

# Jeff's Jottings

## *The Crucial Voices of Lent, Week 4*

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*This holy season of Lent is intended in part as a time of penitence and reflection; in the words of the text from Isaiah many of us heard on Ash Wednesday, a time to take seriously those means by which we might "be called the repairer of the breach, the restorer of streets to live in."*

*During Lent, then, I am using Jottings as a voice that would call us (myself included) to reflection, to faith, to action, as repairers and restorers. A voice that challenges us, and comforts us. A voice that may be hard to hear, but even harder to ignore. Not simply my voice but that of others.*



We more often associate Lent with fasting than with feasting. Jesus' 40 days in the wilderness without food is the traditional text for the first Sunday in Lent; Jesus' final meal with his disciples is his last act before his crucifixion. Those two events bookend and in some way shape our Lenten journey.

Perhaps that is why these two images of food, here and on the next page, from two of our PTCA congregations where I was this week, so captured my attention. On the left is the joyous feast of the congregation at North Presbyterian Church in North Saint Paul, a community meal of, primarily, African origins (and pizza, too) following worship to celebrate the baptism of one of their own. A joyous feast for the people of God.



At left is just a portion of the food collected by the congregation of First Presbyterian Church in South Saint Paul, for Neighbors Inc., serving the people of northern Dakota County. A joyous feast for the people of God.

A joyous feast. Today I welcome Josh Bishop,

whose writing explores that very subject. May these pictures and words invite your own reflections on God's bountiful gifts to us, and how we might give back to others.

*Food is a gift. In fact, food is the first gift. In one entirely accurate sense, all things from God's good hands are gifts, but I think food is somehow unique. Open a Bible to Genesis 1 and look at what God does in the creation story. More specifically, look at the verbs: God creates, he hovers, he says, he names, he separates, he makes and blesses and sees and declares it good. But it isn't until the end of the chapter, in verse 29, that he gives. And what does he give? Food.*

*"Behold," God says, "I have given you every plant and every tree. You shall have them for food."*

*Later, after the Flood, God adds animals: "Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you. And as I gave you the green plants, I give you everything" ([Gen. 9:3](#)).*

*When properly understood as a gift, it becomes clear that food is a tangible expression of God's love for us. As theologian Norman Wirzba has put it, food is "God's love made edible." It is one essential way that he shows his care for us (see [Matt. 6:26](#)). It is a physical embodiment of God's*

*common grace, given for the good of his creation. And it's one of the practical means by which Jesus Christ sustains all things.*

*"Food is not a product," writes gardener and author Fred Bahnson in Making Peace with the Land. "It is not 'fuel for the machine.' It is not a commodity or a reflection of our technological ingenuity. It is before everything else an unearned gift from God, manna from heaven, a blessing."*

*Because food is a gift, how we handle it—what we eat and how we eat it — is much more than a matter of convenience, taste, desire, or consumption. How I respond to a gift is an indication of how I feel about the giver. And because food is a gift of God's good grace, I respond by eating — and supporting within my community — food that manifests God's grace well.*

From: "Digesting Grace," by Josh Bishop. *Christianity Today*,  
August 15, 2012.