

Breads Around the World

Middle East

UCC Hunger Action Office

United Church Board for World Ministries

Refugees

Conflicts

Self-Determination

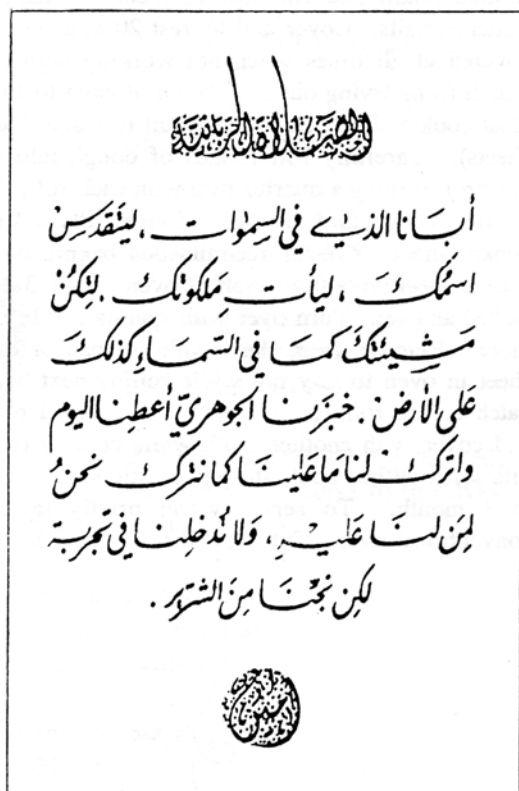
In the Middle East, problems of undernourishment were improving until 1985 when increased food prices and internal political decisions reversed that trend. The 1991 Gulf War with Iraq made matters even worse. It disrupted oil production, and subsequently the incomes of migrant workers who were employed in the oil fields. Personal finances and national economies were affected.

Unemployed migrant workers returned "home" with no job prospects; others fled their home countries for political reasons. 350,000 Palestinians left Kuwait for Jordan. 300,000 Kurds left Iraq for Turkey and Iran. One million Yemeni workers returned home from Saudi Arabia. The Kurds in northern Iraq remain essentially refugees within their own region.

The Palestinians continue to be a people without a land. The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees reports there are more than 2,500,000 Palestinian refugees. It is not uncommon for Palestinian families to spend 80-90% of their income on food. Their hunger and malnutrition is compounded by the lack of access to fertile land, and limited employment possibilities.

This is a region where the rules and practices of hospitality are very important. In contrast to that hospitality is the reality of conflicts, creating a clear barrier to improved food availability. Peace and reconciliation are inextricably linked to the political issues of resource access and distribution. The challenges and vision of peace and justice -- for the region from which emerged Judaism, Christianity, and Islam -- are ever before the global community.¹

The United Church of Christ Hunger Action Office and the United Church Board for World Ministries offer this resource for your congregation. We hope through these prayers, bread recipes, and information on the problems in the Middle East you will do what St. John Chrysostom, an early church patriarch, urged: "if in presenting this bread to the other, you remember the poor, leave the smaller liturgy and go out into the larger liturgy which is that of the poor."²



The Lord's Prayer in Arabic

Written in Farsi and Diwani calligraphy. (Arabic is read from right to left.)

From the WSCF Journal special issue on the Churches in the Arab World, May 1994.

God protect this country from foe, famine and falsehood. 2,000 year-old Persian proverb

Pita Bread (West Bank)³

Khubiz Arabi (KHUH-biz AH-rah-bee)

Pita Bread is a staple throughout the Middle East where people fill it to eat as sandwiches, or break off bits of the thin crust to spoon up other food. Pita rounds that do not puff up when baked can be used as bases for individual pizzas.

- 1 Tablespoon active dry yeast (15 ml) (1 package)
- 2 cups warm water (500 ml)
- 1 Tablespoon oil (15 ml)
- 6 cups flour (1.5 L)
- 2 teaspoons salt (10 ml)

Combine yeast and water in a large bowl, stirring occasionally for about 5 minutes until yeast is dissolved. Stir in remaining ingredients. Knead on lightly floured board until smooth and satiny. Place in greased bowl, turning greased side up. Cover and let rise about 45 minutes. Return to floured board and cut into 12 pieces. Shape into slightly flattened balls. Cover and let rest 20 minutes. (Keep dough covered at all times when not working with them, to keep dough from drying out.) Preheat oven to 450°F (230°C). Heat cookie sheets (it is important to place dough on heated sheets). Carefully roll rounds of dough into 6-inch circles (15-cm), turning a quarter turn with each roll. Take care not to stretch, puncture, or crease dough. Place 4 rounds on hot cookie sheet. (Tester recommends baking on upside-down cookie sheet on bottom shelf of oven. Bake 3-4 minutes until puffed and set. Turn over with spatula and brown 2 minutes more. Remove from sheet with hot pad or turner, leaving sheet in oven to stay hot while rolling next batch. (Bake 1 batch before rolling the next.) Place bread rounds on cloth and cover with another cloth while cooling (covering keeps pita soft). When cool, store in plastic bags in refrigerator up to 1 month. To serve, warm briefly in microwave or conventional oven. Cut slit and fill as desired.



Challah⁴

Throughout the centuries, the making of challahs for the Sabbath has been both a legendary and symbolic custom of the Jewish people. As the lighting of the stoves was not permitted on the Sabbath it was - and still remains - customary to bake the challahs early on a Friday so that it would be in readiness before sundown, which marks the beginning of the holy day. At the table the loaf is set on a breadboard covered with a snowy white tea towel or embroidered cloth. Before the meal begins, the head of the household first uncovers the bread, pronounces the ancient Hebrew grace and then proceeds to slice the challah. The challah is an unusually fine-tasting bread, rich with eggs and butter or margarine, and it bakes to a fragrant gold, attractively textured braid, or it may be formed into a myriad of fanciful shapes.

- 2 packages of dry granular yeast
- ½ cup lukewarm water
- 1 Tablespoon sugar
- ½ cup softened sweet butter or margarine
- 3 eggs
- 1 Tablespoon honey
- 1 boiled potato, mashed until smooth
- 1 cup hot potato water (saved from cooking the potato)
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 4 cups flour plus 2 Tablespoons
- 1 beaten egg yolk mixed with 2 teaspoons water
- poppy seeds or sesame seeds

Sprinkle yeast over warm water; add sugar. Stir. Cover and set aside until foaming and doubled in volume. In a large mixing bowl, beat together the softened butter or margarine, eggs, honey, hot potato water and mashed potato. Cool to lukewarm. Add foaming yeast. Beat in 2 cups of the flour and salt. Beat vigorously until the batter is smooth. Add remaining flour, just enough to make a soft pliable dough. Turn out onto a lightly floured board and knead for 10 minutes until the dough is satiny smooth and elastic. Place in a warm place, free from drafts, until doubled in bulk (about 1 hour). Turn out onto a lightly floured board, and knead again for 5 minutes. Divide dough in half. Divide each half in three parts. Let rest for 10 minutes. Roll each part into ropes about 14 inches long, with the center of the rope thicker than the ends. Braid three ropes together and pinch ends securely. Place on a greased and lightly floured baking sheet. Repeat with remaining three ropes and place on top of first braid. Make sure ends of the braids overlap each other. Secure tightly. Brush with beaten egg yolk, sprinkle with poppy seeds. Cover and let rise until a little more than doubled in bulk. Bake in a preheated 375° F oven for 40 to 45 minutes or until a beautiful golden brown. Tap bottom and top of braid. If it sounds hollow, it is done. Cool on wire rack.

A Service for Breaking the Bread

Understanding there are many manifestations of "the Bread of Life and the Cup of Blessing," you might consider using Turkish coffee in place of wine. It is a Middle East staple, and "is usually served very sweet. The happier the occasion, the sweeter the coffee."⁵

"Stuffing and wrapping food is a common theme in Middle Eastern cooking. Some people believe that a passage in the Koran which speaks about God being a hidden treasure is the inspiration for wrapping foods so that the tasty part is concealed." It is common for Egyptians to "make sweets with a nut or piece of fruit tucked inside."⁶ One might use this in place of the bread or wafer.

Use table cloths from other countries and possibly chalices - glass, pottery, wood, etc. These may be available from SERRV or a local import shop.

Greeting⁷

Rise up, oh children of light, and let us give glory to the Lord who alone can save our souls. O Lord, as you withdraw sleep from the eyes of our body, grant us wakefulness of the mind so that we may stand before you in awe and sing your praises worthily. Syrian Orthodox Church

Petitions⁸

We pray, Lord, for the rising of the water of the Nile this year. May Christ, our Saviour, bless it and raise it, cheering the earth and sustaining us, his creatures. And may the rising water remind us of the Living Water freely given to all who repent and believe.

From the Coptic Orthodox liturgy

Lord, after all the talking; questioning; agonizing over your land, grant that some compassionate breakthrough may occur. Amen.

O Lord Jesus, stretch forth your wounded hands in blessing over your people, to heal and to restore, and to draw them to yourself and to one another in love. Amen. Prayers from the Middle East

O God of peace, good beyond all that is good, in whom is calmness and concord: Do thou make up the dissensions which divide us from one another, and bring us into unity of love in thee, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Liturgy of St. Dionysius

Scripture

Ezekiel 18:5-9

I Peter 4:9-11

Communion Prayer⁹

P: We eat not simply to satisfy our own appetites.

L: We eat to sustain ourselves
in the task we have been given.

P: Each of us is unique,
coming into the world
with a gift no other can
offer: ourselves.

L: We eat to nourish
the vehicle of giving,
we eat to sustain our task
of world repair,
our quest for harmony,
peace and justice.

P: We eat and we are revived,
and we give thanks to the lives
that were ended to nourish our own.

L: May we merit their sacrifice,
and honor their sparks of holiness
through our deeds of loving kindness.

P: We give thanks to the Power
that makes for Meeting,
for our table has been a place of dialogue
and friendship.

L: We give thanks to Life.
May we never lose touch with the simple joy and
wonder of sharing a meal.

Rabbi Rami M. Shapiro

Share the Elements

See suggestions at beginning of service.



Prayer of Thanksgiving¹⁰

O Master, Lord God, Almighty Father of our Lord, our God and our Savior Jesus Christ, we thank you in every condition, for any condition and in whatever condition. For that you have covered us, preserved us, accepted us, had compassion on us, sustained us, and brought us to this hour.

From the Coptic Orthodox Church

**One who shares
my bread and salt
is not my enemy.**

Arabic Bedouin proverb

World Ministries in the U.S.

Your congregation can participate in a variety of ministries with Christians in the Middle East. If you are interested in establishing a church partnership with a congregation in the Middle East, please write for global church partnership materials. Also ask for information about international youth programs, global education and advocacy, and multicultural projects.

Middle East Partners

Union of Armenian Evangelical Churches
in the Near East

Middle East Council of Churches
consisting of
Eastern Orthodox, Oriental Orthodox,
Catholic and Protestant denominations

World Ministries in the United States
United Church Board for World Ministries
700 Prospect Ave., 6th Floor
Cleveland, OH 44115
(216) 736-3210

Hunger Action

The Campaign to End Childhood Hunger continues to be a major domestic focus of the UCC Hunger Action program. With over 5.5 million hungry children in the United States, the need calls us to respond.

Breads Around the World is a collaboration between the UCC Hunger Action Office and the United Church Board for World Ministries. It is an expression of the Hunger Action's responsibility to provide the United Church of Christ with education and worship resources on hunger and poverty.

Breads: Middle East is a second production. To receive *Breads: Africa*, additional copies of this resource, or resources on the Campaign, please contact:

United Church of Christ
HUNGER ACTION
700 Prospect Ave., 3rd Floor
Cleveland, OH 44115
(216) 736-3290

Citations/Permission:

- ¹ *Hunger Reports 1992 and 1993*, (Washington, D.C.: Bread for the World Institute). Used with permission.
- ² Worship resources, Middle East Council of Churches, 1993, quoted from a text entitled "The Liturgy and the Community" by Bishop George Khodr, Metropolitan of Mount Lebanon for the Orthodox Church of Antioch. The ancient city of Antioch is where Christians were first called "Christians" according to Acts 11:26. Used with permission.
- ³ Schlabach, Joetta Handrich, *Extending the Table* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1991) p.51. Used with permission.
- ⁴ Developed by the Hunger Program, Reformed Church in America. This recipe is included with the permission of the publisher. This edition distributed by the United Church of Christ Hunger Action Office.
- ⁵ Schlabach, Joetta Handrich, p.32. Used with permission.
- ⁶ Schlabach, Joetta Handrich, p.311. Used with permission.
- ⁷ Global Worship Resources, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), 1993. Used with permission.
- ⁸ *With All God's People: The New Ecumenical Prayer Cycle*; (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1989), Compiled by John Carden. pp.5, 9, 25. Used with permission.
- ⁹ *Excerpts from Tangents* by Rabbi Rami M. Shapiro, ENR Wordsmiths, Miami, as quoted in "Gleanings of Spirit: A Variety of Gifts for Reflection and Prayer on World Food Day", The Office on Global Education, CWS/NCC, Baltimore, MD. Used with permission.
- ¹⁰ *With All God's People*, pp.4-5. Used with permission.