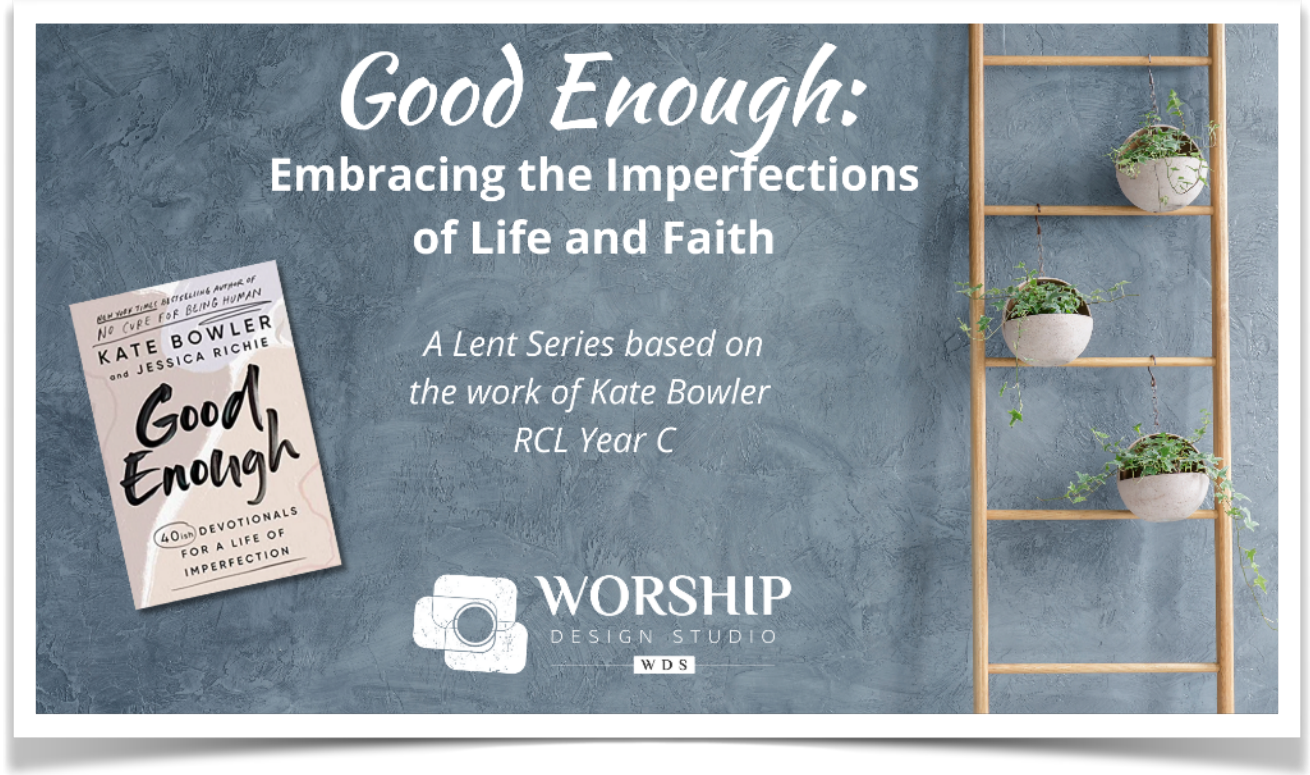


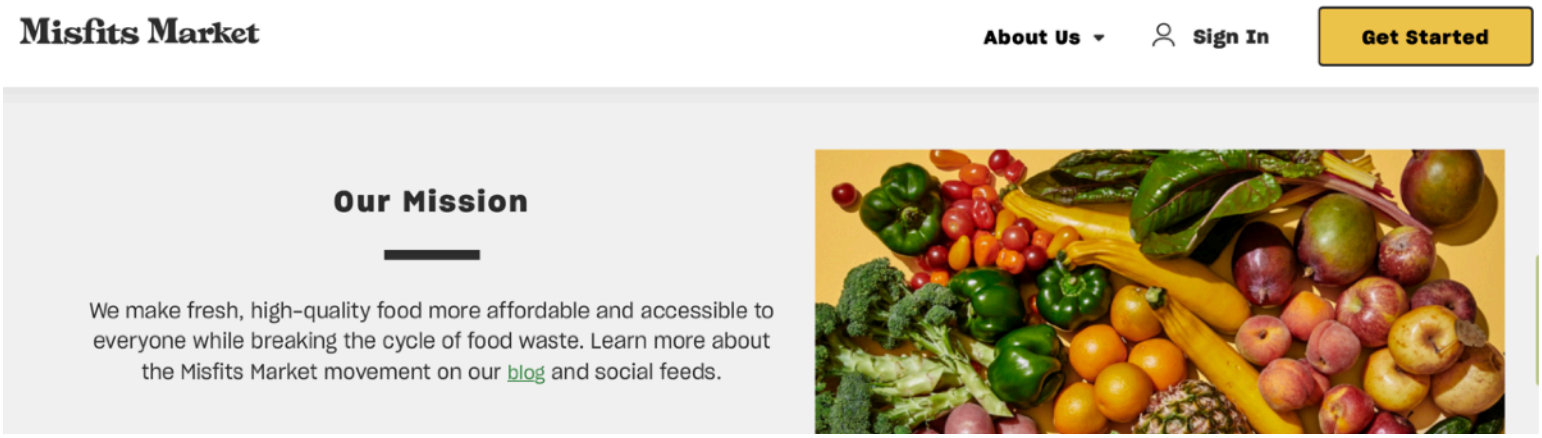
Sustaining Our World by Celebrating Imperfection

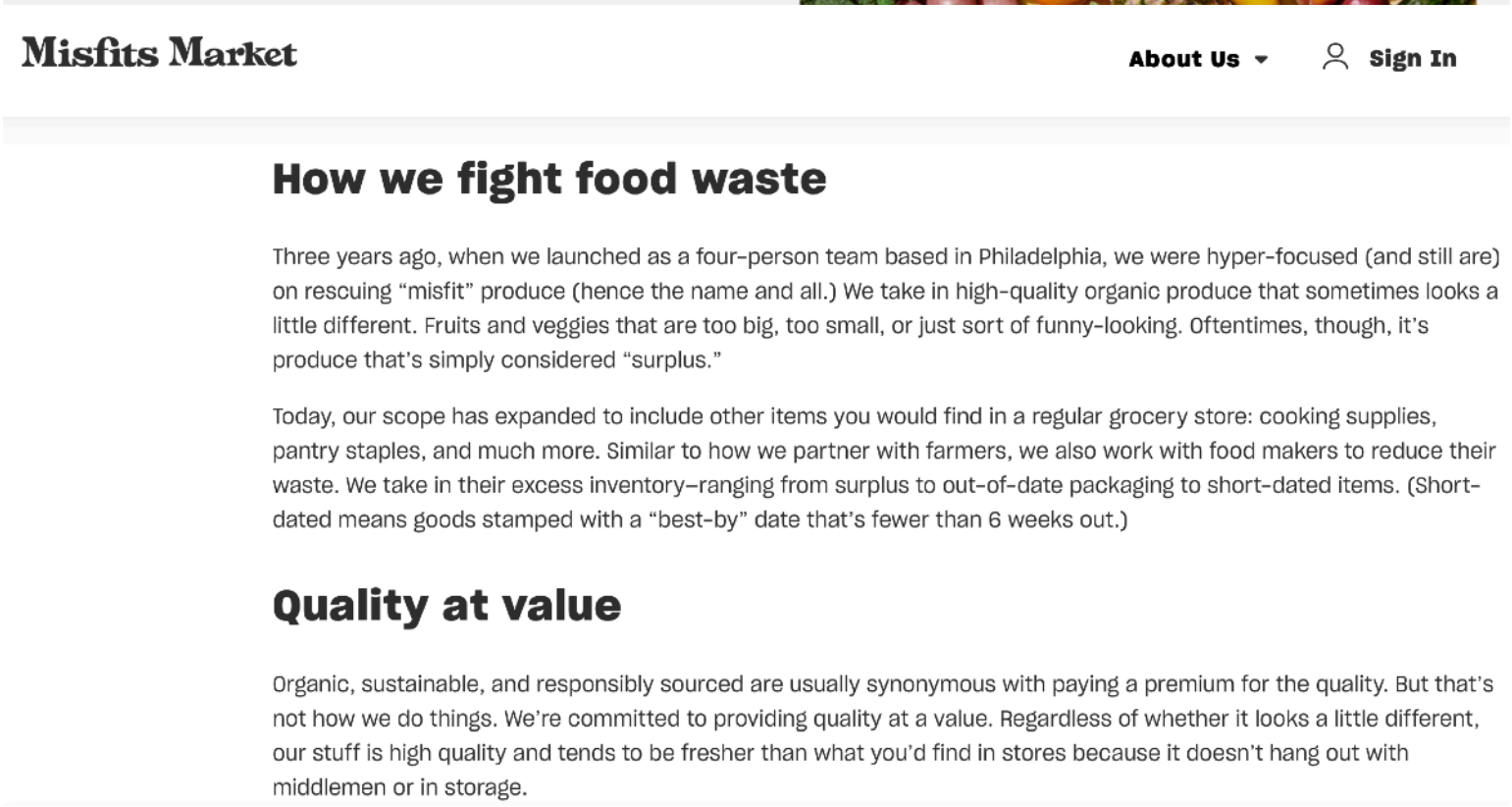
Stop focusing on what's wrong.

Yeah, right. Like "don't think of the color blue." We've become so accustomed to rejecting imperfection — from the produce we buy at the store to the penchant for needing "this year's" fashions (well, some of us — I pretty much hate shopping for clothes). But what if we stopped focusing on what's "not right?" This series theme has got me looking at how wasteful we've become as a society in the relentless pursuit of the "new" and "perfect." So I went looking for ways to raise our consciousness during Lent to embrace imperfection while also helping our environment and each other.

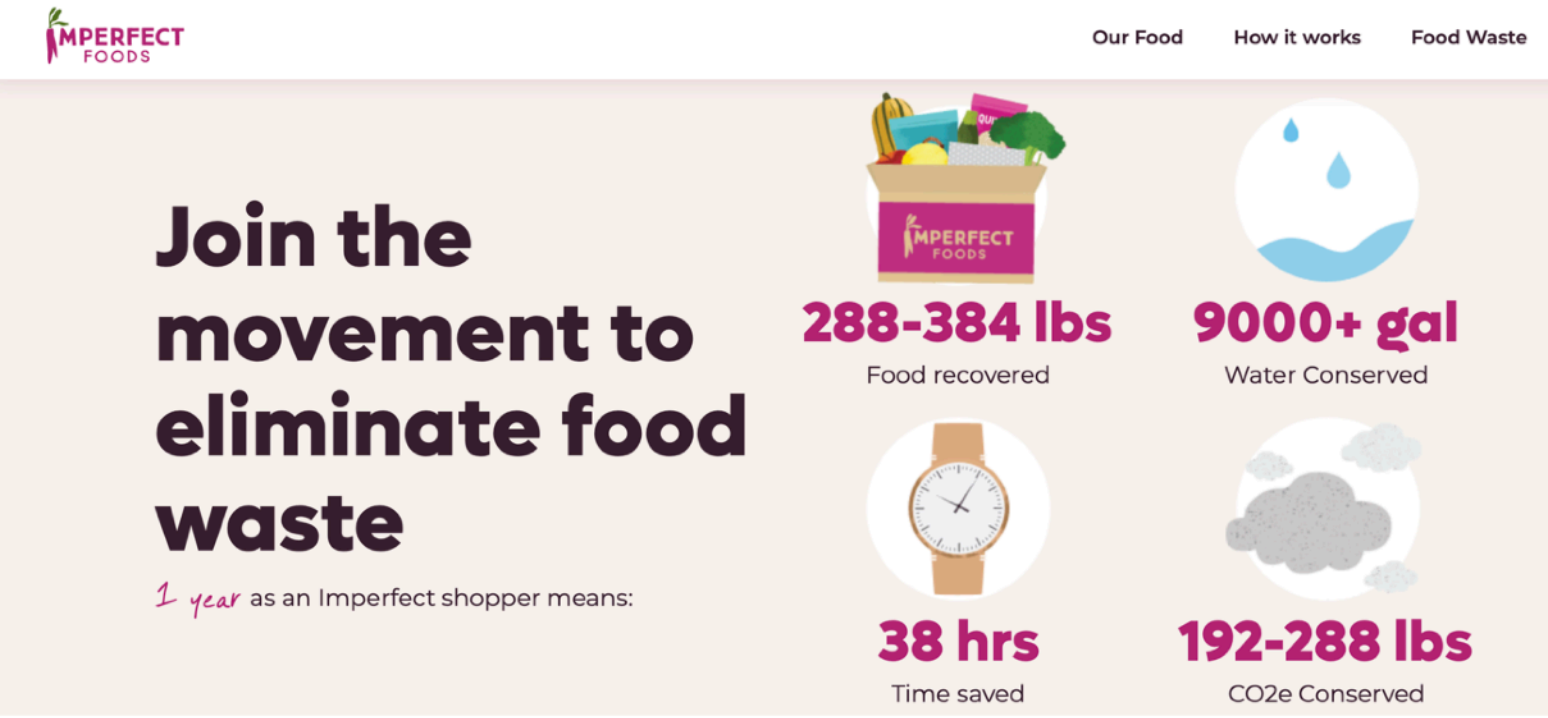
Food

At the grocery store, we often try to select produce that is free from bruises, protrusions, or discoloration. Even before reaching the shelves, food goes through a rigorous inspection process that rejects specimens that have been deemed too “ugly” for display. This filtering process results in a huge amount of food being wasted because of aesthetics. But operations like Misfits Market and Imperfect Foods are working to change that.





Check out this article about how Imperfect Foods is working toward a more sustainable model of grocery delivery.



More Ideas for Sustainable Ministry

- Does your church have a food pantry ministry? If not, are there any food distribution organizations in your local community who are looking for partnerships to advance their outreach and sustain operations? This series would be a perfect opportunity to consider how your church can help alleviate food access barriers in your area.
- Challenge your congregation to adopt a “zero food waste” practice in their own homes for the duration of Lent. This could be an eye-opening spiritual practice for some.

Clothing

There's a spectrum of sustainability when it comes to clothing. Some folks have a higher tolerance for worn and faded clothing or outdated fashion than others. Invite your congregation to think about how often they purchase new clothes, how long items stay in their possession, and what happens to clothes that are eventually purged from closets and drawers. It may be a meaningful challenge for some folks to not purchase any new clothes during Lent as a spiritual practice.

Websites like Poshmark and ThredUP look provide opportunities for online thrift shopping (disclaimer: we haven't tested either of these, but they look like great ways to shop online for used clothing!).

More Ideas for Sustainable Ministry

- While hemming a skirt, sewing on a patch, repairing a hole, or replacing a button may be an easy task for some folks, not everyone has those skills or the materials necessary to make simple repairs that could extend the life of their clothing. If you have a few people in your congregation who love to sew and love to be of service, maybe they would be willing to offer their services to anyone in the community who needs help with some minor clothing adjustments! Perhaps you could even take it a step further and start an educational small group or host workshops at your church to teach people how to learn these skills.
- Have you ever hosted a church-wide garage sale? This can be a wonderful way to ignite your community's spirit of giving (and spring cleaning). The proceeds from the garage sale could be put towards supporting a ministry project. (*Note from Jenna: One of my old churches held a community garage sale annually and used the funds to support various ministry outreach efforts!*)

Shelter

What do you do when a household appliance or piece of furniture breaks? Many household appliances are manufactured to be intentionally difficult to repair without replacing the product entirely, but with a little research and elbow grease, you can salvage many broken items and give them new life.

Pinterest has tons of ideas for upcycling old doors, tables, dressers, couches, you name it! Refurbishing damaged or un-stylish furniture can be fun and rewarding as well as ethical for the environment.



Habitat for Humanity is one organization that has been around for a long time and is very committed to creating affordable housing opportunities all over the world. Here is a great page to learn more about how your church can participate.

More Ideas for Sustainable Ministry

- Are there folks in your congregation who know their way around the wood shop and love to be of service? Perhaps you could offer a furniture restoration workshop and teach folks how to make some simple, manageable repairs to broken furniture.
- How does your church offer support to people with insecure housing in your local community? This could be a good time to examine your ministry offerings for the homeless and perhaps commit to expanding your program by collecting donations that help refugees or newly re-housed persons in your community.

