weeds, and integrating grazing animals into the mix. In fact, he says that nature does not farm without animals and that grazing systems are much more resilient than cropping systems because their soil is covered with living grasses all the time. Most of the farms in our country came from forests and prairies, and that is what we are to mimic.

For Ray Archuleta and others who are shifting, as farmers and eaters, into a more regenerative approach to agriculture, it is a journey that involves a change of heart and mind—and humility. They realize that what we have been doing is failing us and God. But there is a better way—a regeneration of life, healing, and hope.



# Food Insecurity:

## Antithetical to the Gospel

Rev. Dr. Yvette Blair-Lavallais is a food justice strategist, social justice advocate, public theologian, and pastor. Her new book is entitled *Scrimpin' and Scrapin': The Hardships and Hustle of Women and Food Insecurity in Texas*. In this book and in her ministry, she raises the questions—what is the ecclesial (church) response to food insecurity and, if Jesus feeds the multitudes, why are there people hungry in the first place?

The truth is, safe access to fresh, healthy, and affordable food is still not equally available to all, even though there is more than enough food for all. Blair-Lavallais believes the disciples of Jesus are called to address this injustice, which she sees as antithetical to the Gospel.

Widespread poverty and hunger were present before COVID-19, but our awareness has heightened as those previously unaffected found themselves in need.

Perhaps now is the time for a new miracle where the disciples of Jesus are being called to identify and dismantle the barriers of “food apartheid”<sup>[1]</sup> which privilege some and marginalize others.

Starting with scripture, she says we must slow down and digest what the Word is telling us through the thread of food narratives woven through both testaments. Then we need to listen to those being affected by food-related hardships. Finally, we need to engage in what she calls “Activism,” (inspired by Acts 2) as those who advocate for and share with our neighbors.

As people are looking for the Good News,



sometimes the good news is what we can do to respond.

So, what can churches do at this moment to impact change in the food system?

- Have listening sessions with affected people—including farmers.
- If you distribute food, do not decide what they will receive but ask what they want. People have diet-specific and culture-specific needs, not to mention allergies.
- Become familiar with the areas in your city or town that are experiencing food apartheid.
- Find agencies and departments to partner with in this work.
- Build relationships with elected officials and hold them accountable to end hunger and invest in climate-smart agriculture.
- Learn about and have a voice in the far-reaching impacts of the 2023 Farm Bill.

In God’s economy, everyone eats. So, who are the hungry among you? And what can your community do to support caring for households in need and the planet?

[1] Food apartheid is a term to recognize the “root causes of inequity in the food system on the basis of race, class, and geography...that underscores that this is the result of decades of discriminatory planning and policy decisions. <https://www.karenthefarmer.com/faq-index>

# A Church's Community Farm

Elizabeth Kears is a congregant at St. Francis of Assisi in Raleigh, North Carolina. In 2010, she and a group at St. Francis came together over two months to commune and reflect on where their food originated. This intentional community gathering started Elizabeth and her fellow congregants on a new journey. As a mom of two, Elizabeth sought to find better sources of food to support her children's nutritional needs. "It's really important to know where food is grown. If you eat food grown on healthy soil, you eat healthier."

In the fall of 2021, Kears then connected with the Care for Creation team at her parish to start a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) program. A CSA program consists "of a community of individuals [or households] who pledge support to a farm operation so that farmland becomes, either legally or spiritually, the community's farm, with the growers and consumers providing mutual support and sharing the risks and benefits of food production."<sup>[2]</sup>

Through a program organized by RAFI, St. Francis was connected with a multigenerational farmer—Rick Brown at Brown Family Farms. Black farmers are historically and remain discriminated against in the farming industry. Over the last one hundred years, Black farmers have lost over 90 percent of the land they once owned.<sup>[3]</sup>



Unfortunately, land loss and the fight for equality in farming continues in the United States food system. In addition to their fight for justice, many Black farmers struggle to have access to markets. Local sourcing of food helps to support farmers who often experience barriers to market.

At first, Kears was unsure if anyone would sign up for the CSA program. However, members of the Care for Creation team joined Kears to spread the word about the CSA program throughout the church community. Over the last year, the program has continued to grow with families participating. The CSA is simple to run once the relationship is built with the farmer(s), "all you need are sign-up forms and some tables," said Elizabeth.

<sup>[2]</sup><https://www.nal.usda.gov/farms-and-agricultural-production-systems/community-supported-agriculture>

<sup>[3]</sup><https://www.reuters.com/world/us/us-black-farmers-lost-326-bln-worth-land-20th-century-study-2022-05-02/>



In addition to supporting a local Black farmer, this CSA program has helped and challenged congregants to eat in a way that is aligned with the local climate, lowering the collective environmental impact of their food.

In reflecting on the importance of Christians to care for the environment, Elizabeth said, “We are stewards of the land, it is here for us to care for. God asked us to take care of all of creation and agriculture is creation. We need to make sure we are caring for future generations.”

# THEOLOGICAL FRAMING AND SERMON STARTERS

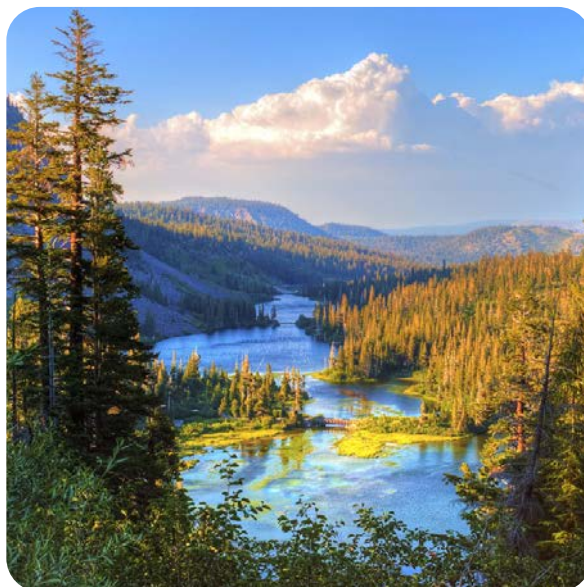


## Theological Framing

In a time of climate crisis, disasters of Biblical scale are impacting our communities and the places we love. Today, just like in the Bible, floods and famines show us a deep truth about human life: that our lives are intimately dependent on the land. In our sacred scriptures, we read the stories of creatures made from the soil, whose lives are sustained—physically and spiritually—by the fruits of the land. In these stories, we see how, in the midst of disaster, the land can be fertile ground to sustain ourselves and to take prophetic action for justice.

In the oldest creation story in our sacred scriptures, God bends down into the freshly created soil, picks up a handful, and breathes the breath of life into it. From this soil—this *adamah*—God creates the first human—*adam*. God then takes *adam* and places them in the Garden “to farm it and to take care of it.” (Genesis 2:15, CEB) This verse, which is often translated as “to till and to keep,” means far more than that. It means, as Ellen Davis has written, to “work and serve it, to preserve and observe” the land (Scripture, Culture, Agriculture, 30). From this story, we learn that we are made from the soil, we are inextricably bound to it, and we are obliged to love and care for it.

It is good to remind ourselves of this story repeatedly because it tells us of our first and most foundational role here on planet Earth: to farm and take care of God’s planet. This is a role not only for those who grow food, but for any one of us who eats food. As Wendell Berry put it, “eating is an agricultural act.” (Berry, “The Pleasures of Eating”). We all benefit from life-giving food and food systems, and we suffer when those systems desecrate the land.



Throughout the stories of the Bible, we read about agricultural acts and food systems. Like our food system stories today, these Biblical accounts are ones of destruction and recreation. They are stories of devastation and rebirth. They are stories of depletion and regeneration. They are stories of death and resurrection. The Biblical stories of the relationship between humans and the land, mediated by the food we eat, are central to our Christian theology.

In the three passages below, this human-land-food relationship is explored in different ways: the hope of planting a vine after the devastation of a flood (Genesis 9), the vision needed in a time of climactic upheaval to care for an entire nation (Genesis 41), and the way a simple meal can reveal to us resurrection hope in the midst of death (Luke 24).

The reflections below can be used as “sermon starters,” sparks meant to ignite the fire of a sermon or Bible study. Use the text, the reflections, and your own meditation to craft a prophetic sermon, sharing with your community about floods, famines, and food.



# The Church Needs to Be a Joseph

## Scripture: Genesis 41: 14-36

At least three elements of Joseph's interpretations of Pharaoh's dreams hold special relevance today as our world confronts drastic challenges related to the climate crisis and our present food system:

### (1) Speak Hard Truths to Those in Power

Joseph represents change from the bottom-up. A prisoner not only dares to speak to a Pharaoh but goes so far as to outline a vision for an entire nation that otherwise faces the brink of disaster. How can we continue in the tradition of Joseph today by finding our voices and our courage to advocate with our elected officials?

### (2) Prepare for Hard Times with an Eye to the Common Good

Famine is coming, and the answer is not "everyone for themselves."

Joseph gives voice to God's vision of providing for all those in need in hard times. How can we continue in the tradition of Joseph by urging our elected officials to make sure our food system is prepared for climate change and meets everyone's needs?

### (3) Keep the Faith amid Times of Plenty and Times of Famine

Joseph foresees radical changes in the conditions that an entire society will face. Amid the turmoil and upheaval to come, there will be a constant: God and God's loving concern for our wellbeing. How can we continue in the tradition of Joseph by keeping hold of a faith that sustains us even in the face of dire circumstances?

With bold truths, broad hearts, and an abiding faith, we can be the Joseph our world needs today.

# No Going Back: The Old Normal is Gone

## Scripture: Genesis 6-9

The usual response to any kind of disaster is to rebuild, get back to normal—the way it was—ASAP. But like the Flood Story in Genesis and Noah’s response after returning, it shows there is no “going back.” Out of chaos, something new—regenerative and restored—is waiting to be born.

### 1) Beyond the Old “Normal”: A New World and a New Worldview

Nothing new will ever be born with the same worldview that shaped the old “normal.” For Noah, this new way of seeing was rooted in a three-way covenant between God, people, and all other living beings, the community of life (Genesis 9:8-17). How do we shift as people of faith from a worldview that sees Earth as a commodity to be exploited to a worldview that sees us in a web of mutual interdependence?

### 2) God’s Commitment to Peace Never Ends

Never forget that God is committed to peace with human beings and all creation, as revealed in the sign of the rainbow. How might this truth be the foundation from which our churches become a moral, ethical, and spiritual voice for a sustainable way of life that is mutually enhancing for all life on Earth?

### 3) Harmony in the Vineyard

After the covenant with all life, the first thing Noah does is plant a vineyard (Genesis 9:20). A Midrash from the tradition of Judaism says that Noah reinvented himself as an agricultural pioneer. His way of farming was harmonious, productive, and not harmful to Earth and human well-being. How might we as people of faith cast a new vision in which our relationship to the land becomes reinvented?

What might our vision be for a national Farm Bill that would invite and include all life to participate at the Table of the Lord?



# The Eye-Opening, Climate-Changing Invitation of the Communion Table

## Scripture: Luke 24:13-35

How is your local church uniquely equipped and positioned to address climate change? Let's come to the table and open our eyes together. Perhaps we will taste and see.

### 1) Is our communion table too small?

It is not a random detail that in the center of every Christian worship space is a table for a meal. However, it could be that we have failed to recognize the fullness of Christ's invitation made in the eucharist—that we have limited it to a private, personal exchange between “me and Jesus.” What if we were to see the bread and wine as a much larger invitation into the possibility of right relationship and holy communion—through Christ—with all of creation?



### 2) Can we be faithful disciples without examining our plate?

In Luke's gospel, there is a strong emphasis on the table. It is a thread along which the story progresses, and a setting where teachable moments are offered. Food matters to Luke's Jesus. Can a life of Christian discipleship then be lived out faithfully without paying attention to our food systems? Loving God and neighbor might include choosing food from regenerative, ecological practices rather than exploitive, industrial practices. The route the food has traveled without adding unnecessary fossil fuel emissions into the atmosphere is a consideration, as is the fair treatment of farmworkers and the soil from which all of life derives.

### 3) What is the role of the church?

All of God's people need access to affordable, nutritious, climate-friendly food. When the local church reimagines the communion table with God's help, then we might bring people into relationship with local farmers, grow food on our campuses, identify and find solutions to local food insecurity problems, and use our collective voice in advocacy for a Farm Bill that promotes regenerative agricultural practices.





# **ACTION RECOMMENDATIONS**



How can we integrate climate education and food justice with personal, communal, and public action? Use the action steps below as a starting point for integrating caring for God's land and climate justice into your life.

## Personal

- Where is your food coming from? If possible, incorporate more regionally sourced foods into your household diets.
- Incorporate composting into your household routine. Composting is the natural process of recycling organic matter, such as leaves and food scraps, into a valuable fertilizer that can enrich soil and plants. [1] If you are unable to have a compost bin, many urban cities are incorporating compost sites for communities to drop off their food waste.
- If possible, connect and support a local urban or rural farm. This can include joining a community supported agriculture (CSA) program.
- Eat more plant-based meals, when possible, to lower your carbon footprint. Eating more plant-based meals are not only good for the planet, but also good for you!

## Community

- Get involved in gardening and/or food access justice. The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the disparities in food distribution systems. Growing your own food can lower your grocery bill and it cuts down emissions from food transportation. You can also volunteer at a community garden that supplies fresh produce to food pantries.
- Have your church engage in [52 Ways to Care for Creation](#) throughout the year to include small ways to better care for the environment.
- Churches can adopt and bless a local farm—know your farmer's name and their family. Listen to their stories and challenges to farm in an industrial agriculture system.
- Host a community potluck.
- Community: Make coffee hour a celebration of goods that reflect one's values: fair trade, organic, local, healthy.

[1] <https://www.nrdc.org/stories/composting-101>

# Community

Below is a prayer for your community to share together.

## **Blessing for farms.**[1]

**The Gift of Seed:** God gives us the seed and entrusts it to our care.

Seeds are about the past, the present, and future. A seed is the fruit of a past harvest; they are ready to be planted in the present; in the future, they will bear fruit. May the miracle of life within the seed break forth and yield a bountiful harvest. Lord God, bless the seed, and all who plant it.

**The Gift of Soil:** God created and entrusted the soil to our care.

The soil is a home for the seed, nourishing and sustaining it. Soil sustains all of life and is a precious resource. Bless the soil, O God, that it may support Your great gift of life. Bless all who work and care for the soil.

**The Gift of Water:** God blesses us with water and entrusts it to our care.

Water gives sustenance and nourishment to the soil, the seed, and all life, with water in rain, rivers, ponds, lakes, and seas. Creator God, bless the water. Let it come as rain at the right time and the needed amount, so that the seed may flourish and grow, life will be sustained, and the harvest be bountiful.

**The Gift of Livestock:** God gives us livestock and entrusts them to our care.

Livestock provide us with so much that we need and enjoy. God, who made all living creatures, blesses our livestock with good health, good living conditions, and careful management. May we care for the animals in our lives with humility and gratitude.

**The Gift of Machinery:** God gives us tools and machines and entrusts them to our wisdom. Tools and machines help us with our work. Tools result from the creativity and vision in the human mind and spirit. Tools can be used for great good in our work. Lord Jesus, who knew the feel of tools in His hands, bless the tractors and tools that we use on our farms. May we use them well, may we use them safely, and may all who work with tools and machines be kept safe in the seasons of planting and harvest.

Creator God, majestic and mysterious, open our eyes to see what You have done and are doing, our minds to understand our dependency upon You for all life; and our gratitude for those who farm the land and care for land, plants, trees, and livestock. Lord, we are thankful for all our blessings in our rural community, our farms and gardens, and the place and people with whom we live. May we bless this life with bold faith, courageous living, and work with You to restore hope, remembering that the Earth and everything in it—including us—belongs to You. In Jesus' name, we pray, AMEN!

[1]

<https://www.kpcthedford.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/BLESSING-LITANY-RURAL-LIFE-SUNDAY-2018.pdf>

# Farm Bill Principles: A Sustainable Farm Bill

The food system includes all stages that food goes through, from farm to store to table and beyond. Overall, the food system in the United States is a large contributor to emissions of greenhouse gasses at all stages of the food cycle. According to the United Nations' Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), "food security is when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life." [1]



As climate change worsens, the food system is left susceptible to extreme weather. These weather events influence precipitation levels, wind patterns, and temperature levels that directly influence food production and can affect access to food.

What is the Farm Bill? The farm bill is a package of legislation that impacts all areas of our food systems from conservation and energy, what foods are grown, nutrition programs, training programs, and livelihoods for farmers. The farm bill typically gets renewed every five years. The current farm bill was passed in December 2018 and will expire in September 2023.

[1] [https://www.fao.org/fileadmin/templates/faoitally/documents/pdf/pdf\\_Food\\_Security\\_Cocept\\_Note.pdf](https://www.fao.org/fileadmin/templates/faoitally/documents/pdf/pdf_Food_Security_Cocept_Note.pdf)  
[2] "Sources of Greenhouse Gas Emissions." EPA. Environmental Protection Agency. Accessed July 28, 2022. <https://www.epa.gov/ghgemissions/sources-greenhouse-gas-emissions>.

[3] Buzby, Posted by Jean, and Mariane Silva. "Food Waste and Its Links to Greenhouse Gases and Climate Change." USDA, January 24, 2022. <https://www.usda.gov/media/blog/2022/01/24/food-waste-and-its-links-greenhouse-gases-and-climate-change>.

## ***How does the Farm Bill Impact the Environment?***

Agriculture was responsible for 11 percent of total U.S. greenhouse gas emissions in 2020, up from 6 percent in 1990. [2] 170 million metric tons of carbon dioxide are released into the atmosphere from food waste alone. [3] While over 100 billion pounds are wasted annually, more than thirty-eight million people in the U.S. experience hunger. [4] Given how much of our food system contributes to climate change, it is important to address this sector. The farm bill has implications for conservation efforts of forests and the biodiversity of land across the country. It also has funding for investments for research and technology innovation.

[4] "Key Statistics & Graphics." USDA ERS - Key Statistics & Graphics. Accessed July 1, 2022. <https://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/food-nutrition-assistance/food-security-in-the-u-s/key-statistics-graphics/#insecure>.

# Farm Bill Principles: A Sustainable Farm Bill

We must reform our food systems in a way that does not destroy biodiversity, deplete soils, exploit human labor, and leave millions of people hungry.

Why should Christians care? As Christians, we have been called to care for the environment and to feed people in need. However, climate change threatens our ability to provide ourselves and our neighbors with safe and nutritious food.

Everything on Earth belongs to the Lord, and we should treat it as such, returning to the regenerative practices present in nature. As disciples of Jesus Christ, each meal illustrates an opportunity to share communion with God and all of creation—human and nonhuman. However, the current U.S. food system is one that harms land, creatures, and people—all of which we have a biblical call to protect.

## Farm Bill Titles

**Title 1: Commodities**

**Title 2: Conservation**

**Title 3: Trade**

**Title 4: Nutrition**

**Title 5: Credit**

**Title 6: Rural Development**

**Title 7: Research, Extension, and Related Matters**

**Title 8: Forestry**

**Title 9: Energy**

**Title 10: Horticulture**

**Title 11: Crop Insurance**



# Faithful Farm Bill Principles

The upcoming farm bill needs to serve as the vehicle to get the U.S. food system back on the right path to address climate change and build a sustainable future. As Christians, we call on a farm bill that is faithful to caring for God's planet and people.

## Equity

- A farm bill should support existing BIPOC family farms to retain land and have livable incomes.
- Support BIPOC farmers to increase access to markets.
- Respect Indigenous knowledge and protect the sovereign rights of Indigenous communities as they continue to protect and restore ecosystems and biodiversity that helps to provide sustenance in their communities.
- Support women farmers to gain land and grow their farm businesses to increase parity with their counterparts.
- Address the discrimination that many BIPOC farmers experience at regional USDA offices.
- Support a pathway to citizenship for farm workers.

## Social Protections and Crop Insurance

- Assist farmers who lose their livelihoods due to climate-related causes, such as extreme heat, hurricanes, flooding, etc. Crop insurance should be expanded to support more farmers beyond those who farm mass-produced crops, such as corn, soybeans, and wheat.

## Sustainability and Regenerative Farming

- Support small- and medium-holder farmers to adapt to climate change by investing in climate-smart agriculture.
- Support farms of all sizes to transition from industrialized agriculture to regenerative agriculture.
- Reduce food waste throughout the food supply chain, especially at the farm level and while in transportation, to reduce the emissions of greenhouse gasses.
- Reduce the usage of pesticides on farms to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and to reduce runoff from farms.
- Support the expansion of healthy soil.
- Incentivize farmers to increase and preserve the biodiversity of ecosystems on their land.
- Decrease deforestation on farms. Trees help reduce climate change by removing greenhouse gas emissions.

Creation Justice Ministries urges Congress to follow these values as they develop the next farm bill that will shape food and farm policy for at least the next five years. Future food system reform should prioritize equity, social protections, adaptation, and mitigation. These changes will make the U.S. more of a world leader in addressing climate change and will put us on the path to create a sustainable food system and end hunger in the United States.

# Sample Letter to Congress

Dear Representative/Senator [Name of Member of Congress],

As Congress prepares for the next Farm Bill, I ask you to use the legacy legislation as a vehicle to support a food system that is equitable and sustainable. As a Christian, I believe the Farm Bill is an important opportunity to care for God's people and planet.

I urge you to support a Farm Bill that will:

**Advance racial equity in the food system** by respecting Indigenous knowledge and sovereignty, supporting Black farmers and removing the barriers they face, and supporting a pathway to citizenship for farm workers.

**Strengthen social protections and crop insurance** by assisting farmers who lose their livelihoods due to climate-related causes, such as extreme heat, hurricanes, and flooding. Crop insurance should be expanded to support farmers who farm mass-produced crops, such as corn, soybeans, and wheat.

**Support the transition to a more regenerative and sustainable food system.** Support farms of all sizes to transition from industrialized agriculture to regenerative agriculture and invest in climate-smart agriculture. Reduce food waste throughout the food supply chain. Reduce the usage of pesticides on farms to reduce emissions and runoff from farms. Support the expansion of healthy soil and increase biodiversity farmland, while decreasing deforestation on farms.

An equitable and sustainable Farm Bill that protects people is crucial to caring for God's creation. These changes will make the U.S. more of a world leader in addressing climate change and will put us on the path to create a sustainable food system.

Sincerely,  
[Your Name]

LITURGY, PRAYERS,  
AND SONGS







## Call to Prayer

We who have lost our sense and our senses—our touch, our smell, our vision of who we are; we who frantically force and press all things, without rest for body or spirit, hurting our Earth and injuring ourselves: we call a halt.

We want to rest. We need to rest and allow the Earth to rest.



We need to reflect and to rediscover the mystery that lives in us, that is the ground of every unique expression of life, the source of the fascination that calls all things to communion.

We declare a Sabbath, a space of quiet: for simple being and letting be; for recovering the great, forgotten truths; for learning how to live again.

## Songs

- "[The Soil](#)" by Pax Ressler commissioned by [The BTS Center](#)
- "Touch the Earth Lightly" by Shirley Erena Murray published in 23 hymnals
- "Creating God, Your Fingers Trace" published by The Hymn Society
- "[Earth: Beloved Community](#)" by [Christian McIvor](#) available at [Interfaith Creation Care](#)
- "Take Up Your Spade" by Sara Watkins



# Liturgy: Call and Response

God of seed-time and harvest.

Have mercy on us and hear our prayer:  
For children who go to bed hungry at night,  
and for parents who cannot find food for  
them.

*Lord, hear our prayer.*

For communities hungry because of flood,  
fire or drought, and for governments who  
struggle to provide for them,

*Lord, hear our prayer.*

For farmers sowing seed and raising  
livestock to feed the world, and for their  
care for the land that provides their  
livelihood,

*Lord, hear our prayer.*

For subsistence farmers vulnerable to  
climate changes, and for market gardeners  
vulnerable to price variations,

*Lord, hear our prayer.*

For those who are committed to organic  
farming practices,

*Lord, hear our prayer.*

For the wellbeing and ethical treatment of  
livestock, and for those who raise,  
transport and slaughter animals for food,

*Lord, hear our prayer.*

For soup kitchens, food banks and aid  
agencies, and for the donors, volunteers  
and staff who help feed the hungry,

*Lord, hear our prayer.*

For remote communities where fresh food  
is expensive and in short supply,

*Lord, hear our prayer.*

For policy makers and planners in land use  
and food production, and for community  
educators in diet and nutrition,

*Lord, hear our prayer.*

Gather us in to your heavenly feast where  
all who hunger and thirst for justice will be  
satisfied

## Prayer of Blessing of the Loaves



Lord, Jesus Christ, our God, You blessed the five loaves in the wilderness and from them five thousand men were filled. Bless now these loaves, the wheat, the wine and oil, and multiply them in this holy church, this city, in the homes of those who celebrate today, and in Your whole world. And sanctify Your faithful servants who partake of them.

*The wealthy have become poor and gone hungry, but those who seek the Lord shall not lack any good thing.*

