

FROM THE TABLE

*Food and faith-focused News and Resources from
the Rural Advancement Foundation International-USA*

**COME TO
THE TABLE**

rafi^{USA}



Members of Norman UMC partnered with the Sandhills AGInnovation Center to distribute fresh, local food.

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Come to the Table Supports Food Ministries Across NC

This spring and summer, RAFI-USA's Come to the Table program provided mini-grants to 39 rural United Methodist churches throughout North Carolina who have responded to the increased hunger in their communities caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. These mini-grants are made possible through the support of The Duke Endowment and provided funding to churches who purchased food from local growers or local restaurants to distribute in their community.

We spoke with one grantee, Rev. David Joyner of Red Oak UMC near Rocky Mount, to learn more about the impact of the grant.

How did your food program begin? What was it a response to?

It was born out of a backpack buddy program in the local school. We started off buying from Sam's Club, then shifted to purchasing from local growers and local sources. We get all of our produce from the local farmers market, 10 minutes down the road.

What would you say to a church that is concerned that buying from local farmers might be more expensive than buying from a large retailer?

When the idea of buying from the local farmers market was brought up, some wondered if we should ask the farmer to price match against Sam's Club. What we did instead was negotiated with the farmers around bulk, season-long buying. In the end, it probably cost \$300-\$400 more to purchase from local farmers, but we typically spend \$14,000 a summer on backpack buddies, so the price difference didn't have a huge impact. We're really grateful for the relationships we've developed with farmers. We're called to be in relationship ministries. If we can't do that, maybe we're nothing more than a Sam's Club church to begin with.



Pastor Jason Leighton of Calvary Memorial UMC packs food for distribution.

Want to connect with farmers in your community?

Contact Michelle Osborne, Program Manager for Faith-based and Community Partnerships at michelle@rafiusa.org or 919-704-6920.

What is Come to the Table?

Come to the Table (CTTT) is a program of the Rural Advancement Foundation International-USA (RAFI-USA), a nonprofit farm advocacy and justice organization based in Pittsboro, NC. Since 2007, CTTT has engaged and mobilized people of faith, farmers, and communities to increase food security, address poverty, and strengthen justice in our food system.

CTTT is best known for hosting conferences and events that bring community members together to find mutually beneficial solutions to food insecurity. We engage churches and community-based organizations to deepen their level of engagement and help move them towards strategies that address the root causes of hunger and poverty using an equity lens. CTTT staff Michelle Osborne and Jarred White were both previously pastors and bring this local church experience with them into their roles.

Read more: rafiusa.org/cttt



Participants at the 2019 CTTT Conference, "Called to Action: Uprooting Hunger and Cultivating Justice"



Do you have farmers in crisis in your congregation?

RAFI-USA can help.



RAFI-USA's farm advocates provide expertise to save or strengthen farms. From working with lenders to dealing with disasters, our work is tailored to meet the individual needs of each farmer. We provide expert knowledge in complex lending situations, combined with more than two decades of experience fighting to keep family farmers on their land, and we serve diverse farms across the Southeast. To learn more about our services or if you are in crisis, call us at 919-542-1396 and press 1 for the Farmer Crisis Hotline or call toll-free at 866-586-6746. The hotline is open Monday-Saturday from 9 am to 6 pm.

Upcoming Events

Virtual Racial Wealth Gap Simulation

The Racial Wealth Gap Learning Simulation is an interactive tool that helps people understand the connections among racial equity, hunger, poverty, and wealth. It is a good first step for people unaware of structural inequality and a support tool for those who want a deeper understanding of structural inequality. We will be hosting a Virtual Racial Wealth Gap Simulation on Tuesday, December 1 at 6 pm. Visit bit.ly/ctttRWGS to learn more and register.



Farm-to-Church Webinar with CTTT and NCCUMC

Is your congregation interested in building relationships with farmers in your community and purchasing fresh, healthy food? Join us to learn about our newest initiative, the Farm-to-Church Project! The Farm-to-Church Project connects NC churches with farmers from RAFI-USA's Farmers of Color Network to create sustainable food-based partnerships. Visit bit.ly/NCCUMCfarmtochurch to learn more and register.



The above photos were taken in 2019.

Announcing the School for Food Justice, Faith, and Storytelling



This photo was taken in 2019.

CTTT is launching a new program beginning in January of 2021 focused on educating faith leaders on the root causes of hunger and exploring the narratives that shape our understanding of hunger. This program will bring together faith leaders from across North Carolina to dive into the theological frameworks underpinning food relief ministries and justice work, learn how story-based strategies can transform the conversation on hunger in communities, and gain tools to implement new and creative strategies to end hunger in their communities in partnership with others.

This program is free of charge and is open to pastors, lay leaders, and leaders of food ministries based in North Carolina. Applications are currently open and the deadline to apply is December 8, 2020. To learn more and apply, visit rafiusa.org/ctttschool.

Keep in Touch!

Learn more: rafiusa.org/cttt

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