



Together at Table

Learning to Slow Down and Eat Prayerfully

“When we pause to consider the food in front of us, we recognize the connection between faith and health.”



How to Eat Prayerfully

Download and print a table tent to guide you through a prayerful meal.

PorticoBenefits.org/wellness

Too often, we eat when we're not hungry. We eat when we feel angry, disappointed, anxious, stressed, bored. We use food as a reward. We eat on the run, behind the steering wheel, at the computer or TV. We look for quick fixes to feed our family in a hurry. We overlook healthy food groups. We forget the role food plays in our lives – nourishment for energy, growth, and renewal.

Slowing down and eating prayerfully invites gratitude – to God, creation, and all who had a role in bringing the meal to your table. Chewing your food slowly and completely supports digestion. Pausing between bites and eating until satisfied instead of full helps you feel relaxed and content. By learning to listen to your body's messages, you can be satisfied with less and potentially even experience weight loss.

When I first introduced prayerful meals to a group of rostered leaders, they grasped the concept quickly. Participants encouraged one another to slow down, pause, and set down their fork between bites. They remarked on how prayerful eating helped them savor the meal and fellowship with those gathered at the table.

Prayerful eating can also lead to new discoveries. One pastor said, “I found out I didn't really like gravy and wondered why I had been masking the flavors of potato and meat all these years.” Another shared that he was raised with the clean plate mentality and was surprised to learn that he was usually full before his plate was empty.

When we pause to consider the food in front of us, we recognize the connection between faith and health. Eating prayerfully stirs us to give thanks, enter into conversation about the day's happenings, and notice where God was present. It opens our hearts to self-compassion and self-acceptance, helping us stop unhealthy patterns of wishing we were different. It is a small step that – when practiced over time – can become a habit that helps us live well as whole people of God.

That it may be well with you!

Tammy Devine, Diaconal Minister
and ELCA Wellness Manager

livewell@PorticoBenefits.org