

Phase 2: Session 9

This document is for registered JustFaith Catholic (JFC) groups to use during the 2014-15 program year, per the licensing agreement. Do not copy, share, or forward without permission.



www.justfaith.org
(502) 429-0865

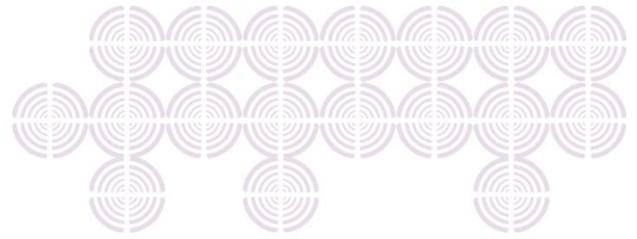
In partnership with



Catholic Campaign
for Human
Development



With additional support from: Catholic Charities USA



Session Overview and Materials

Session Focus: Addressing Food Insecurity

Set chairs in a circle around the table holding items used during prayer.

Section	Timing
Opening Prayer	10 minutes
New Perspectives Dialogue: Reflecting on the readings	45 minutes
Spiritual Practice	15 minutes
BREAK	10 minutes
Business Items	5 minutes
Offering of Letters	60 minutes
Closing Prayer	5 minutes

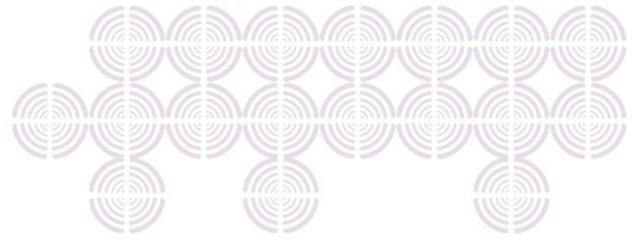
Session Checklist

For the group:

- Large pillar candle and matches
- Bible
- A small plate
- Small loaf of unsliced bread
- Reflective music
- DVD player and TV (or computer with internet access; projector and speakers)
- Flipchart paper and markers
- Free “Offering of Letters” kit that you ordered from Bread for the World.** Or make copies of handouts downloaded from www.bread.org.
- Names/ mailing addresses for the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives from your state/ congressional district. Find at <http://capwiz.com/bread/home/>. Enter the zip codes of your participants to identify their representatives.

For each participant:

- Session 9 Participant Handout
- Five sheets of quality letter-sized paper for each participant
- Pens
- Four business-sized envelopes per person
- List of U.S. Senators and Representatives for your state, by district
- Copies of the following pages from the Offering of Letters Kit:
 - Fact Sheet on International Hunger and Poverty and Hunger and Poverty in the United States
 - Sample letter for 2014 Offering of Letters



Session Notes for the Co-Facilitators

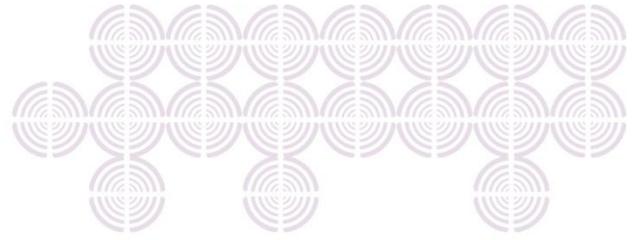
Bread for the World's annual Offering of Letters provides a way for people of faith to participate in advocacy for poor and hungry people with our federal legislators. Each year, Bread for the World encourages churches to engage in legislative advocacy to influence U.S. policy that affects those who are hungry and poor in the world. Legislative advocacy is an important action step for all church members, particularly those passionate about the social message of the Gospel.

While Bread for the World provides excellent sample letters, the most effective letters include personal stories. Such stories demonstrate how individuals have witnessed the impact of federal food aid programs in their own communities or globally. All participants this week will be asked to write a personal letter about programs that assist those who are hungry and mail the letter directly within the next week. While this activity is designed for JustFaith groups, let the group know that hundreds of church communities throughout the United States conduct a church-wide Offering of Letters each year. In fact, your church may already be involved in this prayerful advocacy event.

Several handouts and a video used in this session can be downloaded from the Bread website or you may decide to order a free 2014 Offering of Letters kit, which contains all of these resources. To access the materials online, follow these instructions:

1. Go to www.bread.org and find the banner in the middle of the page that says "Act Now."
2. Click on the tab on the banner marked "Offering of Letters."
3. On the far left side, click on the tab marked "Downloads."
4. Scroll down the page and download copies of these items:
 - a. 2014 OL Kit: Reforming U.S. Food Aid (After this document is downloaded, print a copy of page 10 labeled "Write to Congress," which contains a sample letter.)
 - b. Fact Sheet: Hunger and Poverty
 - c. Bread Regions and Organizer Map
5. To access the video that you will show in this session, select "Learn the Issues" from the tabs on the far left side of the page. Click on "Videos," and when the Videos page loads, choose the one labeled, "Food for a Future" about Catarina Pascual Jiménez.

In February, the new 2015 Offering of Letters kit will be available; prayerfully consider involving your whole parish in next year's Offering of Letters as well. It will give your faith community an opportunity to join their voices with thousands of other Christians around the United States who express their faith by advocating for poor and hungry people. To help you with this endeavor, contact your regional Bread for the World organizer (contact information is online and in the Kit).



Welcome and Opening Prayer (10 minutes)

Items need: A plate with a small, unsliced loaf of bread, Bible, music, CD player
Symbol: Bread – food, a gift from God meant as a gift for all people
Environment: Dim the lights, if possible.

Distribute the session handouts and welcome participants. Describe what the group will be doing using these or similar words:

Today we'll connect with the Biblical foundations for advocacy, reflect on how hunger affects the people in the United States, and then draft letters to our members of Congress advocating for assistance for those who are hungry. Let us begin with prayer.

Light the pillar candle on the prayer table.

Introduce the Symbol

(Slowly and deliberately)

Hold up the plate with the loaf of bread. Briefly introduce the symbol with these words:

Bread...food...that which sustains our bodies.

Given as a gift by God, so that ALL may be nourished.

Call to Prayer

(With quiet reverence)

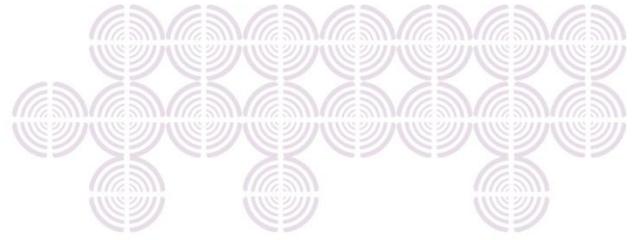
Hold up the plate of bread and offer this prayer:

God, the author of all, the maker of creation, the giver of life, made us dependent upon the gifts of this creation to survive.

God gave us life, and God sustains our lives. The world was created that all people might know life. The food that is given by God is food intended for all, not just for a few.

Let us share with each other and with all.

Pass the plate of bread. Invite participants to tear off a piece to eat and pass the plate to the next person. When the plate of bread has gone around the circle, place it in the center.



Scripture Reading

Read Acts 4: 32-35. Pause for a full minute of silence.

Meditation – To Those Who Are Hungry

**God our Creator,
to those who are hungry and thirsty,
give food and drink.**

To those who are not hungry and thirsty, give a hunger and a thirst for justice.

Help us to share in the creation of a more just and peaceful world.

We pray through Christ the Lord.

*Prayer Without Borders (Catholic Relief Services, 2004), 28.
Used with permission for JustFaith sessions only.*

Prayer of the Heart

After a couple of minutes of silence, introduce the mantra prayer in this way:

**Leader: Let us take prayer to heart. Echo this simple prayer, line by line.
Then, echo the whole prayer.**

Leader: God is Love.

All: God is Love.

Leader: God feeds us with love and bread.

All: God feeds us with love and bread.

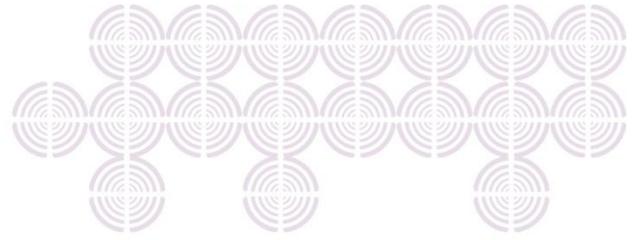
Leader: We are images of God.

All: We are images of God.

Leader: Let us feed the world with love and bread.

All: Let us feed the world with love and bread.

Leader: Let this prayer echo in our hearts.



Rite of Blessing

Invite participants to follow you as you mark a cross on your forehead, lips, and heart:

**Bless with me the thoughts, the words, and the stirrings of our hearts
that we will share in dialogue:**

(Cross forehead) **Holy Spirit, inspire our thoughts...**

(Cross lips) **May we speak your truth...**

(Cross heart) **May our hearts be opened.**

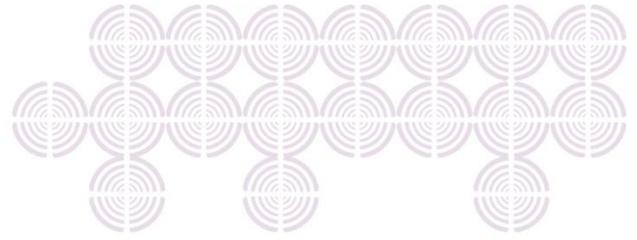
AMEN.

Reflecting on the Readings (45 minutes)

Share the following quotation from the Executive Summary of the 2014 Bread for the World Hunger Report as a preface to dialogue:

The annual food security survey conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau is our measure of how much hunger the country is confronting. We will know we have ended hunger when all households are food secure. In 2012, the most recent year for which we have data, 14.5 percent of American households were considered *food insecure*. That's the federal government's term for being hungry or at risk of hunger. ... A sense of community ownership is critical to finding sustainable solutions to hunger. Partnerships at the local level, and between local initiatives and state and federal government, build that ownership.
(2014 Hunger Report, Executive Summary, pages 4, 7)

1. On page 77 of *Compassion*, the authors write, "The Christian community, gathered in discipleship, is the place where individual gifts can be called forth and put into service for all. It belongs to the essence of this new togetherness that our unique talents are no longer objects of competition but elements of community, no longer qualities that divide but gifts that unite." Both the Bread Hunger Report and the authors of *Compassion* emphasize community as a critical factor in addressing the needs of the world. What unique gifts do you bring to the community that could be called forth to help solve hunger and poverty in our nation and in our world?
2. Write this question on flipchart paper or on a white board: Why are there hungry people in our community?



- a. Ask participants to offer just a word or brief phrase in response to the question. Record responses on the flipchart paper/white board.
 - b. Next ask participants to identify additional reasons for hunger based on this week's reading from the 2014 Hunger Report, Chapter 2, "A Fair Deal for Workers." Again, record responses using a different color marker.
 - c. Conclude by asking everyone to take a minute to silently consider the question: What responsibility do I have in addressing the social/structural causes of hunger?
3. Describe a time in your life when you felt God was asking you to respond to someone or a group of people who were hungry. How did you respond to this call – and why?

Spiritual Practice (15 minutes)

Ask the group to share their experiences of fasting from food. Use these questions to facilitate a brief discussion. You might want to have participants respond in small groups for about 10 minutes and then take about 5 minutes for group response.

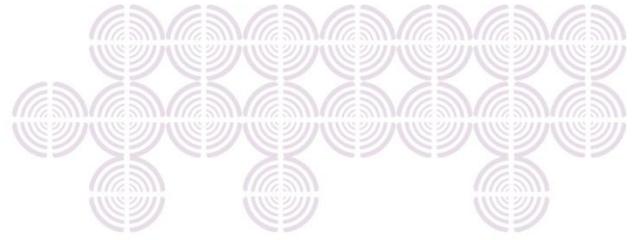
1. What were the benefits of the fast? The challenges?
2. What spiritual insights or connections did you make?
3. Would you consider fasting at regular intervals as a way to be in solidarity with people in our world who are hungry and experiencing poverty? Briefly explain your response.

BREAK (10 minutes)

Invite participants to share refreshments (if provided).

Business Items (5 minutes)

Discuss logistics for the Journey to Justice Day or a Phase 2 Immersion Experience (if you are not doing the Journey to Justice Immersion at this time).



The Bible, Advocacy, and an Offering of Letters (60 minutes)

In this part of the program, participants will learn about the annual Bread for the World Offering of Letters campaign and draft letters to their elected representatives. There are two questions for dialogue. Allow approximately 15 minutes for responses, leaving enough time for participants to draft at least one letter during this time.

1. Introduction

Introduce this part of the session to the group using these or similar words:

Legislative advocacy is an important part of working to improve the lives of our brothers and sisters here at home and around the world. Each year, Bread for the World invites churches and groups throughout the United States to write personal letters to their members of Congress on issues that are especially important to hungry and poor people. Bread sees this letter-writing as an important spiritual exercise as well as a critical way of participating in the democratic process. The letters send a powerful message to our country's political leaders and help us as a nation move closer to our goal of ending hunger. By joining with thousands of others across the country in this Offering of Letters, we will send an outpouring of concern and a powerful message to our country's political leaders. Actions like this help us turn concerns into policies, help us become a more compassionate nation, and help us move closer to the goal of ending hunger.

2. The Biblical Basis for Legislative Advocacy

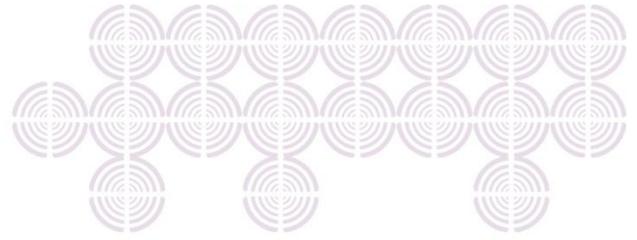
To help participants understand the connection between faith and advocacy for those experiencing hunger, spend a few minutes reviewing the following Scripture:

- Ask someone to read aloud Matthew 22: 36-40. Offer this reflection:

Jesus did not separate the love of God from the love of neighbor. How we treat our neighbor—both through our personal actions and as a nation—are concrete expressions of how we love God. God loves the world and invites us into the loving work of reconciliation and transformation.

- Ask another person to read Isaiah 58: 10-12. Again, offer a brief reflection:

In Isaiah 58, we read of a time when our actions will work with God's will to transform the world. Loving our neighbor and seeking opportunities to be forgivers, restorers, and reconcilers in the social structures of our day is doing God's work in our time.



- Finally, have someone else read Psalm 72: 12-14. Offer a final reflection:

God has indeed ordained government for a special role in the protection and development of our neighbors. In Psalm 72, the psalmist describes the just and righteous king. A key characteristic of a ruler described in the Hebrew Scriptures is to be a protector of the most vulnerable people. Our nation’s leaders have a responsibility to aid those who are in need. Christians are invited to model Christ’s perfect love—the cross—to transform and reconcile all things. When we steward our influence and urge our nation’s leaders to transform social structures and protect society’s most vulnerable people, we love God and our neighbor. Christians can create a circle of protection around people in need and strengthen the moral dignity of our nation’s programs and policies.

3. A Hunger for Advocacy

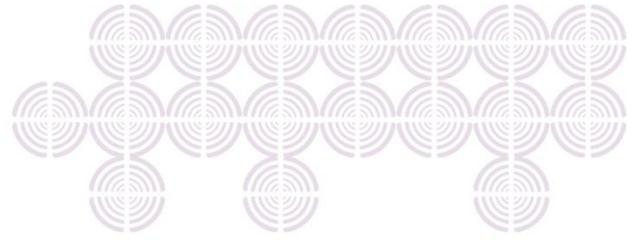
Using the DVD included in the 2014 Offering of Letters kit or the video online using Bread’s website, play the three-minute segment, “Food for a Future.” Introduce this short video clip using these or similar words: **Let us now hear from Catarina, a person directly affected by hunger and poverty.**

After the video, give everyone a copy of the Fact Sheet on Hunger and Poverty Around the World and Hunger and Poverty in the United States, which is included in the Offering of Letters Kit. Ask participants to take five minutes to silently review the Fact Sheet and the 5 infographics at the end of this week’s reading from the 2014 Hunger Report, Chapter 2, “A Fair Deal for Workers.”

After about 5 minutes, take no more than ten minutes to consider the following questions:

- How do you connect personally with the issue of hunger and food insecurity for so many in our nation and the world?
- Have you been personally affected by food programs and hunger? If so, how?
[Some topics that may arise include: use of SNAP (food stamps), WIC (Women, Infants and Children) or EITC (Earned Income Tax Credit); knowing someone who depends on these programs; working with church programs to help people in need of these programs; traveling overseas and seeing the need for U.S. poverty-focused development and assistance.]

Conclude this segment by recalling your spiritual practice of fasting for three days over the past three weeks. Ask for brief responses as to how this voluntary hunger affected anyone’s thinking or daily activities.



4. Understanding the 2014 Offering of Letters Campaign

Share the following with participants:

The overall Offering of Letters Campaign focuses on protecting funding for programs for hungry and poor people. For the millions of people in the United States and around the world facing hunger every day, more is at stake now than during any previous Bread for the World Offering of Letters campaign. Bread aims to prevent deep cuts in funding for the programs that save lives and help people around the world overcome poverty. During budget and spending debates, Bread's priority is to convince Congress to protect programs vital to hungry and poor people in the U.S. and around the world. As has been demonstrated by faith leaders and economic leaders, we have the capabilities to end hunger in our time, but we must have the political will to do so.

5. Writing Letters to Congress

Hand out the blank sheets of paper, envelopes, names and addresses of the U.S. representatives and senators from your area, and sample letters from the Offering of Letters Kit. Ask participants to review the sample letter. Invite them to write letters addressing the issue of hunger to each of their two Senators and to their congressional Representative. They can use the sample letter on reforming U.S. food aid as a guide or write their own personal letter of concern about hunger and poverty based on what they know or have been learning. Encourage them to use their own words and any personal connections with hunger and hungry people. Elected representatives are often impacted by personal stories and how policies are affecting individual lives.

Let the group know when there are five to ten minutes remaining so they can finish their letters and address their envelopes. When the time is up, ask them to place the envelopes with the completed letters on the prayer table.

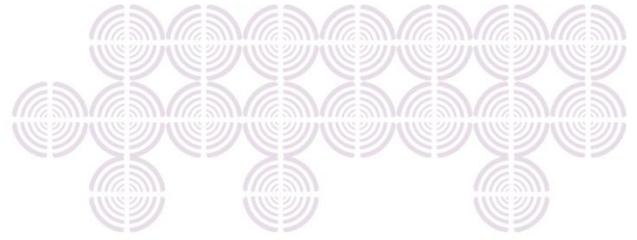
Closing Prayer (5 minutes)

Bring the session to a close and bless the letters through this closing prayer.

Give everyone a copy of the Closing Prayer handout. (For reference, this also is found on page 12 of the 2014 Offering of Letters kit.)

A Prayer and Litany for the Offering of Letters

Gracious God, all good finds its source and end in your love. We ask that these letters we offer before you reflect your good will and serve to strengthen your good work of creating and sustaining our world in your love. May this offering be illuminated by your spirit, and



may your heart be seen in these letters that we lift up today. May they inspire policy makers and staff who read them to care for hungry people living in poverty and respond to the rhythms of your kingdom in their work each day. We ask these things trusting in the name of Jesus, who offered himself as bread for the world. Amen.

Leader: ***Our Father,***

All: Who creates and nourishes us

Leader: ***Who art in heaven***

All: Who, infinite as you are, cares for us in our daily needs

Leader: ***Hallowed be Thy name.***

All: May your holy name be reflected in our voices and lives.

Leader: ***Thy kingdom come.***

All: May our world reflect life as you intend it.

Leader: ***Thy will be done.***

All: May we be instruments of your care and provision.

Leader: ***On earth as it is in heaven.***

All: May we care for all you have made as a sacred gift.

Leader: ***Give us this day our daily bread,***

All: As a mother feeds her child, may you feed us and help us feed others,

Leader: ***And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors.***

All: May our lives reflect your radical grace and our hearts be quick to confess our faults. Forgive us for being silent when our neighbors need us to raise our voices on their behalf. Forgive us for allowing the status quo to rule instead of your love. Forgive us for our disruption of the peace and mercy you intend for our world.

Leader: ***And lead us not into temptation,***

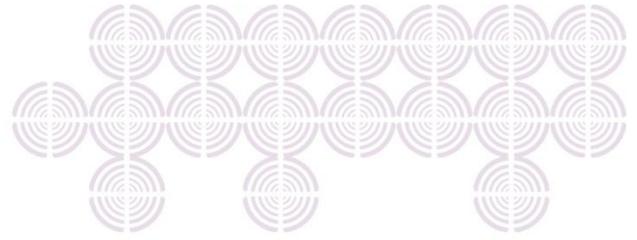
All: Lead us from apathy and indifference and selectively following Jesus.

Leader: ***But deliver us from evil.***

All: May your grace overcome those who promote evil, and open our eyes to see the subtle harm at work in our systems and in our hearts.

Leader: ***For Thine is the kingdom, and the power and the glory forever. Amen.***

All: May your purpose for abundance and life reign in our world and in all aspects of our lives. Amen.



Adapted from a litany by Westminster Presbyterian Church, Sacramento, California.

Invite the group to stand, form a tight circle, and link hands.

In these words, invite any participants who have a prayer, a concern, or a request to briefly share it with the group:

We are disciples on a journey.

We are the body of Christ, broken for the world.

We hold one another as we carry the concerns and intercessions of our neighbors.

If you feel moved, please share your prayer or concerns aloud.

Words to Live By

Leader: **Let us again take prayer to heart. Repeat the prayer after me:**

Leader: **God is Love.**

All: God is Love.

Leader: **God feeds us with love and bread.**

All: God feeds us with love and bread.

Leader: **We are images of God.**

All: We are images of God.

Leader: **Let us feed the world with love and bread.**

All: Let us feed the world with love and bread.

Leader: **May this prayer echo in our hearts throughout the week, as we walk, while we work, as we rest and when we pray for one another.**

Call to mind those who hunger for the nourishment of love. (Pause)

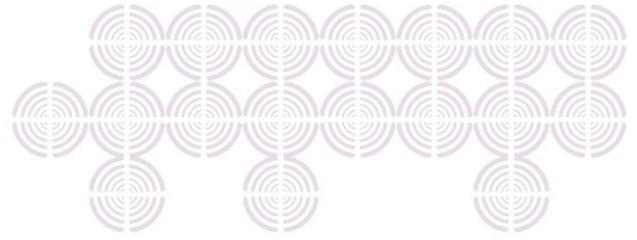
A Sign of God's Peace

Leader: **Now, we share in the peace for which our world hungers.**

With a sign of peace, we affirm one another for the journey ahead.

May we extend God's peace to all!

Remind participants to take their letters with them to mail within the next week, OR have stamps available and offer to drop the letters in a mail for everyone.



Session 9 Participant Handout

Closing Prayer: A Prayer and Litany for the Offering of Letters

Gracious God, all good finds its source and end in your love. We ask that these letters we offer before you reflect your good will and serve to strengthen your good work of creating and sustaining our world in your love. May this offering be illuminated by your spirit, and may your heart be seen in these letters that we lift up today. May they inspire policy makers and staff who read them to care for hungry people living in poverty and respond to the rhythms of your kingdom in their work each day. We ask these things trusting in the name of Jesus, who offered himself as bread for the world. Amen.

Leader: Our Father,

All: Who creates and nourishes us

Leader: Who art in heaven

All: Who, infinite as you are, cares for us in our daily needs

Leader: Hallowed be Thy name.

All: May your holy name be reflected in our voices and lives.

Leader: Thy kingdom come.

All: May our world reflect life as you intend it.

Leader: Thy will be done.

All: May we be instruments of your care and provision.

Leader: On earth as it is in heaven.

All: May we care for all you have made as a sacred gift.

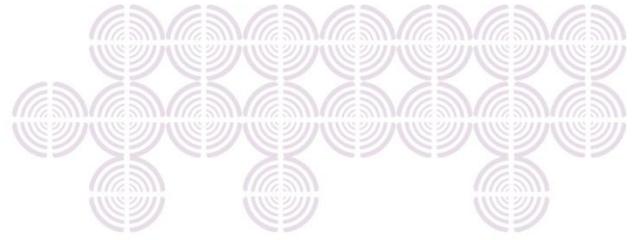
Leader: Give us this day our daily bread,

All: As a mother feeds her child, may you feed us and help us feed others,

Leader: And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors.

All: May our lives reflect your radical grace and our hearts be quick to confess our faults. Forgive us for being silent when our neighbors need us to raise our voices on their behalf. Forgive us for allowing the status quo to rule instead of your love. Forgive us for our disruption of the peace and mercy you intend for our world.

Leader: And lead us not into temptation,



All: Lead us from apathy and indifference and selectively following Jesus.
Leader: But deliver us from evil.
All: May your grace overcome those who promote evil, and open our eyes to see the subtle harm at work in our systems and in our hearts.
Leader: For Thine is the kingdom, and the power and the glory forever. Amen.
All: May your purpose for abundance and life reign in our world and in all aspects of our lives. Amen.

Adapted from a litany by Westminster Presbyterian Church, Sacramento, California.