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Interfaith group comes together to fight hunger in the Treasure Valley

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A book inspired people from a variety of faiths to gather Sunday and strategize about stemming hunger in the Treasure Valley.

OrganizerCarolyn Pietz, who is a member of the King of Glory Lutheran Church in Boise, said more and more people at her church were reading the book, meeting, and realizing that food issues have a wider application outside their own congregation.

In "Take this Bread: A Radical Conversion," author Sara Miles writes about opening a food pantry in her San Francisco neighborhood. So King of Glory Lutheran fans of the book reached out to other faith communities to work together to make Sunday's event possible.

Before attendees break into separate workshops of their choice on organizing food banks, free meal programs, community gardens, the frustrations and challenges of food distribution, storage and more, local representatives from the Treasure Valley's Jewish, Christian and Muslim faiths will speak on their own traditions of supporting their communities, Pietz said.

"Christianity, Judaism, Islam are faiths that grew out of the desert. Hospitality to strangers and the protection of the vulnerable are points of commonality between the faiths that lead to practical work," she said.

As an example of practical work, one of the workshops will focus on training hunger-prevention advocates to go to food pantries and to the free meals offered at churches and shelters to educate clients about other resources in the community.

"Lots of people want to help, and serve, but may not have a way to hook into the groups that are fighting hunger," she said.

Delmer Blades, president of the Freedom Resource Center, a group that helps distribute food to the needy throughout Southern Idaho, is among the conference participants.

"Faith-based programs have always been the backbones of supporting the community," Blades said. Bringing them together to look at hunger issues will mean more shared resources.

"That's the whole heart of doing this kind of work. You don't look to race or religion, or anything else. We have people who pull up to our food bank driving a nice car."

What critics don't realize, Blades said, is that that person may be living in that car.

"You have to look beyond what you see with your eyes, and respond with your heart."

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