

# Planning and Resource Guide

FOR 2021



**One Great  
HOUR**  
OF SHARING

 UNITED CHURCH  
OF CHRIST

[www.ucc.org/oghs\\_resources](http://www.ucc.org/oghs_resources)

A MESSAGE FROM YOUR

# Associate General Minister for Wider Church Ministries

The theme for the 2021 One Great Hour of Sharing (OGHS) offering is **“Let Love Flow.”**

When you share your gifts to OGHS, you Let Love Flow. Your generosity ensures that, even in the midst of uncertainty, the transforming power of love will continue to change the lives of those who are most vulnerable among us.



The COVID-19 pandemic has laid bare structural inequities that contribute to increased poverty and injustice. On full display is the plight of the working poor who have lost jobs, are on the brink of homelessness, and are waiting for hours in

long lines at food pantries.

Deadly wildfires, hurricanes, earthquakes, floods, and wars have left people homeless, families grieving loss of loved ones and entire communities awaiting assistance for long term disaster recovery.

Refugees and asylum seekers are left in limbo, languishing at borders waiting for welcome. Many have been displaced by economic conditions, war and climate change. Among the millions of refugees are families looking for safe places that they can call home.

In the midst of these despairing moments, the United Church of Christ is able to offer hope as we stand in solidarity and mutuality with communities suffering and in need. Through Wider Church Ministries, the United Church of Christ fulfills its commitment to respond to a variety of global and local concerns by providing advocacy, sustainable development resources, long term disaster recovery support, and assistance for refugee and asylum seekers, working in collaboration with our partners locally and globally.

Sandra, a Congolese refugee, was welcomed and resettled in 2018. She is one of more than a dozen refugee women using skills she learned in RefugeeOne’s Sewing Studio to make face masks as a way of giving back to the place she now calls home.

RefugeeOne is one of the partners engaged in refugee and sustainable development programs supported by your generous donations to *One Great Hour of Sharing*.

“  
*Nobody hungry, nobody thirsty,  
shade from the sun, shelter from  
the wind, For the Compassionate  
One guides them, takes them to the  
best springs.”*

(Isaiah 49:10 MSG)

With your gifts to *One Great Hour of Sharing*, we are able to be present for the long term in disaster recovery, as we partner with churches and organizations around the world to walk with families as they rebuild their homes and lives.

Thank you for your gifts to *One Great Hour of Sharing*, as together we build a just world for all.

*With Gratitude and Hope,*  
Rev. Dr. Karen Georgia Thompson  
AGM, Wider Church Ministries  
and Co-Executive Global Ministries

# Promoting the Offering

**This year, instead of sending bulk resources, every congregation received a sample packet, anticipating that many churches might not be back in their sanctuaries.** All resources are available online at [www.ucc.org/oghs\\_resources](http://www.ucc.org/oghs_resources). A small quantity of offering envelopes and bulletin inserts have been printed, and can be ordered online at no charge: [www.uccresources.com](http://www.uccresources.com).

You can be confident that all the materials you use to promote the offering are available, and more. Find videos, templates, and great images that tell the story of the lives, communities and people positively impacted by One Great Hour of Sharing.

To make the One Great Hour of Sharing offering part of your congregation's outreach this year, here are five simple steps that may be helpful to follow:

- ▶ Set a date for the offering and announce it to the church along with a goal.
- ▶ Make a big deal about the offering—hang the poster in a prominent place or remember to use it in your slides in the weeks approaching the offering date.
- ▶ During worship, share stories and videos you can download for free. Templates are available that you can easily paste into your presentation. Your members may be excited to learn more about what their gifts make possible.
- ▶ Thank everyone for participating in the offering. You may want to announce how much was raised. If you set a goal, create a slide to show everyone whether you reached it, or if there is a little way to go. All promotional resources are available on the website [ucc.org/oghs\\_resources](http://ucc.org/oghs_resources) and were created for your use. No permissions required.
- ▶ Donations should be mailed to your UCC Conference Office, check [https://www.ucc.org/about-us\\_conference](https://www.ucc.org/about-us_conference) for address. Please clearly mark that the gift is for the OGHS Offering (Immediate Spending) or OGHS Endowment Fund (Legacy Gifts).



In addition to Our Church's Wider Mission (Basic Support), the United Church of Christ has 4 Special Mission Offerings (SMOs). These offerings exist to allow congregations and individuals to meet people at points of critical need in their lives. Though many options exist for direct, individual support of these needs, the SMOs allow a common witness and make a collective positive impact. Our church has identified four areas where these critical human needs exist:

- ▶ **One Great Hour of Sharing**—in places lacking health and educational resources and/or where disaster has struck;
- ▶ **Neighbors in Need**—within systems of injustice which oppress daily life and opportunity;
- ▶ **Strengthen the Church**—in the nurture of youth and congregations just beginning their lives of faith;
- ▶ **The Christmas Fund**—in the lives of church leaders without sufficient resources to live with dignity;

We believe these SMOs collectively serve to lift people closer to the abundance and wholeness to which Jesus Christ has called us to work together to bring about. Join the other 1,000 churches that have made the decision to become 5 for 5 congregations, supporting OCWM and all four of the Special Mission Offerings.

# Scripture

Isaiah 49:8–12 (The Message translation)

**God also says:**

“When the time’s ripe, I answer you.

When victory’s due, I help you.

I form you and use you

to reconnect the people with me,

To put the land in order,

to resettle families on the ruined properties.

I tell prisoners, ‘Come on out. You’re free!’

and those huddled in fear, ‘It’s all right. It’s safe now.’

There’ll be food stands along all the roads,

picnics on all the hills—

**Nobody hungry, nobody thirsty,  
shade from the sun, shelter from the wind,  
For the Compassionate One guides them,  
takes them to the best springs.<sup>1</sup>**

I’ll make all my mountains into roads,

turn them into a superhighway.

Look: These coming from far countries,

and those, out of the north,

These streaming in from the west,

and those from all the way down the Nile!”

<sup>1</sup>Peterson, Eugene. *The Message: The Bible in Contemporary Language*. NavPress; Colorado Springs, CO. 2005.

# Theme Interpretation

**During the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic, it became clear that many of the western world constructs intended to create a sense of safety had actually created a false sense of security.** In a global crisis, we were faced with a danger that defied our usual protective hedges. While some were made more vulnerable by economic and geographical factors, everyone was affected by the virus.

As it turns out, lines on a map don't stop the spread of disease; a pandemic does not recognize human-made boundaries. Whether we like it or not, our lives are deeply intertwined. Our well-being is bound, inextricably, to that of neighbors close to home, and those halfway around the world.

The sooner we recognize that human codependency, the better we are able to *let love flow*—generously and indiscriminately—to those who need it most.

When water comes to a village, everything changes. It touches every area of life—literally and figuratively! Having clean water closeby means that women in Nicaragua don't have to spend their whole day walking to the source, so they might have other opportunities for learning or vocational growth. Children in Kenya no longer spend their days carrying heavy buckets, so they can go to school instead.

Improved sanitation slows the spread of disease, so there is less preventable illness. Crops thrive in Vietnam, meaning that food security and nutrition improve in the whole community. Families can spend more time together. People of all ages around the world are empowered to provide for their families today, while also planning for the future of their communities.

*continued*



Isaiah 49:8-12 articulates a stunning vision for a world of justice and equity; a world where everyone has enough, and all live in safety and abundance. It is also a vision for a world of *interconnectedness*. In this vision, what is good for you is also good for your neighbor; what is good for one country is good for the whole world; and what harms any one of us harms us all.

In order to help bring about that more just, abundant vision for humanity, One Great Hour of Sharing supports projects around the world that create opportunity and empower communities. Through global partnerships, your offerings promote food security; enable health and wellness programs; support education and vocational training; and of course—provide access to clean, safe water.

Water, after all, is life.

*In many ways, our world was not prepared for the weight of the COVID-19 pandemic. But because of your past generosity through One Great Hour of Sharing, many communities were better prepared to meet the challenges presented by COVID-19. Through the projects that you've supported in the past, more people were equipped for the crisis with improved sanitation; access to clean, safe water for handwashing; and were empowered to prevent the spread of disease among their family and neighbors.*

*And when you continue to give generously, you continue to give life—in the form of water and so much more—to people in need around the world. You continue to build on the dream of a world in which there is no thirst, no hunger, no suffering... just the abundance of life in a living stream.*

But you aren't just sharing water. . . when you share what God has given, you "**let love flow**." That love crosses all sorts of spaces and dividing lines, knitting together a better human story, and bringing the Kingdom of God about in our time.

When you give to One Great Hour of Sharing, you support water and other sustainable development projects all over the world. When you "**let love flow**," lives are not just saved—they are transformed.

**Nobody hungry, nobody thirsty,  
shade from the sun, shelter from the wind,  
For the Compassionate One guides them,  
takes them to the best springs.**



**Water,  
after all, is  
life.**

That Kingdom kind of vision runs through the work that we share in together through One Great Hour of Sharing—much like the stream that runs through Isaiah's Kingdom vision. Human-made constructs of one sort or another too often hinder human thriving, shoring up resources for some while leaving many to suffer. A world built on that sort of imbalance is counter to God's dream for creation.

# Sermon Starter

**Picture your church's mission impact as a stream.** Where does it go? What path does it take as you commission members, resources and the embodied words of the gospel to go out into the world? Whose lives are touched by that stream?

In Isaiah, God says *"I'll make all my mountains into roads, turn them into a superhighway."* How does the mission stream that flows from your congregation shape the landscape as it makes its path through the world?

The people of Israel found themselves exiles in a strange land when Jerusalem was conquered by Babylon. Now, the Babylonians themselves have been conquered by Persia and Cyrus the Great.<sup>1</sup> The prophet speaks to the people after Babylon has fallen (sometime around 586–539 BCE). On the surface, it is a heavy time of war, poverty and devastation.

But in spite of that devastation, it is also a time of restoration. This new generation of wanderers might be allowed, finally, to return home; to reclaim their land, rebuild their homes, even restore their Temple. All the while, the prophet assures Israel that their covenant with God has never been broken—even as their structures and institutions crumbled, God remained with the people.

One critical part of that covenant is that *Israel's responsibilities extend beyond its own people*—God has called them to care more widely for the nations of the earth; to show compassion and mercy as an expression of covenant living.<sup>2</sup> This was part of their identity as God's people before the exile, and remains true at their core as they move into a season of renewal. Even—maybe especially—in a time of upheaval, they are called to be people who live outside of themselves.

Isaiah 49:10 conveys a powerful vision for creation; it's a vision that will be brought to life by these people of covenant and restoration. To be in covenant means to be "a powerful agent and partner in the practice of loyal solidarity that makes a new future possible."<sup>3</sup> In this moment, God is inviting them to step into their role as a community that will *let love flow* in new and innovative ways.

Folk-country supergroup "The Highwomen" released their album by the same name in fall of 2019. But one of the album's tunes took on new life in the early weeks of the COVID-19 crisis. "A Crowded Table" emerged as an anthem of the social-distancing era. You may have even seen it on a Campbell's soup commercial! One verse goes:

*If we want a garden, we're gonna have to sow the seed  
Plant a little happiness, let the roots run deep;  
If it's love that we give, then it's love that we reap  
If we want a garden, we're gonna have to sow the seed...<sup>4</sup>*

That's the same Kingdom kind of vision at the heart of the text; a world in which "everyone's a little broken, but everyone belongs. . .," as one line of the song's bridge affirms. Covenant people are those who recognize that love is what we reap—but only if we first sow it. Only if we release it from our grasp, sending it out to transform the world around us.

When you give generously through OGHS, you *let love flow*. You empower families and communities around the world to live healthier, safer, more hope-filled lives. And ultimately, you build a world that honors the interconnectedness of all God's people.

In this time when all of life has been touched by the effects of the pandemic, we are called to be people of restoration; releasing love into the world in new and innovative ways that answer the unique needs of this season. As the body of Christ in the world, the Church of today puts flesh on this vision: a world shaped by love's movement from one place to another.

The Body of Christ today transforms everything it touches—much like the body of water at the heart of Isaiah's vision for humankind. So take your congregation on a journey downstream: maybe with pictures; maybe using visualization; maybe even setting up worship stations to explore different expressions of mission life. Dive into questions—maybe even celebrations!—about your collective impact. Start with lives inside your own congregation, then look at your local community. And then—follow that stream all the way to Nicaragua; to Kenya; to Vietnam, and all of the other places where your One Great Hour of Sharing gifts are at work.

You are part of a living stream that changes lives as water reaches all who are thirsty.

If your church is a body of water, where does it go? Who does it touch? How does it carve a path and change the shape of the world it flows through?

Of course, every body of water has one thing in common: a source. That source is not your sanctuary, your fellowship hall, or your charter. It is the love of God, made known in Christ and community. When you unleash that power and let love flow, miraculous things happen in the wake of that stream. What stories of new life might be possible when the gifts of your members are set on a course to flow through the world?

<sup>1</sup> Hansen, Paul D. *Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching Isaiah 40–66*. John Knox Press, Louisville, KY, 1995. Pgs. 1–3

<sup>2</sup> Hansen, Paul D. *Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching Isaiah 40–66*. John Knox Press, Louisville, KY, 1995. Pgs. 130–132

<sup>3</sup> Brueggemann, Walter. *Isaiah (Westminster Bible Companion) (Volume 2, Chapters 40–66)*. Fourth Impression, Westminster John Knox Press, 1998. Pgs. 113–114

<sup>4</sup> McKenna, Lori; Hemby, Natalie Nicole; Carlile, Brandi. "Crowded Table." *The Highwomen*, Elektra Records, 2019.

# OGHS Worship Resources

Written by Kent Gilbert—*Lead Pastor, Union Church, Berea Kentucky*

## Call to Worship

One: We are yearning for the day. . .

**All: The day of God's hope made real!  
The day when nobody is hungry, nobody thirsty!  
The day of God's Love flowing freely!**

One: Shade from Sun and Shelter from the Wind,  
The Compassionate One guides us to the springs of  
living water in the Word and in mighty deeds!

**All: Let us worship our God and Let Love Flow!**

## Opening Prayer

Source of Love-Made-Flesh, we stream to you from East and West seeking the right and holding on to the holy. Settle us body and soul in the land of hope your prophets proclaimed. Free our hearts and minds to hear anew the call to compassion, the challenge of community, the needs of our neighbors. Call to us in this One Great Hour that we may gather in Spirit and in Truth and be changed. Seated and settled now, this we pray in Jesus' name: Amen.



## Prayer of Confession

God of grace and abundance: we confess that we have stored up the blessings meant for all, and kept them too close. We have pretended that we have done enough for our neighbors, when still we see their need. For the ways in which we ruin relationships through neglect, and for the ways we obstruct the love you would let flow for all, we ask your forgiveness and a new way to live. Transform our hearts so that our actions may follow. In our abundance, free us from the fear of scarcity, and open our hands to heal your people and your land. Set our feet on new paths and guide us to the up-welling spring of your grace. In Christ's name we pray. Amen.

## Words of Assurance

One: Friends, believe this good news: nothing can dam the waters of God's love. The Compassionate One guides us and will shelter us from the winds of recrimination. God's mercy frees us to make our broken places whole, reconnecting us to a higher call and new life. Love flows to us this day, and by God's power we are forgiven!

**All: Thanks be God!**

## Pastoral Prayer

When we have crouched in fear, most holy, loving One, your presence has given us strength. When we have been alone and unsure, you have sent companions and messengers across deserts, across seas, across time itself to remind us that no one is forgotten. When we have hung our heads in despair, you have raised up children, generation after generation, who have proven that with you, all things are possible. We thank you

*continued*



for your unrelenting pursuit of our well-being; for the drops of mercy within us that make great rivers of compassion when we join them together. You immerse us in healing waters, and we are glad. Guide us to take part in shaping a world where all people know such joy. Let hunger end by the open hands of generous hearts. Let none be thirsty, as your love freely flows! Let health be restored to the sick of body, mind or spirit, and in Jesus' name, let us help. We who have known mercy are a people of mercy, strengthened through you and through your Son, Jesus. With a renewed and holy Spirit, we are joyful; we pledge justice; and we will make peace on all of your mountains and plains. May such love flow through all your people, now and always. Amen!

## Litany

*For the litany consider using a table-top fountain to provide the sound of living water. A worship leader could also pour water between two pitchers as the congregation responds. If the service will be online or if you can project images in your worship space, this litany is appropriate for use with a series of images beginning with a single drop and proceeding to a large waterfall, river, or ocean. Using photos or videos of bodies of water near and familiar to your congregation will give depth and power to the meditation.*

One: Almighty God, your compassion washes over your people. People made in your image, yet weak when alone...

**All: Small as drops, but love flows.**

One: And like drops your people gather, seeking the way to you: drops make streams...

**All: Wearing away the stone to let love flow!**

One: Joining in a murmur of praise, the stream unites ...

**All: In ever-flowing current to let love flow!**

One: From the banks of hillside creeks and the streams that irrigate our fields, may our love converge

**All: In a mighty river of mercy to let love flow!**

One: For this we know: drops alone may dry too soon, but drops together are a flood of love!

**All: In this and every hour: Let Love Flow!**

## Invitation to Communion

One: Come to the table where all are made welcome.

**All: Let none hunger or thirst in the presence of our God!**

One: The table is prepared!  
From East and West,  
North and South, come to  
the feast.

**All: The people of God  
gather in thanksgiving  
and praise. Together we  
are made whole. Together we remember Christ's  
life, love, and promise.**

One: Come to the table, friends. All is ready!



## Communion Prayer

God of earth and stars, you breathed on the waters and brought forth life. Like springs in the desert, you sent forth prophets and teachers filled with wisdom to wash over your people. Beside the rivers they preached. With your word they liberated our hearts and helped us cross the divides to your promise. In the fullness of time, you sent Jesus to be our Christ, who offered the water of eternal life to all who would hear. The clear flow of your unending grace washes over us now, and we join in the river of praise and love together with angels and mortals alike:



**[Use a Sanctus appropriate to your tradition or this one as you choose]**

*Holy, holy, holy is the lord God of hosts! Heaven and earth are full of your glory. As the heavens bring rain to water the earth, may your love water our hearts. Blessed is the one who comes in the name of God's love and mercy. Hosanna in the highest!*

## Invitation to Generosity

“Nobody hungry, nobody thirsty” is the hope of God in Isaiah. It is also the hope of this One Great Hour of our Sharing and caring. With the gifts of our hearts, we let love flow, like new well-water to a thirsty village; for crops, for cooking, for life! Let our giving be an upwelling of generosity and may the stream of love bring about God's kin-dom. Our gift is prayer in action. Praise be to God.

## Dedication Prayer

Holy giver of all good gifts, bless now this offering that great hours of labor have made possible. Bless the drops that become mighty rivers of grace and transformation. Bless the vision of a world transformed. Let a shining river of love flow through us to your waiting world, in Christ's name. Amen.

## Benediction

May the Maker of rain and sea, Creator of all, and Giver of life awaken you that you may flourish with sister, brother, and human family.

May Jesus, our brother, redeemer of the lost and hope of the poor, call your name to follow in his footsteps;

And may the Holy Spirit flood you with such love, that you fill with joy all who drink from your well. God's peace is for all and is now with you!

Our worship is over: Let our service begin! Amen.

## MISSION MOMENT | NICARAGUA

# Letting Love Grow in Nicaragua

Imagine not knowing where your next meal will come from. Imagine the constant fear of political unrest. Imagine working hard to produce crops to feed your family and earn a living. Imagine constantly battling the effects of climate change.

Imagine all the obstacles farmers face to get their crops to harvest, and then to market. Then, imagine all these things happening—at once.

In Nicaragua families find it harder to believe that there will come a day when they do not hunger or thirst. For many, food security can seem like an unattainable goal. But through a partnership with many organizations such as: Growing Hope Globally, a respected local organization CIEETS, and Church World Service, the United Church of Christ is helping families to thrive despite such adversity.

René Bermúdez is working hard to ensure that his family has enough to eat and he has a way to earn a living. René is raising stingless Melipona bees, which produce medicinal honey that he can sell. Through the program,



Left: Getting fresh water to locals in Nicaragua; Right, René Bermúdez and his son René Camilo

he learned about poultry raising and has started raising chickens—and now has forty hens that produce eggs, plus another 140 that he is preparing to sell!

Like René, several of the families there have lost several harvests to the effects of climate change. Farmers in their community found that when it rains too much, the crops die from disease or are washed away. When it doesn't rain enough, they dry up. Either way, farmers lose everything.

Your generous gifts through **One Great Hour of Sharing** will help farmers continue to build a sustainable life—without hunger or thirst—as they learn new ways to produce food and income. Please give generously so they will continue to reap the harvest of God's love growing in their communities.



ABOVE: Hanh (right) and her friends wash their hands at school. RIGHT: Vietnamese girls washing their hands in a bowl of water.



## MISSION MOMENT | VIETNAM

# Letting Love Flow Through Springs of Clean Water

The COVID-19 pandemic has taught us many things about what it means to be a global community. One of the most basic things we've been constantly reminded of is the importance of—*washing our hands*—in the battle to prevent infectious disease.

Hanh and her mom live in a poor rural village about 135 miles northwest of Vietnam's capital, Hanoi. Hanh had no idea what a toilet was. Where she lives, people still use fields, bushes, and streams as their bathrooms.

This situation is all too common in many places in rural Vietnam and across southeast Asia.

In September of 2018, latrine and water supply improvements were brought to Hanh's school. Since then, Hanh and her friends have had an exciting time experiencing modern latrines and clean water taps. . . and how these conveniences lead to better hygiene and, ultimately, better health.

When you give to **One Great Hour of Sharing**, you are providing clean water for drinking and sanitation to children like Hanh and her schoolmates. As God's compassion flows through you, your gifts will bring the promise of better health to children. Please give generously to support this important work.

# California church cares for newcomers

Written by Carol Fouke-Mpoyo

**Six days a week, the kitchen at Eden United Church of Christ in Hayward, Calif., is bustling.** Volunteer cooks—primarily asylum-seeking mothers from Mexico and Central America—are using their favorite recipes to prepare hot meals.

The meals are delivered late afternoon to 100 newcomers attending the local public schools and their caregivers. The asylum-seeking youth and their family members who receive food may be living in households under quarantine or in isolation, because someone is recovering from COVID-19 at home.

Many adults being served by Eden’s meal program were working one or more low-wage jobs to cover basic necessities. They lost that work due to the pandemic. Children enrolled in public schools can access free breakfasts and lunches, “but what about dinner, the weekends, school vacations, and what about their families?” asked the Rev. Arlene Nehring, the congregation’s pastor.

To help Eden provide meals, UCC Disaster Ministries provided a small grant from its COVID-19 Refugee and Asylum Fund to purchase groceries for the hot meal program.



**Rosemary Vasquez and Leah Rosenbloom, volunteer “platers” and “door-dash drivers” from Cherryland Elementary School.**

Nehring said the UCC grant would cover hot meals for 100 people for two weeks.

“The real story,” Nehring said, “is that these immigrant women are volunteering while suffering from the pandemic themselves, giving substantial time and talent to take care of others in more difficult circumstances. They are knocking themselves out for others,” including “kids they’ve never met.”

Micaela Serrano Cuevas, a native of Mexico, is the executive chef for UIY Hot Meals, and a popular cook at a local restaurant. She was furloughed because of the pandemic and was therefore able to immediately step in at Eden to help produce a large volume of delicious meals, assure food safety, and provide coaching to others who didn’t have much experience cooking in large quantities. She also enlisted her niece, a pastry chef, and her two young-adult daughters.

“Migrant women are so demeaned in U.S. culture,” Nehring observed. “At Eden, by contrast, we honor their skills and compassion for strangers.”

The congregation has forged a deep relationship with its immigrant neighbors over the past 20 years, the pastor said. Today the neighborhood is 65 to 70 percent first-generation Mexican, primarily people from the farming states that stretch from Guadalajara to the Gulf of Mexico, just above Mexico City.

“With COVID-19, everything is harder for newcomers,” Nehring said. “Their legal cases are on hold. They cannot get a Social Security number until they go to court. They are not eligible for employment without a Social Security number. They cannot get a driver’s license. They are supposed to prove their children are enrolled in school and attend. So how exactly are they supposed to pay for food and rent?”

Accompanying asylum seekers is “a marathon experience, not a sprint,” Nehring said. “Our experience illustrates why we need meaningful immigration reform. Meanwhile we try to figure out the next best thing to do with the resources we have.”

# Dry conditions fuel fires, devastation

**From January 1 to November 3, 2020 there were 47,506 wildfires compared with 44,929 wildfires in the same period in 2019, according to the National Interagency Fire Center.** About 8.6 million acres were burned in the 2020 period, compared with 4.6 million acres in 2019. Six of the top 20 largest California wildfires occurred in 2020, according to CalFire's list.

In August, a series of lightning strikes started hundreds of fires across Northern California. Dubbed the August Complex fire, they are the largest fire in California's history, burning 1.03 million acres in six counties and continuing into November.

On September 28, a state of emergency was declared in California in response to the wildfires that burned through Napa, Sonoma and Shasta Counties, where tens of thousands were forced to evacuate.

In early October, 65 large fires were burning in California, Idaho, Montana, Oregon, Washington and five other states, consuming over 2 million acres. In Oregon thousands of residents evacuated their homes to escape the flames that scorched more than 230,000 acres. In California fires burned from the north all the way down to the Mexican border, stretching across approximately 800 miles of landscape. In Washington, more acres had been burned in 2020 than in the past 12 fire seasons. The fires are being fueled by continuing dry conditions.

In response to all the fires, in the midst of the COVID-19 Pandemic, the United Church of Christ was barely able to provide any support to the Conferences and Communities impacted. Of course, the church and its leaders prayed, asked others to pray, but we also kept checking in to

let our colleagues know of our care.

In Oregon, UCC Disaster Ministries walked with leaders in the Conference as they began their response and learned to work in the community. Our team introduced them to key people in the disaster field who could help the Central Pacific Conference, who had not experienced this level of disaster in recent history.

With a newly formed disaster recovery team, the Conference was engaged in support to all of its congregations on a regular basis. With 17 UCC Churches directly impacted, supported was provided for members, community organizations that assist the migrant and homeless population, and many who were displaced. Several families lost everything in their homes.

With so much loss in Oregon, UCC provided an initial grant of \$20,000 and is gearing up for the long-term recovery process when the time is right. Continued gifts to the West Coast Wildfires are appreciated.



# In Thanksgiving and Celebration

## TOP 100 BASED ON PER CAPITA GIVING

### CALIFORNIA, NEVADA NORTHERN

**New Vision Congregational UCC**  
Chico CA

**Foothills Congregational UCC**  
Los Altos CA

**Skyland Community UCC**  
Los Gatos CA

**College Avenue United Church of Christ**  
Modesto CA

**United Church of Christ**  
Petaluma CA

**Ladera Community Church**  
Portola Valley CA

### CALIFORNIA, NEVADA SOUTHERN

**Claremont United Church of Christ**  
Claremont CA

**Irvine United Congregational Church**  
Irvine CA

**Montebello Plymouth Congregational**  
Montebello CA

**Neighborhood Church UCC**  
Palos Verdes Estates CA

**Mission Hills UCC**  
San Diego CA

### CENTRAL ATLANTIC

**New Ark Church UCC**  
Newark DE

**First Congregational UCC**  
Washington DC

**Evangelical Reformed Church**  
Frederick MD

**Greenbelt Community Church, United Church of Christ**  
Greenbelt MD

**Christ Reformed UCC**  
Middletown MD

**Packanack Community Church**  
Wayne NJ

**Little River UCC**  
Annandale VA

**Rock Spring Congregational UCC**  
Arlington VA

### CENTRAL PACIFIC

**First Congregational UCC**  
Corvallis OR

**United Church of Christ**  
Lake Oswego OR

**Medford Congregational UCC**  
Medford OR

### FLORIDA

**Cocoa Beach Community Church UCC**  
Cocoa Beach FL

**Mayflower Congregational UCC**  
Naples FL

**Congregational UCC**  
Punta Gorda FL

### HAWAII

**Waikeola Congregational Church UCC**  
Honolulu HI

### HEARTLAND

**Christ United Church**  
Olmsted Falls OH

**David's UCC**  
Kettering OH

**The First Church in Oberlin UCC**  
Oberlin OH

**Plymouth Church UCC**  
Shaker Heights OH

### ILLINOIS

**Congregational UCC**  
Arlington Heights IL

**Saint Peter's UCC**  
Champaign IL

**First Congregational UCC**  
Crystal Lake IL

**First Congregational UCC**  
Elgin IL

**Saint Peter UCC**  
Lake Zurich IL

**Pilgrim Congregational UCC**  
Oak Park IL

## Top Giving BASED ON TOTAL DOLLARS

**Plymouth Congregational UCC**  
Des Moines, IA  
Offering Amount: \$20,118  
*Iowa*

**First Church of Christ Congregational**  
Glastonbury, CT  
Offering Amount: \$14,930  
*Southern New England*

**First Congregational UCC**  
Crystal Lake, IL  
Offering Amount: \$12,833  
*Illinois*

**First Congregational UCC**  
Eau Claire, WI  
Offering Amount: \$12,549  
*Wisconsin*

**Claremont United Church of Christ**  
Claremont, CA  
Offering Amount: \$12,074  
*California, Nevada Southern*

**Plymouth Church UCC**  
Shaker Heights, OH  
Offering Amount: \$9,366  
*Heartland*

**Rock Spring Congregational UCC**  
Arlington, VA  
Offering Amount: \$9,192  
*Central Atlantic*

**Plymouth UCC**  
Grand Rapids, MI  
Offering Amount: \$8,311  
*Michigan*

**First Congregational UCC**  
Baraboo, WI  
Offering Amount: \$8,296  
*Wisconsin*

**First Congregational Church**  
Old Lyme, CT  
Offering Amount: \$7,943  
*Southern New England*

**First United Church**  
Arvada, CO  
Offering Amount: \$7,832  
*Rocky Mountain*

### ILLINOIS SOUTH

**Zion Evangelical United Church of Christ**  
Hoyleton IL

**INDIANA-KENTUCKY**  
**First Congregational UCC**  
Indianapolis IN

**Saint John's UCC**  
Vincennes IN

**Lynnhurst UCC**  
Louisville KY

### IOWA

**United Church of Christ—Congregational**  
Ames IA

**United Church of Christ—Congregational**  
Grinnell IA

**The Congregational Church, UCC**  
Iowa City IA

### KANSAS-OKLAHOMA

**Puritan Cong-Christian United Church of Christ**  
Drummond OK

### MAINE

**First Congregational UCC**  
Camden ME

**State Street Congregational UCC**  
Portland ME

### MICHIGAN

**First Congregational UCC**  
Alpena MI

**Plymouth UCC**  
Grand Rapids MI

### MINNESOTA

**First Congregational**  
Moorhead MN

**Union Congregational UCC**  
Saint Louis Park MN

**Macalester Plymouth United Church**  
Saint Paul MN

### MISSOURI MID-SOUTH

**Ivy Chapel UCC**  
Chesterfield MO

**MONTANA-NORTHERN WYOMING**  
**Community UCC**  
Red Lodge MT

**NEW HAMPSHIRE**  
**Meriden Congregational Church**  
Meriden NH

**NEW YORK**  
**Mountain Rise United Church of Christ**  
Fairport NY

**The Church-in-the-Gardens**  
Forest Hills NY

### PACIFIC NORTHWEST

**Shalom UCC, Richland**  
Richland WA

**Magnolia UCC**  
Seattle WA

**United Church in University Place**  
University Place WA

### PENN CENTRAL

**Zion Reformed UCC**  
Chambersburg PA

**Trinity UCC**  
East Petersburg PA

**Emmanuel UCC**  
Hanover PA

**Church of the Apostles UCC**  
Lancaster PA

**Hamilton Park UCC**  
Lancaster PA

**Myerstown United Church of Christ**  
Myerstown PA

### PENNSYLVANIA SOUTHEAST

**Trinity Christian UCC**  
Harleysville PA

**United Church of Christ at Valley Forge**  
Wayne PA

### ROCKY MOUNTAIN

**First United Church of Arvada UCC**  
Arvada CO

**Lakewood United Church of Christ**  
Lakewood CO

### SOUTHEAST

**The United Church**  
Huntsville AL

**Central Congregational UCC**  
Atlanta GA

**First United Church UCC**  
Belvidere TN

**Pleasant Hill Community Church UCC**  
Pleasant Hill TN

### SOUTHERN

**Congregational Church UCC**  
Tryon NC

**SOUTHERN NEW ENGLAND**  
**Park Avenue Congregational UCC**  
Arlington MA

**United Church On the Green UCC**  
New Haven CT

**Congregational Church**  
Weston MA

**United Congregational Church**  
Worcester MA

**First Church of Christ Congregational, Glastonbury**  
Glastonbury CT

**Newton Highlands Congregational Church UCC**  
Newton MA

**Kingston Congregational Church UCC**  
Kingston RI

**First Church in Windsor, UCC**  
Windsor CT

**First Congregational UCC**  
Stockbridge MA

**Union Memorial UCC**  
Stamford CT

**Mashpee Congregational Church UCC**  
Mashpee MA

### SOUTHWEST

**The Good Shepherd UCC**  
Sahuarita AZ

**Sierra Vista Community UCC**  
Sierra Vista AZ

**Church of the Palms UCC**  
Sun City AZ

**Church of the Painted Hills UCC**  
Tucson AZ

**First Congregational UCC**  
Albuquerque NM

**United Church of Santa Fe UCC**  
Santa Fe NM

### VERMONT

**Second Congregational UCC**  
Bennington VT

**Charlotte Congregational Church UCC**  
Charlotte VT

**Bethany UCC**  
Randolph VT

**Congregational Church of South Hero, UCC**  
South Hero VT

### WISCONSIN

**First Congregational UCC**  
Baraboo WI

**First Congregational UCC**  
Eau Claire WI

**Pilgrim UCC**  
Fond Du Lac WI

**Congregational UCC**  
Neenah WI

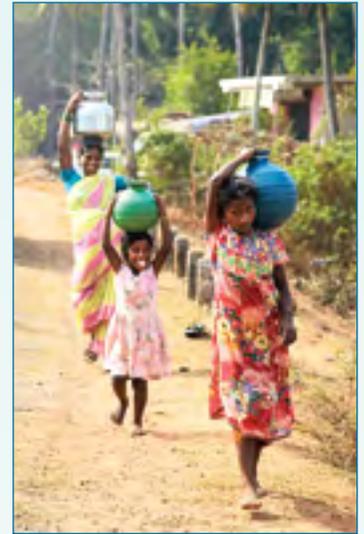
**First Congregational UCC**  
Oconomowoc WI

**Congregational UCC**  
Whitewater WI

continued



**Pandasin Orguba, one of Namanu's neighbors, at the water kiosk in Merille.**



## How Far Will You Go to Let Love Flow?

**How far are you willing to go so that your family will not thirst?** For Namanu Macharia, that distance was twelve miles. Twelve miles of walking with her children; twelve miles of the heat beating down on them; twelve miles of carrying empty five-gallon containers to retrieve water, then rolling those containers back to her home.

The prophet Isaiah declares that God's people will neither hunger nor thirst. But for those living near Merille, in Kenya's Marsabit County, hunger and thirst were a daily concern as water scarcity is a huge problem in this arid desert region. Obtaining water was once a crippling daily challenge, especially for the women and children responsible for walking long distances in search of streams and ponds. Even when they found precious sources, the water they brought home was contaminated, often making their families sick. Between illness and the sheer amount of time it took every day to find water, families were caught in a vicious cycle of increasing hunger and poverty.

That was the situation until our partners and the community drilled a solar-powered borehole well and installed a water system.

Water kiosks like the one in Merille function like small shops, where people pay a modest fee for clean water. That money covers the operating and maintenance costs of the water system, ensuring it will be around for a long time to come, and available whenever they need water. In addition to the 2,850 community members who use the kiosk, it also serves two schools, the local livestock market, and a health center which serves more than 4,800 people!

Namanu still walks from her home to retrieve water, but now, the entire journey is less than one-third mile to the kiosk and back. "I can leave my food cooking, fetch water, and be back on time," she says. The new water system in Merille is a huge step forward in the fight against hunger, illness, and poverty in the area. For Namanu and thousands of her neighbors, it means freedom and peace of mind.

How far are you willing to go so that people in water-scarce regions no longer need to walk twelve miles to receive God's promise of a life without hunger or thirst? The journey begins with One Great Hour of Sharing. Your generous gift supports life giving water. Let your love flow.

# OGHS Sharing Calendar—*Let Love Flow*

**God has blessed us in so many ways.** This calendar is designed to help us acknowledge our blessings but to also think about and pray for others. Each day highlights various situations and suggests a donation of coins or bills. Your household can decide what unit works best for you. It is easiest if you select one unit and use it throughout the days on the calendar. The sharing calendar works well with the OGHS coin box. To order additional coin boxes, visit our store at [www.uccresources.com](http://www.uccresources.com). Your gift will allow love to flow into the lives of those who need it most!

	SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
CHILDREN	<p><b>Children remain the poorest age group in America. Progress has been made, but too many children are still hungry</b></p> <p>Give two units for each child in your family.</p>	<p><b>Good nutrition is a critical part of ensuring that all human beings can use their bodies and minds to live an active life and reach their full potential</b></p> <p>Give one unit for each meal you've eaten today.</p>	<p><b>Substantial global progress has been made in reducing child deaths since 1990. The total number of under-5 deaths worldwide has dropped by 58%</b></p> <p>Give two units in thanksgiving for the progress being made.</p>	<p><b>Can you really imagine Jesus saying, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these"</b></p> <p>Jesus cares for children and so should we. Please give a generous donation today!</p>	<p><b>Children represent the future, and ensuring their healthy growth and development ought to be a prime concern of all societies</b></p> <p>Give three units in honor of the children in your congregation.</p>	<p><b>Malnourished children have a higher risk of death from common childhood illness such as diarrhea, pneumonia, and malaria</b></p> <p>Give one unit for each child under 5 in your extended family.</p>	<p><b>In the first 1,000 days, babies' brains form new connections at an astounding rate. With every nutritious meal, hug and kiss, you help build a baby's brain</b></p> <p>Share one unit for each baby you kissed this week or three units if you were unable to kiss a child.</p>
CREATION	<p><b>Over one billion people do not have access to safe water and 2.4 billion have no access to decent sanitation</b></p> <p>Give three units today.</p>	<p><b>Cars are harmful to the environment. Taking public transportation, walking, or riding a bike are good options that help the environment</b></p> <p>Give one unit for each time you rode in a car today.</p>	<p><b>Plastic pollution is one of the biggest threats to worldwide ocean health. Skyrocketing plastic production and limited recycling are factors</b></p> <p>Please give one unit, and commit to recycling and/or limiting use of plastic bottles.</p>	<p><b>Through wisdom, God founded the earth; by understanding God established the heavens</b></p> <p>Give one unit for every bottle you threw away this week that still had water trapped inside of it.</p>	<p><b>Approximately 3 billion people lack access to clean-cooking solutions and are exposed to dangerous levels of air pollution</b></p> <p>Give two units for every home-cooked meal you enjoyed today.</p>	<p><b>The proportion of people using drinking water from improved sources has been steadily improving</b></p> <p>Give one unit for each faucet in your home.</p>	<p><b>Many poor villages still lack reliable electricity. The U.S. uses 22% of all electricity consumed in the world</b></p> <p>Give one unit for each electrical appliance in your home.</p>
NEIGHBORS	<p><b>Immigration is an international hunger and poverty issue. Many undocumented immigrants are fleeing hunger, extreme poverty, and violence</b></p> <p>Give two units to support lawful pathways to citizenship in the US.</p>	<p><b>About 40% of the world's population, mostly people in the poorest countries, risk contracting Malaria, which causes 300 million illness and 1 million deaths annually</b></p> <p>Give one unit for every doctor you have.</p>	<p><b>\$10 can provide a thermal blanket for a refugee, or 1 mat to prevent them from sleeping on the cold ground</b></p> <p>Give two units for every blanket on your bed.</p>	<p><b>Feel God's presence and joy through helping others for God loves a cheerful giver</b></p> <p>Give the number of units you think would be pleasing to God.</p>	<p><b>The proportion of people living in extreme poverty is half of what it was in 1990. Yet 1.4 billion people still live on less than \$1.25 per day</b></p> <p>Share a unit for each meal you have eaten in a restaurant in the past week.</p>	<p><b>Worldwide, over 100 million elementary school-aged children do not attend school</b></p> <p>Give one unit for each year of formal education you have received.</p>	<p><b>The U.S. has significantly reduced the number of refugees it is admitting into our country</b></p> <p>Give one unit for each person you know who came from another country. If you know more than 5 people from another country give 3 units.</p>
LET LOVE FLOW	<p><b>"We cannot rest until every child who lives in: poverty, a refugee camp, an isolated village, a fragile setting, or who has a disability has a chance to go to school"</b></p> <p><b>Alice Albright</b></p> <p>Give two units today in thanks for your education.</p>	<p><b>Floods are the most widespread natural disaster aside from wildfires. 90% of all U.S. natural disasters declared involved flooding</b></p> <p>Give two units if you live in a comfortable home that has never flooded.</p>	<p><b>Providing an education to girls and young women is one of the strongest ways to end cyclical poverty</b></p> <p>Give one unit in thanksgiving as you name each girl and woman important in your life.</p>	<p><b>One plants, one waters, but only God gives the growth.</b></p> <p>Share two units in thanksgiving for the ways God has blessed you so that you can bless others.</p>	<p><b>In 2018, wildfires burned 8.6 million acres in the United States. Many of the homes that were impacted were completely destroyed.</b></p> <p>Give 1 unit for every smoke detector in your home.</p>	<p><b>For every \$1 invested in water and sanitation, an average of \$4 is returned in increased productivity</b></p> <p>Give one unit for each time you washed your hands today.</p>	<p><b>Support disaster survivors. Become a UCC Disaster Recovery Volunteer. Help communities rebuild, visit <a href="http://ucc.org/disaster">ucc.org/disaster</a> for info</b></p> <p>Share one unit if you have ever volunteered at a disaster site or two units if you have not.</p>

Sources: Church World Service, Bread for the World, Children's Defense Fund, UNICEF (United Nation's Children's Fund), Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, Oceanic Society, World Food Programme, World Health Organization, American Red Cross, the New York Times and the U.S. Census Bureau.

## ENGAGE IN MISSION

# One Great Hour of Sharing

There are many ways to be involved in addition to your financial support.

## Share. Connect. Travel. Give.

### Share One Great Hour of Sharing Videos

Videos show the mission that's made possible through the United Church of Christ. They can be fun, educational, and easy to share with church groups or during worship.

### Connect with OGHS through Social Media

Follow OGHS on social media, then post OGHS videos and stories to your own page.

You can find OGHS on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram:

[facebook.com/onegreathourofsharingucc](https://facebook.com/onegreathourofsharingucc) [twitter.com/OGHS\\_at\\_UCC](https://twitter.com/OGHS_at_UCC) [instagram.com/oghsucc](https://instagram.com/oghsucc)

### Travel with OGHS

When the time is right, OGHS will resume hosting educational mission trips. You are invited to allow us to put together a trip for your church related to OGHS and parts of the world where you have interest. See first-hand how OGHS makes a difference in the lives of people and communities. Find info at [www.ucc.org/oghs\\_travel](http://www.ucc.org/oghs_travel) and join us on our next trip.

### Make an Investment! Give a Significant Gift to the Offering or Endowment Fund

As your congregation participates in the OGHS offering for immediate ministry, let them also know OGHS has an Endowment Fund. A gift to the endowment fund will ensure that the offering will be around as a legacy to help people in need for years to come. Visit our website at [ucc.org/oghs\\_endowment](http://ucc.org/oghs_endowment) or contact our office.

### Apply for a Matching Gift Through your Employer

Double your gift. Many employers contribute to employee and board members' favorite charities.

Matching gift programs often support mission work for which OGHS qualifies. Encourage everyone to check with their employer to see if they have a matching gift program. Visit [ucc.org/matching-gifts](http://ucc.org/matching-gifts).

### Complete OGHS Materials at [www.uccresources.com](http://www.uccresources.com)

- Bulletin Inserts (no charge)
  - Offering Envelopes (no charge)
  - Cube Coin Offering Boxes (additional—\$0.10/each)
  - Planning and Resource Guide
  - Worship Resources and Children's Sermons
  - Children and Youth Activities
  - Downloadable Art, Graphics, Songs and Videos
  - Sharing Calendar
  - Skits and Stories
- Contact us at 216.736.3215 or Email [oghs@ucc.org](mailto:oghs@ucc.org)

Compiled by Rev. Phyllis Richards