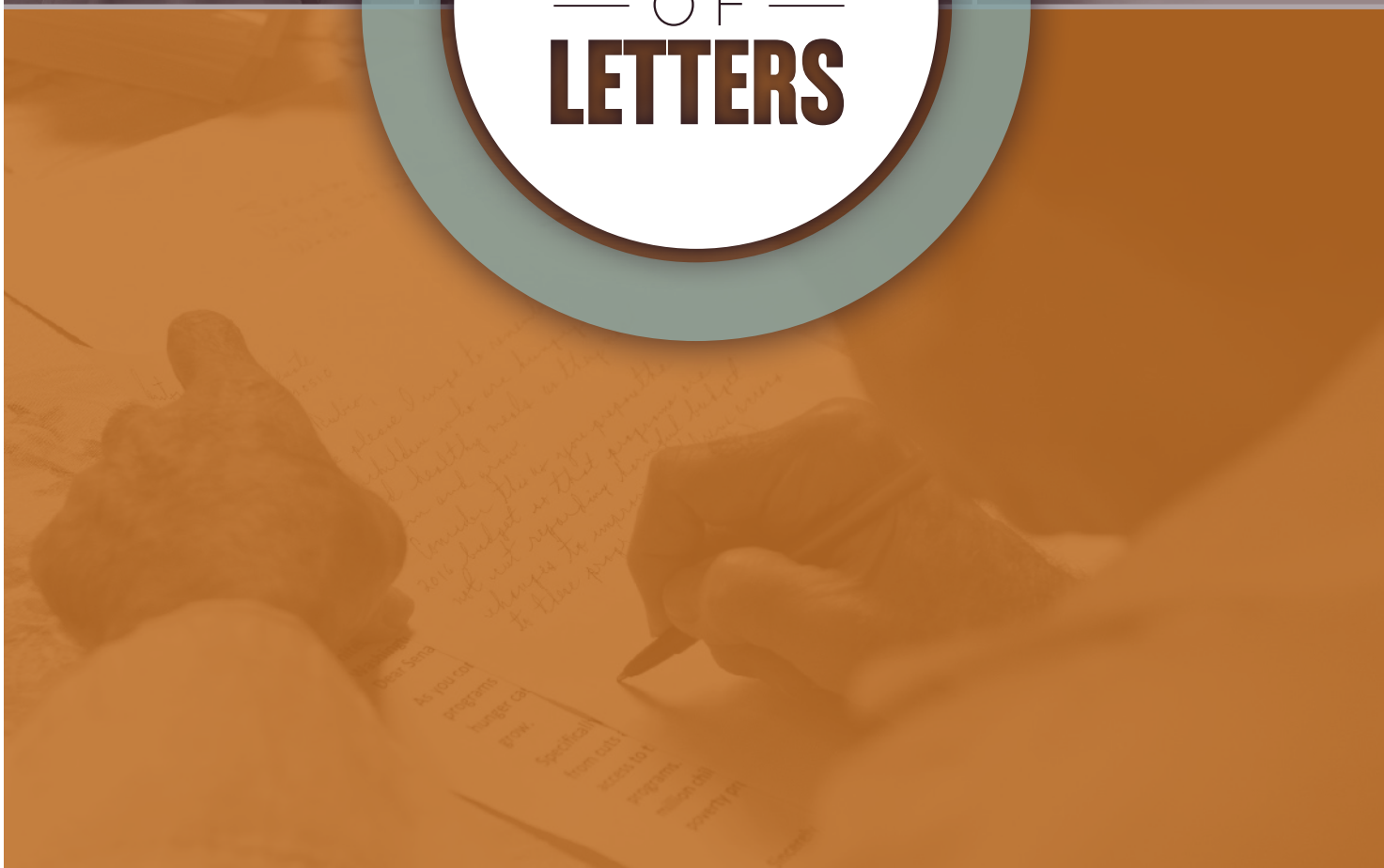




CONDUCTING AN

OFFERING — OF — LETTERS



breadfortheworld
HAVE FAITH. END HUNGER.

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INTRODUCTION

Each year, Bread for the World urges elected leaders in Washington, D.C., to enable people in our nation and our world to feed their families and move out of poverty. An Offering of Letters event—when people in your congregation, campus, or group sit down together to write personalized letters or emails to members of Congress on specific issues—is an effective tool that helps shape our government’s response to hunger.

Whether you are new to letter-writing or are experienced in organizing people to speak out to our leaders in Washington, this “how-to” section of the toolkit will help you prepare for an Offering of Letters. Setting up an Offering of Letters event is doable. It doesn’t take as much time as you might expect, and you will find that it enriches your faith experience. This toolkit, Bread’s website (bread.org/ol), and Bread staff members who serve your region as organizers (contact at organizing@bread.org or 800-822-7323) are resources for planning and carrying out your Offering of Letters. Telling us about your event is important, too. We urge you to visit bread.org/evaluation or fill out the form in the toolkit, and let us know what happened. Offering of Letters materials are also available in Spanish (bread.org/ofrenda).

Why Write Letters?

Bread for the World’s annual Offering of Letters campaigns are part of our goal to end hunger by 2030. Your efforts can make a big difference.

Studies show that personalized letters and emails are one of the best ways to reach members of Congress. Adding a few sentences to the sample letter or email about why you, as a constituent, really care about an issue will make them stand out to your senators and representative.

Members of Congress want to hear from constituents about the issues on which they will vote in the Senate and House of Representatives. Hand-written letters and personalized emails—along with face-to-face visits and phone calls—are among the most effective ways for you to share your views. The Offering of

A campus group
writes letters to their
members of Congress.



Bread for the World photo

INTRODUCTION, cont.

Letters is both an effective tool in shaping public policy and a strong expression of our faith in action.

Each year, Bread for the World, in consultation with its partners, chooses a specific hunger issue for its Offering of Letters campaign. Then, tens of thousands of people like you use our resources to engage church members, students, women's and youth groups, adult education classes, and mission committees in letter-writing events—the Offering of Letters.

We are serving God
when we raise
issues of hunger
and poverty with
our government.

When these hand-written letters and personalized emails reach our nation's leaders in Washington, they are a powerful witness to grassroots concerns. Over the years, your correspondence has helped win significant victories on hunger issues. Bread for the World also advocates on other issues that are not part of the Offering of Letters campaign but are critical in ending hunger. As issues arise throughout the year, the newly created Activist Corner (bread.org/activist) is your go-to place to get the

most up-to-date information and resources to help you put your faith into action. Bread members speak out on additional issues throughout the year through personalized emails, phone calls, office visits, Facebook, and Twitter. We hope you and others will take part in these other campaigns as well as the Offering of Letters.

Getting Started

Bread for the World is grateful for your faithful and consistent commitment, and we are eager to support you in any way we can. **Remember:** There is no single model for an Offering of Letters. The examples offered in this publication are not to limit you, but instead, to stimulate your creativity. You know your congregation or campus best, so develop plans that make sense for your setting.

As technology changes, we want you to learn about a new way to more easily communicate with your legislators—a **NEW DIGITAL OPTION.**

A mix of digital and conventional technologies provides Offering of Letters participants more choices, and therefore increasing

contacts to Congress. Using your laptop, electronic notebook, or even a smartphone, insert bread.org/eol into the browser of your e-device. After you input your name, address, and zip code—and adding a line or two to personalize the email—the system will automatically email both your senators and representative. That's three letters with the push of one button!

Just like with hand-written letters, add a personal motivation for writing, a story, or a fact to the email to make it stand out. Make sure to track your emails for your final report.



Bread for the World photo

THE BIBLE AND THE OFFERING OF LETTERS

Bread for the World is a collective Christian voice urging our nation's decision makers to end hunger at home and abroad. Moved by God's grace in Jesus Christ, we reach out to our neighbors, whether they live in the next house, the next state, or on the next continent.

We experience God's grace and love through our faith in the saving power of Jesus' death and resurrection. "We know love by this, that he laid down his life for us—and we ought to lay down our lives for one another" (1 John 3:16).

In the Gospels, Jesus was compassionate to all people, especially the widow, the orphan, the stranger, hungry people, poor people—those most vulnerable in society.

Jesus loved all people, rich and poor, and actively cared for those in need. He urged his disciples to do the same.

"Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due, when it is in your power to do it."

— Proverbs 3:27

As followers of Christ, we are called to proclaim and embody God's reconciling love at all times and in all places. We work to end hunger and poverty in our communities, in our country, and in other countries.

Throughout Scripture, God calls people into community and sets the expectation that leaders (whether they are kings, pharaohs, or elected officials) should care for their people. Therefore, we also reflect God's love by challenging individuals and institutions that have the power to change laws and structures that keep people vulnerable. As God's hands and feet in the world, we work toward a beloved community in which every person has an equal opportunity to thrive.

The Offering of Letters is one opportunity for Christians to live out this commitment. It invites us to be good stewards, using our voices to encourage our elected representatives to take the necessary steps to end hunger.

Read more about the biblical themes that inform our mission in "The Biblical Basis for Advocacy to End Hunger." Download or order a free copy of this resource at bread.org/store or by calling 800-822-7323.

Pastors, priests, and ministers—those who preach on the Scriptures weekly—are among the best leaders in getting their congregations to engage in advocacy.



ORGANIZING AN OFFERING OF LETTERS

The Basics

Organizing an Offering of Letters event is not difficult. Here are a few key points to remember and some examples of what has worked well in the past. For more details, go to bread.org/ol.

Key Steps in Planning Your Offering of Letters

1. **Get support** from your pastor, mission committee, and church council if needed—or from your campus ministry or sponsoring professor or staff. Set a date for the Offering that works on your church or campus calendar.
2. **Gather a team** to work with you, and plan how and when you'll get the word out using newsletters, bulletins, announcement boards, and social media. Locate key educational materials and videos; start by looking at bread.org/ol. Contact Bread's organizing staff (organizing@bread.org) for help.
3. **Plan** what will happen the week before and the week of the Offering. Find ways to integrate the hunger topic in the entire worship service or event. Identify a space for participants to write letters or send emails. Have available sample letters, paper, envelopes, pens, stamps, and names and addresses of members of Congress. For the digital OL option, set up Wi-Fi connected electronic notebooks and laptops, or encourage participants to use their smartphone by inserting bread.org/eol in their phone's browser. Assign people to help and answer questions and be ready with tips on how to personalize letters and emails.
4. **Gather the letters and bless them** (for personalized emails, include the number of emails sent on a slip of paper), and thank people for participating. Make sure to count the total number of handwritten letters and personalized emails sent to each member of Congress, and then mail the individual letters to Capitol Hill or to Bread for the World for personal delivery to Congress.
5. **Report your Offering results** to Bread using either the form in the companion materials or online at bread.org/evaluation. The reports help Bread's staff in Washington, D.C., follow up with your members of Congress and increase the impact of your letters.
6. **Celebrate** your success in raising voices to help end hunger—no matter how many people take

part. Stay connected to the Offering of Letters campaign (visit bread.org/activist for frequent updates), and report progress to your team and your church or campus.

Ideas for Events

Adult or Youth Education Forum

Host a letter-writing forum after worship or between services. Show the Offering of Letters video(s). Invite a speaker who has first-hand knowledge of the advocacy issue. Set aside 20 to 30 minutes for letter writing—paper and electronic. Use the social media kit (bread.org/ol) for activities, such as hosting a tweetup.

Movie or Video Night

Host a movie or video night at church, and show a film related to the topic. If you are showing a movie like, "A Place at the Table," make sure you have the appropriate license to show the film publicly. (In general, you can show a movie such as "A Place at the Table" for educational purposes without a license to a group of 10 people or less). You can also choose any of the videos in Bread's YouTube channel (youtube.com/breadfortheworld). **You do not need a license to show Offering of Letters videos.** At the end of the movie or video, host a short discussion and invite attendees to write letters, send emails, or participate in an activity from the social media kit.

Service and Advocacy

Consider conducting an Offering of Letters activity as part of a service project or mission trip. If your church is volunteering at a food bank, invite participants to write letters to address the root causes of hunger. For a mission trip, make sure to check out Bread's "Getting Ready to Come Back: An Advocacy Guide for Mission Teams," available at bread.org/store.

Worship Service

If Bread is a central part of your church's mission, consider asking congregants to write letters during a worship service. The sermon should tie closely to the issue, and congregants should be given at least 10 minutes to write in silence. We recommend this only for churches that are highly engaged with Bread for the World. Distribute half-sheets of cardstock and pens before service or ask people to use their smartphones. End by bringing letters forward and holding smartphones up for a blessing.

ORGANIZING AN OFFERING OF LETTERS

Integrating Your Event into the Life of Your Congregation/Campus

Engaging Your Church

- **Motivate** church councils and pastors by organizing an Offering of Letters and promoting Bread for the World at meetings of your faith tradition's synod, diocese, presbytery, or general conference.
- **Gather** a study group to read Bread for the World Institute's current Hunger Report and its accompanying Christian study guide. See bread.org/hungerreport.
- **Connect** with your church's mission activities by engaging volunteers and recipients at your church, your local food pantry, or shelter. If your church has mission relationships in the United States or abroad, consider connecting with them as well. These connections will help you gather stories that can be used to inform your congregation about how anti-hunger and anti-poverty programs affect their lives.
- **Strengthen** your church's hunger ministry through a Covenant Church relationship with Bread for the World. When you commit to integrating hunger concerns into the life of your congregation, Bread for the World provides tools to help your church learn more about hunger, pray for hungry people, and advocate to end hunger. For more information, go to bread.org/covenant-churches.
- **Celebrate** Bread for the World Sunday in the fall, and renew your church's commitment to overcoming hunger. Visit bread.org/sunday for more details.
- **Subscribe** to Bread for the Preacher, a free monthly email resource for pastors at bread.org/preacher. Each edition features Scripture-based reflections and worship resources that address issues of hunger and poverty.

Engaging Your Campus Groups

- **Raise awareness.** Consider writing letters to members of Congress during your campus' hunger awareness month or at the end of a hunger fast. End a service event with an advocacy action. Go to the Activist Corner (bread.org/activist) for the most current anti-hunger issues moving in Congress that need advocacy.
- **Invite a speaker.** A Bread for the World organizer or local activist can come to your campus to speak about the Offering of Letters or about solutions to hunger and poverty. For larger audiences or for additional speaker ideas, contact Bread's organizing department at organizing@bread.org or call 800-822-7323.
- **Use social media.** Download the Offering of Letters Social Media Kit at bread.org/ol or in the Activist Corner (bread.org/activist) for tips on how you can use social media, primarily Facebook and Twitter, to influence Congress and educate your community about hunger issues.

Only 1 out of every 20 grocery bags that feed people who are hungry come from church food pantries and other private charities. Federal programs provide the rest.



Mark Fenton for Bread for the World

ORGANIZING AN OFFERING OF LETTERS

Additional Tools to Help You Plan and Stay Informed



Videos that are part of Bread for the World's Offerings of Letters show how the federal government's policies affect real people in real life.

Videos and Photos

Related to the 2017 Offering of Letters:

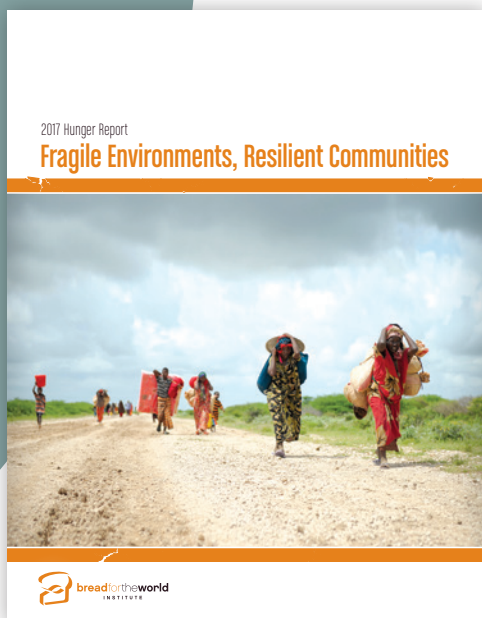
- bread.org/ol
- on the DVD included in this toolkit
- www.flickr.com/photos/breadfortheworld
- www.youtube.com/breadfortheworld

Post videos and photos on church or campus ministry websites, blogs, or Facebook pages to promote your Offering of Letters. Videos can also be presented during worship, in a class, during an event, or while letters are being written.

The Activist Corner

bread.org/activist

The Activist Corner has resources, tools, and information about the most current anti-hunger issues moving in Congress, including the latest on the Offering of Letters. Find links to email Congress on individual issues in the “Act Now” section. Read stories about how “Activists in Action” across the United States are putting their advocacy to work. Download how-to documents and fact sheets from the “Activist Tool Kit.”



The Hunger Report

hungerreport.org

Bread for the World Institute's annual *Hunger Report* provides policy analysis on hunger and strategies to end it. A Christian study guide for the report is available. It invites participants to consider how they might take action in response to the issues discussed in the report. The study guide includes biblical reflections, discussion questions, a summary of the *Hunger Report* theme, and suggested activities.

ORGANIZING AN OFFERING OF LETTERS

Tools to Help You Respond Throughout the Year

These tools can help you stay up-to-date on Congress and Bread actions throughout the year.

Offering of Letters Website

- Latest sample letters to Congress
- Explanation of the issues and what we want Congress to do
- Fact sheets

Bread on Social Media

Download Bread's Social Media Kit, a companion to the Offering of Letters, from bread.org/ol for other opportunities to engage Congress and educate your community about the Offering of Letters topic. Also make sure to follow Bread on Facebook (facebook.com/breadfortheworld), Twitter (twitter.com/bread4theworld), and Instagram (instagram.com/bread4theworld/). Read Bread Blog (bread.org/blog) each day for stories, updates, and uplifting biblical reflections.

Email and Action Alerts

Bread's action alerts are critical tools for building political will in Washington, D.C. When hundreds of constituents join their voices on an issue, they can often influence the outcome of votes in Congress. To sign up for action alerts, visit bread.org and fill out the email sign-up form. You can also visit our online action center at bread.org/act, where you can choose to write on any of the legislative issues affecting hunger moving in Congress at that time.

E-Newsletter and Fresh Bread

Bread's e-newsletter is published electronically monthly. The e-newsletter covers issues and legislation that affect hungry people as well as the advocacy actions of our members. To subscribe, visit bread.org/signup.

Fresh Bread is a weekly email newsletter about hunger-related happenings in Congress. It is produced only when Congress is in session. To subscribe, visit bread.org/freshbread.

National Call

Register for this monthly discussion of current legislative priorities and actions with Bread staff, activists, and special guests from coalition partners or Capitol Hill. To participate, visit bread.org/activist and then scroll down to the "Stay Informed" section and sign up for the upcoming grassroots webinar and conference call.

Bread Regional Organizers

Stay updated on developments and resources by keeping in touch with Bread organizers. Find contact information for the organizer in your region at bread.org/regional-organizers or contact organizing@bread.org with your questions.

The Bread for the World website provides updates and connections to help you follow the issues and be an effective advocate all year.



ORGANIZING AN OFFERING OF LETTERS

Promoting Your Event

Pulpit Announcement

If a pulpit announcement is part of the worship service, it should reflect the experience of worship—encouraging faith and understanding of God’s message. Don’t just tell worshippers the details of the Offering of Letters. Tell them why this is important, grounding your words in your faith experience. Ultimately, you best know your faith community and what speaks to their hearts, but here are some ideas that can help you develop your announcement:

- **Tell a brief personal story** or explain why advocating on behalf of poor and hungry people is a valuable part of your faith walk.
- **Connect the Offering of Letters to the day’s sermon**, reiterating any points made by the pastor, or speaker about helping hungry and poor people.
- **Present a skit** with your ministry team, encouraging congregants to live out their faith through advocacy.
- **Show the short Offering of Letters video trailer**, followed by an announcement of where and when the Offering will take place and why you’ll be participating.
- **Compare current facts on hunger and poverty to God’s vision** to help congregants re-envision the world. Mention a few facts from the Hunger and Poverty Facts sheet in this toolkit, and talk about how those facts would change in a world in which no child goes hungry and no parent sacrifices a meal to feed a child.
- **Visit the Offering of Letters website** for more inspiration and facts: bread.org/ol.

Sample Pulpit Announcement

[Relate personal experience or facts about hunger.]

What would it take to realize God’s vision for a world in which everyone has enough? We have the resources now to feed all people, but we need the political will to make it happen. Our nation’s leaders have the ability to craft policies that establish pathways out of hunger and poverty for our brothers and sisters both at home and abroad. This is God’s vision. But leadership must come from God’s people: you and me.

That is why I am asking you to join me in Bread for the World’s Offering of Letters on [date, time, place] to write letters to our members of Congress, asking them to prioritize and protect programs vital to hungry people in the United States and around the world.

Bulletin or Newsletter Announcement

Bulletin announcements should be short and include clear information about the purpose of the Offering of Letters as well as the time and the place. For a newsletter submission, look for a way to make the issue of hunger real and personal, using one of the ideas mentioned in the pulpit announcement section above or a story from the Offering of Letters website.

Sample Bulletin Announcement

Bread for the World’s Offering of Letters aims to realize a world in which all of God’s children are fed. Our goal is to create political will by writing our policy makers and urging them to create pathways out of hunger and poverty. Join the [committee or group] on [date, time, place] as we turn our faith into action by writing letters to our members of Congress. For more information on this year’s Offering of Letters, go to bread.org/ol.

Social Media

Many churches reach new audiences and keep their congregation informed of upcoming events through Facebook or Twitter. Does your church or pastor have a blog on which to announce an Offering of Letters? Consider posting pictures after the event and writing about what you have accomplished.

Sample Facebook Post

Join us [date] as we put our faith into action. We will be conducting a Bread for the World Offering of Letters, asking our nation’s leaders to work to end hunger both at home and abroad. We will begin with an adult forum on hunger at [time, place], followed by letter writing and a blessing of the letters before we send them to Washington, D.C. [Find an Offering of Letters picture or video link to include with your announcement at bread.org/ol.]

Sample Tweet

Join us for an Offering of Letters [date] & ask Congress to #endhunger at home & abroad.

ORGANIZING AN OFFERING OF LETTERS

Conducting an Adult Forum or Workshop

Educating your congregation or campus on the Offering of Letters campaign is an important way to build awareness and commitment to advocacy. You can build excitement and knowledge at adult or campus forums, youth group retreats, Sunday school classes, women's or men's groups, or in other settings. A concise presentation, clear instructions on writing letters, and powerful stories will inspire members of your community to join our efforts to end hunger.

Here is a suggested outline for a presentation. Tailor this to the time you have; your Bread for the World organizer (organizing@bread.org) can help you decide on goals and outcomes.

In advance: Prepare any handouts, and consider using the PowerPoint presentation. The PowerPoint presentation and other resources, such as the social media kit, are also at bread.org/ol. The PowerPoint presentation includes talking points for each slide. Be sure to review the PowerPoint presentation and practice delivering it.

Introduction: Start with a welcome and prayer. Provide some background about how you came to participate in the Offering of Letters, explain why this forum is important, and talk about what you expect to accomplish.

Background: If your group is new to Bread and letter-writing, include in your presentation the slides in the PowerPoint presentation that introduce Bread and the importance of advocacy as a response to hunger. Discuss the biblical grounds for speaking out to leaders about hunger and poverty. If your group already knows Bread, skip those introductory slides, and move into the Offering of Letters slides.

What: Introduce the Bread for the World's Offering of Letters topic—see the issues section of the Offering of Letters kit or website. Make it clear what we are asking Congress to do and why it will help hungry people. Remind participants of the biblical stories in which God provides food to people on journeys or on the margins of society (the Biblical Reflection in the Offering of Letters kit can provide talking points). Show the Offering of Letters video (DVD) found in the toolkit. Finally, invite participants to share their own stories about ending hunger.

How and who: Talk about why letters, either hand-written or personalized emails, can make a difference. Highlight past victories found on the back of the Offering of Letters kit. Point out which members of Congress in your area are especially important (your Bread organizer can help you identify key leaders). If time permits, write letters (by hand or email) during the forum, or let people know when your Offering of Letters will take place. Answer questions and distribute handouts. Invite participants to give their best tips or offer ideas about conducting a successful Offering of Letters.

Closing: Summarize the Offering of Letters campaign, the ask, and any goals you have for your community's engagement (for example, the number of letters you hope to get or how many churches you hope will participate in the Offering of Letters). End with prayer.

Resources for your forum

- Handouts, stories, Offering of Letters videos, and PowerPoint (on DVD and at bread.org/ol)
- “We Are Bread for the World” video, for those new to Bread (on DVD and at bread.org/ol)
- Global poverty and hunger facts and biographical information for your members of Congress (contact organizing@bread.org to locate the biographical information)
- Current sample letter

Tips

- Anticipate who may attend and what questions they may have. Review the questions and answers on the issues in this toolkit and online at bread.org/ol.
- Prepare talking points, drawing from notes on the PowerPoint slides.
- Encourage interaction rather than lecturing.
- Words and statistics are good tools, but pictures and stories enliven your points.
- Make sure that logistics (especially technology) are arranged in advance.

QUICK-SETUP GUIDE

Use this Quick-setup Guide to plan and carry out your Offering of Letters event. For more detailed ideas and guidance, read the inside pages of this booklet.

- 1 Read** the issues part of this toolkit (pages 1-11 in the bound part). Then familiarize yourself with the supplements in the toolkit (items in the pockets of the folder). These are materials to help you promote your event and for participants to learn about the issues and write letters. Order/gather additional supplies as necessary.
- 2 Determine** what will happen at your event and plan it. **Schedule** your event. Work with your pastor, mission committee, or church council to get permission and support.
- 3 Promote** your event through announcements (spoken and in the bulletin), newsletters, and social media in the weeks before your event.
- 4** On the day of the event, **integrate** the hunger topic in the entire worship service or event. **Prepare** your space and supplies.
- 5 Gather** the letters and **bless** them, and then **thank** people for participating. **Count** the total letters for each member of Congress, and then **mail** the individual letters to Capitol Hill. **Report** your Offering results to Bread using either the form in the companion materials or online at bread.org/evaluation.
- 6 Stay involved.** Keep following the Offering of Letters campaign and visit the Activist Corner regularly (bread.org/activist), and encourage people to continue their advocacy with Bread for the World.



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