The Hunger Experience

The Famine Feast
About Children of the Nations

Children of the Nations (COTN) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to raising children who transform nations. Founded in 1995, the organization currently provides holistic care to orphaned and destitute children in Sierra Leone, Malawi, Uganda, and the Dominican Republic. By partnering with nationals, they establish full-care residential Children’s Homes (for orphans) and Village Partnership Programs (to benefit orphans and children living with destitute families or caregivers who are unable to properly provide for them). The programs and services they provide include education, feeding centers, medical services, and community development initiatives such as agriculture, sanitation projects, micro-enterprise, and much more. Children of the Nations believes that true, lasting, and meaningful change to a nation begins with the children, and so they are their mission. Children of the Nations stands apart from other organizations in their goal, not to provide relief, but rather to come alongside nationals, empowering them to a life of self-sustainability. For more information visit www.cotni.org.

About the Meal Marathon

A Meal Marathon is a food-packaging event facilitated by COTN but funded by the participants, who also volunteer their time to package meals to send to our children in Africa and the Dominican Republic.

What is the Hunger Experience?

The purpose of the Hunger Experience is to give students an opportunity to experience and understand hunger firsthand and motivate them for action based on their new understanding. Over the course of four weeks, students will be exposed to the facts about hunger in our world, and they will also hear what God has to say about hunger. At the end of the four weeks, the students will have the chance to fast, serving orphaned and destitute children in Africa and the Dominican Republic by raising funds through pledges for the time they abstain from food. Their Hunger Experience will then culminate in a Famine Feast, an event designed to provide a new perspective on the effects of extreme poverty on the children of the world.
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Hunger Experience Outline

- **WEEK 1**
  - Inform Church of Upcoming Activities
    - Invite church to participate through prayer, pledges, and volunteering
  - Deliver Message (Recommended: James 1:27)
  - Explain Concept of Hunger Experience to Youth Group
    - Present hunger statistics (p. 8)
    - Describe upcoming events
    - Explain fasting and pledging process
    - Set date and time for fasting
  - Pray for Hunger Experience and Pledges

- **WEEK 2**
  - Deliver Message (Recommended: 1 Samuel 2:1–10)
  - Distribute Pledge Cards and Explain Pledging Process
    - Explain “why” as well as “how”
    - Address safety precautions, as students may go door-to-door
  - Establish Group Goal
    - Pray for Holy Spirit’s guidance, then set group’s pledge goal
    - Divide group goal by participants for individual goals
  - Pray for Hunger Experience and Pledges
  - Announce Pledge Goal to Church
    - Invite church to participate through prayer, pledges, and volunteering

- **WEEK 3**
  - Deliver Message (Recommended: Isaiah 58:10)
  - Check Status of Pledges
    - Raise goal if necessary
    - Encourage church to participate through prayer, pledges, and volunteering
  - Pray for Hunger Experience and Pledges

- **WEEK 4**
  - Fast, Then Hold Famine Feast (Collect Pledge Money and Announce Total)
  - Deliver Message and Explain Upcoming Meal Marathon
  - Watch COTN DVD
**Hunger Experience Teaching**

The Hunger Experience is meant to give students an opportunity to hear what God’s Word has to say about hunger, both spiritual and physical. In the Hunger Experience Outline, specific passages are recommended, but there are many others that could be used. You are encouraged to make this experience your own by prayerfully considering what passages to use for your teaching. Some verses that you might consider include Genesis 3:17, Deuteronomy 8:3, Matthew 25: 31–45, John 6, and James 2:14–17.

**Fundraising**

Students get the opportunity to act on their new perspectives of hunger by raising money that will be used to fund your Meal Marathon, where you will package food for children in Africa and the Dominican Republic. Without funding, meals cannot be packaged. Students will raise support in the form of pledges. The students will be given pledge cards to hand out in their community (e.g. family, friends, and neighbors). Each supporter will commit a specific amount of money for each hour that the student fasts.

For example, Crystal asks her grandmother to support her during a 12-hour fast by contributing to feeding hungry children around the world, giving a donation for every hour that she abstains from eating on the date the youth group has set for fasting. Her grandmother gladly agrees to give $2 for every hour that Crystal fasts. That money—$24—can be handed directly to Crystal in the form of cash or a check at the time of pledging, to be collected at the youth group before the Famine Feast. Crystal’s grandmother may also choose to wait to fulfill her pledge until after Crystal has fasted. In that case, Crystal will need to get in touch with her grandmother again to collect the money after the Famine Feast. You may want to encourage the students to get contributions upfront so the collection process will be easier for them.

On page 13 of the manual, a master copy of a pledge card is provided for you to make copies for your youth group. Students should receive their pledge cards in the second week of the Hunger Experience to give them plenty of time to go out and get pledges. It is important that your students leave the second week with an understanding of how the pledge cards work, what they are raising money for, and the deadline for turning in the pledge money.

It is also important that your group comes to a consensus as to how much funding you believe God will enable you to raise. This group goal will allow you to set individual fundraising goals more easily. Simply
divide the goal evenly amongst participants, who can divide their individual goal by contributions per hour. For example, your group may decide to raise $2,000. If your group contains forty participants, each one must raise $50. If your group opts for a 20-hour fast, each participant must collect $2.50 per hour. This is totally attainable and will probably be able to raise more. This division sets an attainable goal for each member of the group.

This goal also enables Children of the Nations to plan more accurately for your Meal Marathon. If your group has committed to raise $2,000, COTN knows to prepare for your group to package 8,000 meals (and will prepare a bit more in case you exceed your goal). Remember, 10 people can package 1,000 meals every hour!

You will need to sign up for packaging the food months before and turn in the money raised one month before the Meal Marathon so COTN can prepare for the event!

Famine Feast: Overview

At the end of your four-week Hunger Experience, your youth group will get together for a banquet called the Famine Feast. The purpose of the Famine Feast is to let your students experience hunger and the realities of living in a third-world country. They will then have a chance to hear about what God is doing in Africa and the Dominican Republic. Like the rest of the Hunger Experience, you are encouraged to be creative and make this Famine Feast your own.

When students arrive, they will draw tickets at random that assign them each to a high-, middle-, or low-income tier. Those in the high-income tier should receive preferential treatment throughout the event. Each tier receives a distinctly different meal. The 5% in the high-income tier are served a scrumptious meal. The 35% in the middle-income tier eat a simple meal. The 60% in the low-income tier get only small portions of basic foods. For example, a low-income student might eat only a small portion of rice with a cup of water; a middle-income student could have a larger portion of rice, a scoop of beans, and perhaps a tortilla with their cup of water; and a high-income student could receive a hearty meal of rice, beans, a tortilla, salad, and maybe even meat with a soda or juice to drink. If you choose, students can receive character cards that describe the situation of specific people at the income level to which they have been assigned (you need to
create them).

Seating arrangements will be segregated by income level, as well. High-income students will sit at nice tables—possibly being served their meal by staff—while the low income students will sit on the floor, or even outside. Interaction is allowed, but only from the top down: a higher-income student may approach lower-income students, but not the other way around.

After the students eat, the Youth Pastor and/or COTN representative will speak, and the students should have an opportunity to share their thoughts on the experiences they have had over the last month, especially the experience of this meal. Then, please show the Children of the Nations DVD, which explains how COTN is fighting the problem of hunger in Africa and the Dominican Republic and how the students can help. After that, please encourage your students to participate in your upcoming Meal Marathon.

**Famine Feast: Planning**

**Volunteers**

In order for your event to run successfully, you will need some help. It is useful to have a team of people to assist you in the three main aspects of planning and running this event: food, facilities, and hosting.

The *Food Coordinator* should be in charge of acquiring food and building a team of people to cook and serve the food at the Famine Feast. It is the Food Coordinator’s responsibility to try to get the food in an inexpensive manner, e.g. addressing the church congregation for assistance or asking local stores for donations. The church should be encouraged to support the youth group by participating.

The *Facilities Coordinator* will reserve a venue for the banquet. Even groups who hold the banquet in their own church often need to reserve the space and request permission for the use of the kitchen, sound system, projectors, tables, or other equipment they may need during their event. The Facilities Coordinator should be responsible for making sure you have everything necessary for your Famine Feast. Do not forget to plan ahead and have someone present who is familiar with the sound system and projector.

The *Event Host* (who could be the same person as the Facilities Coordinator) will be in charge of organizing volunteers to set up beforehand, to greet and orient students, and to clean up afterward. In greeting and orientation, volunteers will set the tone for the evening, so it is important that the Event Host ensure they are well-informed about their roles. The money should have already been collected one month before the Meal Marathon and sent to COTN’s Feeding Department so that the necessary food packaging supplies could be purchased. The total amount raised should be announced again at the end of the event. To
ensure smooth operation of this event, the Event Host will also oversee the Food Coordinator during the event, assigning additional volunteers to work with food or help clean up as necessary.

**Food**

As previously stated, it is important to find inexpensive sources of food for the Famine Feast. The Food Coordinator is in charge of acquiring the food and volunteers to prepare and serve it. Thought should be taken for the timing of the preparation, as well as means to keep the food hot before serving. The food should not be visible to students when they arrive, as they should have no prior knowledge of the segregation that will take place. Suggestions for menu items can be found in the preceding Famine Feast: Overview section, but you can make variations to the menu as you wish. The percentages (5% high, 35% middle, and 60% low) for the income tiers are based on real-world income division.

**Master of Ceremonies**

The Youth Pastor can function as a Master of Ceremonies (MC) for the Famine Feast, but this role may alternatively be played by a volunteer. The MC’s role is to set the tone for the evening, aiming to please the high-income crowd while (barely) tolerating the low-income masses. The MC can greet students, give directions about seating and food service, make announcements, or even provide actual entertainment. You are encouraged to be creative and make the Famine Feast your own. However, it is critical that the MC get the students involved and encourage them to participate during the sharing session (when the MC should no longer show favoritism), as their thoughts and reactions at this stage form the essential core of the Hunger Experience.

**The Meal Marathon**

**Thinking About Your Meal Marathon**

The Hunger Experience is meant to get students excited about stepping out to serve those who hunger. The Hunger Experience culminates in the Famine Feast, but it does not end there! The program is designed to be followed shortly by a Meal Marathon, so students have an opportunity for hands-on service while the Hunger Experience is still fresh in their minds.

As stated on page one, there are two responsibilities for participants in the Meal Marathon. First, they must raise funds to cover the cost of the food. Each meal costs twenty-five cents, so $100 will cover 400
meals! The funds raised during your time of fasting and announced at your Famine Feast go directly toward your Marathon. The total should be reported to Children of the Nations one month before the Meal Marathon so that an accurate amount of foodstuffs can be acquired for packaging—the second responsibility of participants.

The meals are packaged by participants on the day of the Meal Marathon. Be sure to coordinate with the COTN Feeding Department when setting a time and place for the event. Plan it well in advance, and give students and their families plenty of notice to ensure as many as possible will attend. A great idea is to have a sign-up sheet available at all of your regular youth group meetings during the Hunger Experience, as well as at the Famine Feast. If students’ families or other church or community members wish to help package meals (or provide funds in order to package more), COTN would welcome their partnership, but this is your event. It is up to your discretion whether or not to allow participants from outside your youth group.

**Hunger Statistics**

- There is enough food in the world today for everyone to have the nourishment necessary for a healthy and productive life.

- “Under-nourishment” is used to describe the status of people whose food intake does not include enough calories (energy) to meet minimum physiological needs for an active life. At present, there are above 1 billion undernourished people worldwide, most of them in developing countries.

- “Malnutrition” means “badly nourished” and is characterized by inadequate intake of protein, energy, and micronutrients and by frequent infections and diseases. Starved of the right nutrition, people will die from common infections like measles or diarrhea. Malnutrition is measured not by how much food is eaten but by physical measurements of the body—weight or height—and age.

- “Wasting” is an indicator of acute malnutrition that reflects a recent and severe process that has led to substantial weight loss. This is usually the result of starvation and/or disease.

- “Stunting” is an indicator of chronic malnutrition that reflects the long-term nutritional situation of a population. It is calculated by comparing the height-for-age of a child with a reference population of well-nourished and healthy children.

- “Underweight” is measured by comparing the weight-for-age of a child with a reference population of well-nourished and healthy children. An estimated 146 million children in developing countries are underweight.

- 1.02 billion people do not have enough to eat—more than the populations of USA, Canada, and the European Union.
• The number of under-nourished people in the world increased by 75 million in 2007 and 40 million in 2008, largely due to higher food prices.

• 907 million people in developing countries alone are hungry.

• More than 60% of chronically hungry people are women.

• 10.9 million children under five die in developing countries each year. Malnutrition and hunger-related diseases cause 60% of the deaths.

• The cost of under-nutrition to national economic development is estimated at $20–30 billion per annum.

• One out of four children—roughly 146 million—in developing countries are underweight.

• It is estimated that 684,000 child deaths worldwide could be prevented by increasing access to vitamin A and zinc.

• Under-nutrition contributes to 53% of the 9.7 million deaths of children under five each year in developing countries. This means that one child dies every six seconds from malnutrition and related causes.

• Lack of Vitamin A kills a million infants a year.

• Iron deficiency is the most prevalent form of malnutrition worldwide, affecting an estimated 2 billion people. Eradicating iron deficiency can improve national productivity levels by as much as 20%.

• Iron deficiency is impairing the mental development of 40–60% of children in developing countries.

• Vitamin A deficiency affects approximately 25% of the developing world’s preschoolers. It is associated with blindness, susceptibility to disease, and higher mortality rates. It leads to the deaths of approximately 1–3 million children each year.

• Iodine deficiency is the greatest single cause of mental retardation and brain damage. Worldwide, 1.9 billion people are at risk of iodine deficiency, which can easily be prevented by adding iodine to salt.

All statistics taken from the World Food Programme, an agency of the United Nations (www.wfp.org).
## Famine Feast: Sample Timeline

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<tr>
<th>Timing</th>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Coordinator</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5-8 weeks before</td>
<td>Set a date for the Famine Feast and contact COTN Representative</td>
<td>Youth Pastor</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reserve a venue (and equipment)</td>
<td>Facilities Coordinator</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Seek out food donations</td>
<td>Food Coordinator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2–4 weeks before</td>
<td>Determine seating arrangements</td>
<td>Facilities Coordinator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Contact volunteers</td>
<td>Event Host/Food Coordinator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Design menu</td>
<td>Food Coordinator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Print and distribute pledge cards</td>
<td>Youth Pastor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 days before</td>
<td>Buy remaining food</td>
<td>Food Coordinator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Check on silverware, appliances</td>
<td>Facilities Coordinator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Make follow up calls for volunteers</td>
<td>Event Host/Food Coordinator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Follow up call to COTN Representative</td>
<td>Youth Pastor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Several hours before</td>
<td>Orient volunteers</td>
<td>Event Host</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Set up and decorate room</td>
<td>Facilities Coordinator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Coordinate and prepare food</td>
<td>Food Coordinator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Greet students and hand out tickets</td>
<td>Event Host</td>
</tr>
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Famine Feast: Sample Program

4:00 – 6:00  Volunteers arrive
Event Host orients and directs volunteers
Volunteers set up and decorate venue
Food is prepared by Food Coordinator and Volunteers
Pastor leads prayer for successful event

6:00 – 6:15  Event Host, Volunteers, and MC greet students and distribute character cards
Event Host collects pledge cards and money and delegates counting duties
Volunteers direct students to their income groups

6:15 – 6:20  MC welcomes everybody and leads the group in prayer
MC gives signal for dinner and explains how the segregation works
Food Coordinator and Volunteers bring in food and serve

6:20 – 6:35  Students receive food and eat

6:35 – 6:50  Youth Pastor speaks, then asks for a moment of silence

6:50 – 7:05  MC leads students in a discussion of their feelings and reactions to the event

7:05 – 7:15  COTN video is shown

7:15 – 7:30  Youth Pastor talks about the upcoming Meal Marathon
Total pledge money announced
Students may eat more if food is available
Famine Feast: Sample Layout

Podium/Stage

High-Income Tables

Middle-Income Chairs

Low-Income Guests
Floor seating. Avoid obstructing their view with chairs or tables.

Middle-Income Serving Station

Entrance/Character Card Distribution

Low-Income Serving Station
Hunger Experience Pledge Card: Church Copy

Donor Name ___________________________ Phone __________________

Donor Address ________________________________ State ______ ZIP ______

$____ per hour

Student Name _____________________________

X____ hours Donor Signature __________________ Pledge Collected

$_______ Total Pledge Please pay by cash or check. Please consider paying in advance to aid in the collection process.

Keep this card to contact donors who choose to hold their pledges until after your time of fasting.

Pledge Card: Student Copy

Donor Name _____________________________

Donor Phone _____________________________ Pledge Total $______

□ Pledge Collected

Keep this card to contact donors who choose to hold their pledges until after your time of fasting.