



Living Stewardship

About this Faith Practice

As a way of life, expressed in gratitude, living stewardship is a practice that involves all that it means to live as faithful followers of Jesus Christ. It grows out of a deep caring for and joy in who we are as God's created people and the natural world in which we live. Living stewardship is about how we live our lives and how our lives express our values. It affects all of our decisions, especially the ones we make about the natural and human resources entrusted to us for care. Living stewardship is shalom: living in harmony with others and the world. It is about our relationships, liberation, grace, justice, peace, and mutuality as well as our material possessions. As faithful stewards, we are joined by our common gift of life and the reality of finite resources. We recognize that each of us is a mixture of neediness and fullness and so have responsibility to care for each other as we honor the holy in creation and ourselves. As faithful disciples, we are called to live as generous creatures created by a generous God who mutually shares responsibility with us for all creation. Stewardship involves all people because all are connected in mutually covenanted stewardship within God's original intent for creation....

Let's Begin...

Now that you've downloaded the files for your faith practice and age group or setting, you can get started planning one or multiple sessions:

1 Open the .pdf file for your age group or setting. Choose an Exploration, the approach you think will help your group to best experience the faith practice. Choose any one of the following Explorations to use for one session:



Discovery



Scripture



Discipleship



Christian Tradition



Context and Mission



Future and Vision

Note: If you're planning multiple sessions, you can follow the order suggested above or feel free to use any order that fits the needs of your group. Some groups may choose to start with Scripture and then see where that leads them. Others may be more ready to act in their community and might want to start with Context and Mission.



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2 Locate the Exploration you've chosen

3 Look through all 9 activities and select the ones you would like to do with your group.

- If you're planning a 30–45 minute session, choose 3 activities.
- It is best to select at least one activity from Exploring and Engaging, at least one from Discerning and Deciding, and at least one from Sending and Serving.
- For 45 minutes to 1 hour, choose 4 or 5 activities.
- For a 1½ to 2-hour session, you can use all 9 activities.

Tip: Look for this symbol  to find activities designed for Easy Preparation (able to be done with minimal preparation using supplies normally found at the church).

4 Make copies of any handouts () related to your activities. Order posters () if using art (see "Ordering Posters," below).

Use of Art, Music, and Scripture in Faith Practices

Faith Practices activities include many opportunities to grow in faith through the use of scripture, music, and art.

Ordering Posters

If you choose activities that use an art image, you or your church will need to purchase posters of the art by clicking on the link provided in the activity. If you wish to use art, you will need to plan ahead, since it takes 1 to 2 weeks for the posters to arrive after you place your order.

Art

Six posters are used with the faith practice Living Stewardship and may be ordered by clicking on the links provided.

From Imaging the Word Poster Sets:

"Planting" by Rex Goreleigh (<http://www.tinyurl.com/UCCResources>)

"The Moorish Kitchen Maid with the Supper at Emmaus" by Diego Rodriguez de Silva y Velazquez (<http://www.tinyurl.com/UCCResources>)

"With hoot and squawk and squeak and bark ..." by Barbara Reid (<http://www.tinyurl.com/UCCResources>)

From AllPosters.com:

"Banjo Lesson" by Henry Ossawa Tanner (<http://www.tinyurl.com/AllPosters4>)

"Baobab, Okavango Delta, Botswana" by Pete Oxford (<http://www.tinyurl.com/AllPosters5>)

"Orion Nebula" by Stocktrek Images (<http://www.tinyurl.com/AllPosters6>)

Music

Three music selections are used with Living Stewardship. We have selected music which is easily found in many hymnals. A web link is provided to give more information about each music selection.

Jesu, Jesu Fill Us With Your Love, Tune: Chereponi (<http://www.tinyurl.com/FPSong4>)

Take My Gifts And Let Me Love You, Tune: Talavera Terrace (<http://www.tinyurl.com/FPSong5>)

God Whose Giving Knows No Ending, Tune: Austrian Hymn (Hymn lyrics: <http://www.tinyurl.com/FPSong6>) (Austrian Hymn tune: <http://www.tinyurl.com/FPSong6a>)

Scripture

Twelve Bible passages are used with Living Stewardship, two with each Exploration.

Discovery	Deuteronomy 8:7-18	Matthew 2:1-11
Scripture	Genesis 1:26-31	I Timothy 6:6-10, 17-19
Discipleship	Isaiah 55:1-3	Mark 10:17-22
Christian Tradition	Deuteronomy 14:22-29	Acts 4:32 - 5:11
Context and Mission	Isaiah 1:10-17	Mark 14:3-9
Future and Vision	I Chronicles 29:1-19	Revelation 21:10, 21:22-22:5

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Living Stewardship



Exploration: Discovery

About this Setting

Stewardship is a way of life that Christians undertake daily as they follow Christ. This way of living is expressed through the recognition of and gratitude for all of the gifts God bestows upon us as inhabitants of God's creation. This session seeks to interpret the theology and ethos of living stewardship within the United Church of Christ—its core understandings, commitments, and outlooks. In the United Church of Christ, we respond to Christ's call to ministry by equipping ourselves for living stewardship both locally and globally through our national structures.

About this Exploration

For many, stewardship is only or primarily about money and tithing. This exploration intends to help individuals and churches discover and imagine possibilities of what it means to live into a Christian sense of stewardship that involves all of life. We hope to explore both what this can mean and how we might integrate this with our life experiences. Because God is still speaking, we listen, envision, and embrace our responsibility as God's people, drawing upon the stories found in scripture and the importance of continuing and sharing the story of what it means to be a disciple who is living stewardship.



BIBLE FOCUS PASSAGES:

Deuteronomy 8:7-18
Matthew 2:1-11

Leader Preparation

The activities presented here are intended for intergenerational groups of youth, adults, and elementary age children. It is also possible to use them specifically for an age-level group of adults, youth, or children. In the cases where an activity leans more toward older participants, a suggestion is offered for use with children. As the leader of the session, be sure to adapt the activities to the specific learning abilities in your group. For further information about stewardship in the United Church of Christ, see "Additional Resources for Discovery," Attachment: Extra 1.

Spend some quiet time reflecting on all of the gifts God has given you throughout your life. Consider ways you can show God your gratitude for these gifts.

Prayer: What shall I bring to you, O God of Compassion? I bring my body and spirit, broken and in need of healing. What shall I bring before you, O God of Eternal Vision? I bring my dreams and hopes to be fulfilled. What shall I bring before you, O God of Everlasting Love? I bring my gratitude and possessions. What shall I bring before you, O God of All Good Gifts? I bring myself. May it be holy and acceptable to you, O God. Amen.

(adapted from *Inspiring Generosity: A Resource of the UCC Stewardship and Church Finances Ministry*, p. 108)

Exploring & Engaging Activities

1 What Does Living Stewardship Mean To You? (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Read the handout "What Does Living Stewardship Mean To You?" and select the version (adult, teen, or children) that will work best with the group you are leading.

Supplies:

- copy of "What Does Living Stewardship Mean To You?" Attachment: Activity 1
- a Bible
- a pen or pencil for each participant
- apples, a paring knife, cutting board or plate (for children)

2 Are You Ready to Talk about Money in Your Church?

Leader preparation: Order copies of the pamphlet "Are You Ready To Talk About Money In Your Church?" They are available from UCC Resources at <http://www.tinyurl.com/264w8gz>.

or by calling 800-537-3394. Read the pamphlet in preparation for this activity.

Supplies:

- copies of the pamphlet "Are You Ready to Talk about Money in Your Church?"

Take the quiz in this booklet from the UCC's God Is Still Speaking initiative. In a lighthearted way, it opens up the often "forbidden" subject of money in the church.

3 God Is Still Speaking,

Leader preparation: Read the handout "God Is Still Speaking" and visit <http://www.tinyurl.com/d7tjtb>

for more background information about the UCC's God Is Still Speaking initiative.

Supplies:

- copies of "God Is Still Speaking," Attachment: Activity 3
- computer with Internet access (optional)

Read and discuss the information on the handout "God is Still Speaking" in light of living stewardship. Encourage discussion about God's "still speaking" voice by asking questions such as these: How does the concept of sharing in our abundance embrace the concept of allowing more light and truth to come from God's Word? How can a comma help us to respond to all that God gives us? How can God's "still speaking" voice help to break through the fear of scarcity and move us toward recognizing the blessings of abundance?

If you have access to the Internet, provide visual reminders of what the United Church of Christ stands for by showing one or more of its TV advertisements, <http://www.tinyurl.com/2c3dc84>. If there are children in your group, ask them to list all the kinds of people that God loves. Then invite them to help create verses for singing "The Whole World Is in God's Hands," <http://www.tinyurl.com/2dhuv8>.



Session Development

For each session leaders may choose from nine activities that help learners engage the practice of faith. It is best to select at least one activity from “Exploring and Engaging,” at least one from “Discerning and Deciding,” and at least one from “Sending and Serving.” The first activity in each category is designed for “easy preparation” (able to be done with minimal preparation with supplies normally found at the church). Using all nine activities could take 90–120 minutes.

- To plan a session of 30–45 minutes, choose three activities, using one activity from each category.
- To plan a session of 45–60 minutes, choose four or five activities, using at least one activity from each category.

Discerning & Deciding Activities



4 “The Moorish Kitchen Maid with the Supper at Emmaus”(Easy Preparation)

Leader Preparation: Acquire the poster *The Moorish Kitchen Maid with the Supper at Emmaus* by Diego Rodriguez de Silva y Velazquez. Spend some time with the image as you reflect on ways you have responded personally to acts of generosity.

Supplies:

- poster: “The Moorish Kitchen Maid with the Supper at Emmaus” by Diego Rodriguez de Silva y Velazquez, <http://www.tinyurl.com/UCCResources>

Allow a few moments for the group to study the poster. Then invite them to view it using three different lenses: First, look at this scene through the eyes of the kitchen maid. What are some of the joys and struggles you experience by providing a service? Second, imagine you are one of the people through the window in the next room. What kind of gratitude do you have for the services of the kitchen maid? Third, now imagine this scene from an observer’s point of view. What are the social obligations of each of the people in this scene? Where do you see generosity?

5 The Runaway Horse

Leader preparation: Preview the YouTube video of master storyteller Odds Bodkin’s rendition of the old Chinese tale “The Runaway Horse.” The narrative is attached as a handout, if needed.

Supplies:

- “The Runaway Horse” on YouTube, <http://www.tinyurl.com/29b96kt>, or “The Runaway Horse,” Attachment: Activity 5

Listen to the old Chinese tale of “The Runaway Horse” and compare its moral with the following quotation from the UCC’s stewardship resource *Inspiring Generosity*: “Becoming a generous people depends on the way we look at life. We give as we live, out of a sense of who we are and what we believe is true” (p. 6). In what ways is this true in your life? In your congregation?

6 Magi Guided Meditation

Leader preparation: Practice reading “A Magi Guided Meditation” handout in order to place pauses and silence in the appropriate places when leading the guided meditation.

Supplies:

- “A Magi Guided Meditation,” Attachment: Activity 6
- candles and matches or lighter
- Bibles

Light one or more candles and lead the group in the guided meditation on the handout. Invite participants to share any “epiphanies” they may have experienced. Refer them to Matthew 2:1–11 for questions about this story from the Bible.



Sending & Serving Activities

7 Take My Gifts (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Become familiar with the words of the hymn “Take My Gifts and Let Me Love You.” Invite a keyboardist to accompany the singing of this hymn during the session.

Supplies:

- copies of the hymn “Take My Gifts and Let Me Love You” (Tune: Talavera Terrace), <http://www.tinyurl.com/FPSong5>
- sheets of scrap paper
- pencils
- an accompanist (optional)

Begin by singing together “Take My Gifts and Let Me Love You.” In preparation for the next time your congregation sings this hymn together, create a pictorial presentation of each stanza of the hymn to be shown with computer presentation software or by holding up poster board placards. Discuss which images of stewardship could be represented for each stanza and draw prototypes with paper and pencil of three designs, one for each stanza. Arrange for another time to create the actual slides or placards.

8 Stewardship in the News

Leader preparation: Browse through the links on the UCC News Portal to get a sense of where stories of stewardship may be found.

<http://www.ucc.org/news>

Supplies:

- computer with Internet access

Visit <http://www.ucc.org/news> and search for stories about stewardship in the United Church of Christ. As a group, determine which one or ones to share in worship, in your church’s newsletter, in an all-church e-mail, or in all of these or other ways with the rest of your congregation.

9 Create a Picture Budget

Leader preparation: Become familiar with the material on the Web site listed below to determine the best way to offer this activity with specific groups in your congregation (for example, confirmation class, youth group, council or consistory, stewardship committee, finance committee, others, or a combination of the above). If you would prefer to focus on a Narrative Budget, visit

<http://www.tinyurl.com/29g6vmw>

to view some samples.

Supplies:

- computer with Internet access

It’s never too early to begin preparing your church’s annual budget. Consider creating a “Picture Budget” this year using computer presentation software. Visit <http://www.tinyurl.com/24ohveq> for some guidelines. As you work together, discuss this quotation from the UCC’s stewardship resource *Inspiring Generosity*:



“Every dollar in a church budget is a dollar that someone has given freely, under no compulsion, driven by a wish for the church to exist. Every dollar in a church budget represents one person’s generosity and good will” (p. 34).

To involve children, invite them to contribute to the “Picture Budget” and also include their artistic interpretations of what happens in your church in worship, community, mission and service, Sunday school, and the like.

Reflect

As a Christian and member of the United Church of Christ, living stewardship often goes against what our consumerist culture preaches on a daily basis. In what ways did the participants respond to abundance, recognize the gifts they already possess, and turn their fear of scarcity into hope and possibility?

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Attachment Extra 1

Additional Resources

Books and Resources for Children

God's Gifts, My Gifts, by Sandy Luechsen, produced by the Stewardship and Church Finances Team, Local Church Ministries, United Church of Christ. This resource teaches that God is the source of who we are and what we have, and is our model for being generous and faithful. Elementary-age children will have fun in class or at home using these five colorful and snappy foldout sheets with individual and group activities, including scriptural texts and prayers. Set includes five active lessons to reinforce the church, personal decisions, loving God, self, and others. View flier at <http://www.tinyurl.com/24brhyc>. Order from UCC Resources by calling 800-537-3394.

Scriptographic Booklets from Channing L. Bete, Inc.

Stewardship bookmarks, magnets, banks, family kits, envelopes, stickers, children's/teen's workbooks, presentation kit, etc. Order from <http://www.faithguildes.com> (search "stewardship").

The Table Where Rich People Sit by Byrd Baylor (ISBN-10: 0689820089; ISBN-13: 978-0689820083), grades 3–5. A young girl learns that riches consist of more than money. <http://www.tinyurl.com/2c6sy6v>

The Merchant and the Thief: A Folktale of Godly Wisdom by Ravi K. Zacharias (ISBN-10: 0781432960; ISBN-13: 978-0781432962). An ancient Indian folktale adapted for today about life's true wealth. <http://www.tinyurl.com/27sel95>

Miss Fannie's Hat by Jan Karon (ISBN-10: 0140568123; ISBN-13: 978-0140568127), ages 4–8. Miss Fannie, age 99, has many hats, but will she offer her favorite for the church auction? <http://www.tinyurl.com/2ea6n2t>

The Giving Tree by Shel Silverstein (ISBN-10: 0060586753; ISBN-13: 978-0060586751), ages 4–8. A story of a boy and a tree, the gift of giving, and the capacity to love in return. <http://www.tinyurl.com/2buvcbi>

A Gift for Jesus by Joan Summer (ISBN-10: 1579214215; ISBN-13: 978-1579214210), ages 4–8. The story of the birth of Jesus through the eyes of a child whose desire is to give an appropriate gift to the Savior.

A Resource to Use With Youth

Growing Up Generous: Engaging Youth in Giving and Serving by Eugene C. Roehlkepartain, Elanah Dalyah Naftali, and Laura Musegades (ISBN-10: 1566992389; ISBN-13: 978-1566992381). Explores both Jewish and Christian traditions of giving, service, and the issue of money.

Books and Resources for Adults

Inspiring Generosity. A resource of the Stewardship and Church Finances Ministry, Local Church Ministries, United Church of Christ. Order from UCC Resources at <http://www.ucc.org> (click on "Buy It," then "UCC Resources") or by calling 800-537-3394.

Stewards in the Household of God by Doris Powell. Stewardship is not just for the fall anymore, and it's never been just about money. Whether it's care for God's creation, attention to our families and relationships, making the most of talents and skills, or being responsible and generous with our finances . . . it's all stewardship. And it's all the time. Introduce the concept of year-round stewardship in your congregation. Order from UCC Resources at <http://www.ucc.org> (click on "Buy It," then "UCC Resources") or by calling 800-537-3394.

Attachment Extra 1, page 2

Supplemental resources for the Theme of the Month can be found at <http://www.tinyurl.com/2dojp3w>.

The Gifting God: Change the Way you Look at Giving by Rochelle A. Stackhouse. A small-group stewardship study. Order from UCC Resources at <http://www.ucc.org> (click on "Buy It," then "UCC Resources") or by calling 800-537-3394.

7 Ways to Increase Giving in Your Congregation. Good ideas and lively conversation-starters for your stewardship committee, trustees, and other church leaders. Basics of stewardship in a condensed, easy-to-use brochure. Order from UCC Resources at <http://www.ucc.org> (click on "Buy It," then "UCC Resources") or by calling 800-537-3394.

The Big Secret of Giving: Hidden Treasures in Life and Church, A Stewardship Devotional A 30-day devotional for church members, stewardship and finance leaders, and pastors. Daily devotional readings to encourage generous, faithful giving. Written by William Green, who has served in the local, conference, and national settings of the United Church of Christ. Order from UCC Resources at <http://www.ucc.org> (click on "Buy It," then "UCC Resources") or by calling 800-537-3394.

Scriptographic Booklets from Channing L. Bete

Understanding Stewardship (booklet)

Stewardship: Sharing Our Gifts From God (booklet)

Stewardship and You (booklet) (also in Spanish)

Being A Good Steward (booklet)

Stewardship of Time and Talent (booklet)

Stewardship: A Way of Life (booklet)

(Order from <http://www.faithguides.com> (search "stewardship"))

Web Resources

Stewardship in the United Church of Christ, <http://www.ucc.org/stewardship>

UCC Stewardship Resources, <http://www.tinyurl.com/2e6aayb>

UCC Stewardship Bulletin Inserts by the Rev. Maren Tirabassi, <http://www.tinyurl.com/23b9a7c>

Supplemental resources for Stewards in the Household of God by Doris Powell, <http://www.tinyurl.com/29eebbp>

Electronic Giving in the United Church of Christ, <http://www.tinyurl.com/2bdhjcc>

Attachment: Activity 1

What Does Living Stewardship Mean To You?

For Discussion with Adults

Based on material from *Inspiring Generosity*, a resource of the Stewardship and Church Finances Ministry, Local Church Ministries, United Church of Christ

Stewardship: Response to Abundance

"The real answer to what the church needs, and its witness to the world, comes not from overcoming scarcity but from discerning and sharing abundance. The driving force of the church, when it is true to itself, is the spirit or disposition of Jesus and the experience of abundant life that this manifests and evokes. This is the power that "turns on the lights," whereby we can see anew what we feel and face, see life more clearly as it is, not just as we thought it was or think it should be."

— *Inspiring Generosity*, p. 4

Question for Discussion:

How can you help your congregation move from a theology of scarcity to a theology of abundance?

Stewardship: building morale

"In the secular world, morale is called the key to better giving. In the church, morale is called "Spirit," without which the challenge of giving becomes a plea for support, largely unheeded. Spiritual vitality is the precondition of financial vitality. The number one stewardship task of the church is to build morale—to enhance a sense of God's spirit, making sure the atmosphere and attitude of the congregation express and nurture an experience of God's power. This means that stewardship is hardly the monopoly of one committee. It is the responsibility of every committee, indeed the very heart of the church's ministry. The quality of Sunday worship, the excellence of the education program of the church, how well the church enjoys and celebrates its life together, how well the church presents and promotes understanding of its own mission as well as the wider mission, how effectively faith can be shown to strengthen life at home, on the job, in the community—all these are issues bearing on an experience of the presence of God. Where that experience is thin, giving is thinner, and any emphasis on "stewardship" simply depletes further the limited energy of the congregation."

— *Inspiring Generosity*, p. 18)

Question for Discussion:

Which sentences in the preceding quotation best describes your congregation? What would your congregation need to do to acquire the kind of "spiritual vitality" described here?

Stewardship is not something you feel you SHOULD do

"No persuasive appeal, no colorful stories about the difference giving makes, no eloquent sermons about our many blessings, no stewardship programs the denomination should provide—none of this can accomplish much as long as the intent is to convince people of something they should believe and do."

— *Inspiring Generosity*, p. 5)

Question for Discussion:

- Loretta Laroche, noted author, humorist, and Fortune 500 Trainer, often includes in her presentations a comment about avoiding "should-ing on yourself." What she means is that so many of us get unnecessarily focused on what we should have done that we miss out on the time that we could be enjoying life's gifts. What is the difference between convincing people of something they "should" do, and helping them to act based on what they believe in and want to do?

Attachment: Activity 1, p. 2

Read Deuteronomy 8:7-18.

Question for Discussion:

In this scripture passage, the author believes that remembering to give thanks to God can be a natural response to the vast generosity of God's gifts. What are the reminders given here of God's abundant blessings? What are some ways that you can remind yourself of God's gifts to you each day (so that giving thanks to God will be something you want to do instead of something you feel you "should" do)?

All Shall Be Well; Expect the Best

"Perhaps 'counting on the best' suggests more clearly what can be anticipated in terms of personal and congregational growth. Think of examples of how 'the best' is being built on and will be lived out. Too commonly, faith and church are thought of in terms of overcoming problems, addressing the ills and weaknesses of something missing in personal life, in the church, or in the world. But reliable growth of any sort comes from engaging strength, not addressing weaknesses."

— *Inspiring Generosity*, p. 19

Questions for Discussion:

- What things are happening in your congregation that exemplify "building on the best"?
- Does your congregation fear the worst or expect the best?
- Does your congregation believe that even amid the hardest and most challenging circumstances, hope and assurance, power and possibility are on the way, waiting to happen again?

Attachment: Activity 1, p. 3

What Does Living Stewardship Mean To You?

For Discussion with Teens

Make a list of the 10 most important things in your life:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.

Put an asterisk (*) next to each one that God is responsible for giving you.

Would you consider yourself rich in things or rich in relationships?

How is God responsible for both things and relationships in your life?

How can you thank God for all that you have?

Read Deuteronomy 8:7-18.

Replace these nouns with related nouns from your own life:

“For the Lord your God is bringing you to (a place you’ve always wanted to go) _____, a land flowing with (your favorite body of water) _____, a land of (three favorite foods) _____, _____, and _____, a land where you may eat (your favorite healthy food) _____ without scarcity, where you will lack nothing, a land that has (your favorite electronic item) _____. You shall eat your fill and bless the Lord your God for the good land that he has given you.

“Take care that you do not forget the Lord your God, by failing to keep his commandments, his ordinances, and his statutes, which I am commanding you today. When you have eaten your fill and have found a (the kind of housing you’ve always wanted to live in) _____ to live in and have lived there, and when you acquire (more than the amount of money you’ll need to support yourself) _____, then do not exalt yourself, forgetting the Lord your God you was with you when (a difficult time that you’ve experienced) _____ . He provided (two of your favorite things) _____ and _____. Do not say to yourself, ‘My power and the might of my own hand have gotten me this wealth.’ But remember the Lord your God, for it is he who gives you power to get wealth, so that he may confirm his covenant that he swore to your ancestors, as he is doing today.”

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Attachment: Activity 1, p. 4

Now share this with a partner and respond to these two questions:

- “If someone were to give you all f the items you filled these blanks with, how would you thank that person?”
- God has already given you gifts such as these. What can you do to thank God for them?

Gather as a large group to share what you’ve learned about living stewardship.

Attachment: Activity 1, p. 5

What Does Living Stewardship Mean To You?

For Discussion with Children

Read Deuteronomy 8:7–18 from a translation of the Bible more readily understood by elementary age children, such as the Contemporary English Version or Eugene Peterson’s *The Message*.

As you read, peel and core an apple, cut it into slices, and share them with the children. Cut up as many apples as needed in this way. Reserve the apple cores and peelings on a plate or cutting board in front of you. When you finish reading, lead a brief discussion with the children based on the following questions:

- What kinds of things did God give these people?
- Why should they be thankful to God for these things?
- What do you have that you are thankful to God for?
- I don’t know about you, but I’m pretty thankful for this apple we just ate. Would you have wanted to thank me for sharing it with you if instead of the apple slices, I gave you this core? How about these peelings?
- It is good to recognize and be thankful for the good things that come to us and that we share with others. What are some of the good things we can share with others?
- What are some of the good things God gives us?
- What can we do to thank God for these gifts?

Attachment: Activity 3

God Is Still Speaking

In 2004, the United Church of Christ adopted the phrase “God is still speaking,” to capture the essence of what the UCC stands for and is all about. The phrase emerged from something Gracie Allen wrote to her husband, George Burns, in a letter: “Never place a period where God has placed a comma.” (Gracie Allen and George Burns were a comedy team popular for decades in vaudeville, radio, movies, and TV.)

The concept of the comma resonates with our United Church of Christ history. It is recorded that the pastor of the pilgrims who sailed on the Mayflower, John Robinson, blessed them on their journey by praying, “O God, grant yet more light and truth to break forth from your word.”¹

We serve a living, loving God who is still speaking, who is not finished yet, who has more truth and light to break forth, and who is calling you and me to respond this day. . . . This urgent message is not new. It is old, very old. It is woven deep into our scriptures, tradition and story as Christians and as the United Church of Christ. And yet it is at the same time totally new, because God’s living Word is always new and alive. To say that “God is still speaking” is to connect us with our past for the sake of our future.

Today, the United Church of Christ spreads the message of God’s extravagant welcome, reaching out especially to those who have felt there is no room for them within Christianity and the church—the excluded and alienated, the spiritually homeless, the questioning.

The comma, the understanding that there is still more light and truth to be made known to us, and that we should continue to call on God’s guidance as we live our lives as Christians in the world, all exemplify the work and ministry of the United Church of Christ. In all that we do, we in the United Church of Christ encounter God as a still-speaking God.

This description is based on material found on the UCC Web site about the God Is Still Speaking initiative. For more information, visit <http://www.ucc.org/god-is-still-speaking>.

¹ Anthony B. Robinson, Stillspeaking Bible Study, United Church of Christ. Available at <http://www.tinyurl.com/2euytkm>.

Attachment: Activity 5

The Runaway Horse An Old Chinese Tale

A long time ago, at the edge of a small village, there lived a very poor old man and his son. The only possession this young man could call his own was his horse. One day the young man was seated in front of his house, and nearby his mare was tethered to a post by a leather strap. All of a sudden without notice, the mare reared up, snapped her tether, and tore off into the forest. The son called for his horse, but she was long gone. He just lost his only horse and wondered what would now become of him and his poor father. The neighbors, when they heard the news, gathered at his house and expressed their sympathy at his loss. But his father took his son aside and asked him, "How do you know that this is not a blessing?! How do you know?" The young man thought to himself, "Losing my only horse, a blessing? How can that be?"

A week later, early in the morning, the young man heard the sound of hooves galloping toward the house. He looked out the window and saw his mare! And alongside his mare was a large stallion, a war horse, which had followed her home. And when the neighbors saw that there were now two horses tethered to the post instead of just one, they all gathered at the house to share in the young man's joy. But his father once again took him aside and asked him, "How do you know that this is not a disaster?! How do you know?" The young man thought to himself, "Losing my only horse, but then gaining a mating pair? Disaster?! How can that be?"

But it wasn't a week later when he decided to take a ride on the stallion. Now this war horse was not used to such a light load and tore off into the forest, the young man holding on for dear life. The speed and the tree branches hitting him in the face were too much and he fell to the ground as the horse continued racing deep into the forest. The young man laid there in pain for quite some time until his neighbors found him and brought him home. They declared what great misfortune the young man had experienced, for he indeed had broken his hip. And they returned to their own homes shaking their heads. But his father, seeing the pain his son was experiencing, both in his hip and in his eyes, asked, "How do you know that this is not a blessing?! How do you know?" The young man knew that he would not heal quickly and thought to himself, "A blessing?! I don't even know if I'll ever be able to walk again. How can this be a blessing?"

A week became a month as he lay in his bed. One morning, the gongs in the village were being rung and villagers were running with pitchforks and shoves to meet the danger which the gongs were signaling. The nomads were fiercely attacking the village and most of the men were lost in the battle. But the young man was spared because of his injury and went on to live, albeit with a limp, a long and prosperous life.

So the old ones in China say, "Just beneath blessing crouches disaster, but always perched above disaster one finds blessing. And it is impossible to know which is really which."

Attachment: Activity 6

A Magi Guided Meditation

I'd like you to join me in a time of focused meditation. I'm going to tell a story and describe some scenes, and I'd like for you to imagine that you are part of this story. So close your eyes, place your feet flat on the floor, and take a deep breath: inhale through your nose ... and exhale comfortably out through your mouth. Take another breath in ... and slowly let it out.

Continue breathing in this way as you imagine yourself inside a large bubble. With every breath, the bubble lifts you up higher and higher. Since you are lighter than air, you move effortlessly through the ceiling, then through the roof, gliding through the outside air, over the rooftops. You feel no fear because you are kept warm and safe inside the bubble. It is nighttime and you marvel over the beauty of the lights down below ... and the beauty of the lights above you in the star-filled sky. Surely, God is in this place.

And just as you have become quite comfortable in your warm, safe bubble, marveling over the splendor that surrounds you, you feel yourself being lowered back toward the earth. Yet there is nothing to fear because the warm and pleasant feeling that the bubble provided is now a part of you. Even as the bubble disappears and you find yourself on the back of a camel, bouncing along in a caravan, you are filled with a sense of adventure—as if this is where you were meant to be, what you were meant to be doing.

You are surrounded by your close friends and colleagues, each of them riding a camel as well. There is excitement in the air. You have been planning this trip for years and now you are making the journey of your dreams. And the star ... the star you have been studying for so long ... it is above you, shining more magnificently than you ever imagined.

There is a commotion up ahead. One of your colleagues is speaking quite rapidly and pointing to an inn. You are too far back in the caravan to hear what he is saying, but it is clear from the joy in the faces of your companions that you have reached your destination. All those years of reading, studying the stars, and months of tiresome travel have finally brought you to the place named in the prophecy. You are overwhelmed with joy and excitement as you try to imagine what is inside the inn ... what this prophesied ruler might look like. But your camel is being led toward the area where the animals are kept. As you move closer, you see the light from the star streaming down on a few people. It is a couple hovering over a baby in a manger. Some of your friends are already kneeling before the baby offering their gifts to the parents. Of course! Now it all make sense to you: "A little child shall lead them."

Attachment: Activity 6, page 2

You move toward the manger, hesitantly, savoring every moment, taking in every sight, sound, and smell. You want to remember this moment forever. The child is sleeping, but you can see in his countenance hope for the future; it radiates from his little being. You are so taken with this image of a peaceful, slumbering infant that you have almost forgotten the gift you've carried this long distance.

You reach for the chest you carried with you and present the child's mother with your gift. Her smile is gracious and grateful. You spent much time choosing your gift, making sure that it would be from your heart, from your abundance, from your gratitude . . . a response to all that you've been given. You reflect on this gift—this gift which has become so much a part of you—now given in love. What did this gift mean to you when you chose it? ... What does it mean to you now? ... How has this journey changed you? How has it changed your understanding of giving? ...

(Brief time of silence)

Your friend touches your shoulder and wordlessly tells you that it is time to begin the return journey. You gaze at the child one last time. You look heavenward at the star. And filled with a presence that you cannot even begin to describe, you make your way back to your camel to embark on a new journey. But before you depart, you take one last look at the starlit scene behind you. Surely, God is in this place. And your heart overflows with gratitude.

(Very short time of silence)

And when you become aware of the chair you are sitting in ... and when are ready ... you may open your eyes.

Living Stewardship



Exploration: Scripture

About this Setting

In the United Church of Christ, we take scripture seriously, but not literally. With this seriousness, we come to scripture with our questions and doubts, as well as our hopes, understanding that a lifetime commitment to living with scripture will bring us to an ever closer relationship with God. As we look to scripture for guidance regarding our understanding of stewardship, we bring open minds, open hearts, and gratitude for the life-giving steadfast love of God, with whom “all things are possible” (Matthew 19:26).

About this Exploration

When we hear scripture as a community, we discern its life-giving blessings and reconcile its power to generate wholeness with its history of abuse and its potential for misuse. Scripture gives us a foundational image of God that is relational and embodies differences within the whole. We hear many different voices and contexts within scripture and are invited to sit with these differences without resolving the tension. Within the context of stewardship, scripture affirms that God blesses each part of creation as necessary for the well-being of the whole. At the same time, our experience, guided by the Holy Spirit, calls us to reject an understanding of dominion as power over creation. Scripture tells us that we are made in the image of God the Creator and Source of Life and so invites us to accept the gifts God provides for the enjoyment of all and to embrace “life that is really life” rather than storing up treasures and individual possessions.



BIBLE FOCUS PASSAGES:

Genesis 1:26–31
1 Timothy 6:6–10, 17–19

Leader Preparation

In this focus on scripture, the concept of living stewardship is explored through two passages—one from the Torah and one from an epistle. You may focus the session on only one scripture or “mix and match” them. If children are included in this session, tell the scripture as a story. Use “How to Tell a Story,” Attachment: Extra 1, if you need some guidance. Throughout this session, help the participants observe how scripture can and does inform our sense of living stewardship today. For further information about scripture and the Bible in the United Church of Christ, see Attachment: Extra 2.

Prayer: God of all time, Inspire us with your Word, transform us through these scriptures, and guide us with the love with which you blessed our ancestors in the faith. For we respond to your abundant gifts with grateful hearts. Amen.

Session Development

For each session leaders may choose from nine activities that help learners engage the practice of faith. It is best to select at least one activity from “Exploring and Engaging,” at least one from “Discerning and Deciding,” and at least one from “Sending and Serving.” The first activity in each category is designed for “easy preparation” (able to be done with minimal preparation with supplies normally found at the

Exploring & Engaging Activities



1 The Root of All Evil (Easy Preparation)

Leader Preparation: Read and reflect on 1 Timothy 6:6–10, 17–19.

Supplies:

- Bibles
- children's storybook about stewardship (optional)

Ask if anyone knows where the phrase “Money is the root of all evil” comes from. After listening to all of the responses, invite the participants to follow along in their Bibles as you read 1 Timothy 6:6–10, 17–19, asking them to listen for the phrase. Be sure that they catch the real phrase, which emphasizes the “love of money.” Lead a discussion about the emotions we tend to have regarding money. What are the typical emotions? What are the extreme ones? Which ones do you think God wants us to have when we approach our finances, both personal and congregational? Anthony B. Robinson writes in *The Bible and the United Church of Christ* that “the Bible is . . . about our identity as the church: who we are, our calling or mission, what God asks of us as the church.” What is God asking of us in this scripture passage? If children are a part of this session, recruit someone to read and discuss a storybook about stewardship with them during this time (for example, *The Merchant and the Thief: A Folktale of Godly Wisdom* by Ravi K. Zacharias).

2 On the Sixth Day of Creation

Leader preparation: Read and reflect on Genesis 1:26–31. Ask your pastor or other knowledgeable person about the Hebrew origins of the words “dominion” (in verse 26) and “subdue” (in verse 28), and read the information found at <http://www.tinyurl.com/2eox6ua>.

If you have a person who does storytelling in your congregation, invite him or her to this session to tell the scripture as a story.

Supplies:

- Bibles
- scrap paper
- pens or pencils

Have a volunteer read Genesis 1:26–31 to the group (or invite a person who does storytelling to tell the story). Share with the participants that caring for God’s creation is one of the ways we in the United Church of Christ acknowledge that God is still speaking. Also lead a brief discussion on the words “dominion” and “subdue” based on what you learned from the Hebrew. Then invite the group to brainstorm on paper all of the ways that God calls us to be good stewards of God’s creation. Share these in your church’s newsletter, your church Web site, in an upcoming sermon, and in other ways with your congregation.

3 What Scripture Says About Giving

Leader preparation: Order copies of the brochure “What Scripture Says About Giving” from UCC Resources, <http://www.tinyurl.com/2dqdr9s>, or call 800-537-3394), or use the attached handout. Become familiar with this brochure in order to lead this activity.



church). Using all nine activities could take 90–120 minutes.

- To plan a session of 30–45 minutes, choose three activities, using one activity from each category.
- To plan a session of 45–60 minutes, choose four or five activities, using at least one activity from each category.

Supplies:

- copies of the brochure “What Scripture Says about Giving,” <http://www.tinyurl.com/2dqdr9s>, or Attachment: Activity 3
- computer with presentation software, or scrap paper and pencils

Allow time for the participants to read the brochure (or handout). Then divide the group into three groups, instructing each to design a computer software presentation (on a computer or by creating a draft on scrap paper to create on computer later) connecting the text with photos from the life of your congregation. If children and youth are not available for this activity, be sure to include their input and any photographs they may have taken as well. Present the final product during your congregation’s next intergenerational event or stewardship campaign.

Discerning & Deciding Activities



4 Dollar, Dollar, Who’s Got the Dollar? (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Cut dollar bill shapes out of green construction paper or make reduced black and white copies of a dollar bill, one for each participant.

Supplies:

- green construction paper or a dollar and a copy machine
- scissors
- game instructions, Attachment: Activity 4

Play the game as instructed on the handout. Then lead the group in a debriefing discussion, using the questions on the handout.

5 Six Geese A-Praying

Leader preparation: Read and reflect on Genesis 1:26–31.

Supplies:

- Bibles
- scrap paper
- pens or pencils
- accompaniment music for “The Twelve Days of Christmas” <http://www.tinyurl.com/22lyfhs>

Have the group skim Genesis 1:1–2:3 and list what God created on each of the seven days of creation. Using the tune from “The Twelve Days of Christmas,” rewrite the song using the items created on each of the seven days with a three-to-four syllable phrase for how to be good stewards of them. (For example: On the sixth day of creation our good God gave to us—animals to take care of . . .) Print out your new song to share and sing at your next intergenerational event.

6 The Bible and the United Church of Christ

Leader preparation: Read and become familiar with the quotations on the attached handout.

**Supplies:**

- handout “The Bible and the United Church of Christ,” Attachment: Activity 6

Explain to the group that you will be reading statements from people knowledgeable about the beliefs of the United Church of Christ. Ask the participants to imagine an invisible line on the floor spanning the length of the room. Designate one end of the room as complete agreement with the statement read, and the other end complete disagreement with it. Invite persons to stand in the place on that spectrum that represents to what degree they agree or disagree with the quote. At the end of each statement and after everyone has found a place, ask for volunteers to explain why they chose where they’re standing. Conclude this activity by discussing the stewardship question at the bottom of the handout.

Sending & Serving Activities



7 Prayers of the People (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Prayerfully reflect on your own views of money in the church.

Supplies:

- index cards
- pens or pencils
- bowl or basket
- table for a worship center
- candle and matches or lighter

This is a good closing activity. Invite participants to write a brief anonymous prayer asking God for guidance with their use of money. Place the completed cards in a bowl or basket on the worship center and redistribute them so that everyone has another’s card. Light the candle on the worship center and invite the participants to join you in the spirit of prayer as each reads a prayer card aloud one at a time. Close by saying, “*And all the people shall say, ‘Amen.’*”

8 Symbols of Creation

Leader preparation: Gather seven small symbols to place on the worship center representing each of the seven days of creation. Use this as your own personal devotional time and preparation for leading this activity. Practice gratitude for each.

Supplies:

- table for a worship center
- seven small representations of each of the seven days of creation
- candle and matches or lighter

Place the seven symbols of creation on the worship center and light the candle. If necessary, briefly identify each symbol and invite each person, one at a time, to go prayerfully to the worship center, pick up a symbol, and offer a one-sentence prayer for the care of that element. You might suggest that such symbols would enrich a worship center at home.

Close with a brief prayer of your own or use the following: *Still speaking God, you have blessed us with the abundance of your creation. Help us to care for it as you care for us. We pray this from the gratitude in our hearts. Amen.*



9 Orion Nebula

Leader preparation: Spend time studying the poster Orion Nebula by Stocktrek Images, <http://www.tinyurl.com/AllPosters6>.

Supplies:

- poster Orion Nebula by Stocktrek Images, <http://www.tinyurl.com/AllPosters6>
- CD of classical music, CD player
- watercolor paints
- paper
- paintbrushes
- cups of water
- old newspapers to cover the work area

Play the classical music softly as you invite the participants to view the poster. Ask them to imagine being witnesses to the first moments of creation. Then have them use the watercolors to create their own grateful artistic response to God's abundant works.

Reflect

In the United Church of Christ, we take Scripture seriously. In what ways were the members of your group challenged by the Scriptures? Where did you see gratitude for what was shared and learned?

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Attachment: Extra 1

How To Tell a Story

Storytelling is one of the most effective means of sharing the stories of the Bible with children of *all* ages. It makes sense because much of the Bible was originally passed from generation to generation through oral tradition. Not only that, but we are already adept at telling stories because we do it every day. How many times have you come home from school or work and said, "Guess what happened to me today?" And the story begins.

While we tell stories all the time, it is possible to lose confidence when we are given the responsibility to tell an important story and to tell it in a way that teaches and even transforms others. But we already have it in us; we *can* do it. The trick is to recall what goes on in your head when you respond to a question like, "So what did you do today?" What follows are some suggestions for how to begin:

Step One: Read the story over a few times until you have "put yourself in each of the characters' shoes."

Step Two: Jot down or remember the main events of the story.

Step Three: Read through the story one more time, very slowly, creating mental images for yourself. What does the setting look like? Are there any distinctive smells? What can you hear and what does it sound like? Does the story allow you to taste or touch anything?

Step Four: Now retell the story from memory. You will be surprised how much you remember and can tell of the story because you are simply describing the mental images in your head to your audience. Have fun with these stories!

Step Five: Be sure to have an open Bible on your lap when telling a story from the Bible. This helps your audience (especially children) to make a visual connection with the source of the story.

Attachment: Extra 2

Additional Resources for Scripture

Children's Bibles for Older Elementary Readers (or can be read to younger children)

The Family Story Bible by Ralph Milton (ISBN: 0664221084). Provides gender balance and inclusive language for God.
<http://www.tinyurl.com/38mo3rv>

The Pilgrim Book of Bible Stories (ISBN: 0-8298-1487-6). Illustrated by an Israeli artist. Includes a helpful Bible content chart/timeline. Order from UCC Resources at <http://www.tinyurl.com/37u5mjw> or by calling 800-537-3394.

The Bible: A People Listen to God (ISBN: 0814625096). Conscientiously retold Bible stories in the order in which they were created (begins with the story of Abram/Abraham). Gives children (and adults) a better understanding of the chronology of biblical history. Includes fascinating and helpful introductions to each of its eight sections of Bible stories.
<http://www.tinyurl.com/2wpuow5>

Children's Bibles for Beginning Readers

The Beginners' Bible: Timeless Children's Stories (ISBN: 0310709628), ages 4–8. Ninety-five familiar Bible stories rewritten for children. <http://www.tinyurl.com/23t3ar2>

The Early Readers' Bible (ISBN: 0310701392), ages 4–8. Sixty-four familiar Bible stories, based on standard public school word lists. Includes questions for pondering and relating the stories to the child's everyday life.
<http://www.tinyurl.com/255p5p9>

A Bible for Youth

The Learning Bible: Contemporary English Version by Howard Clark Kee and the American Bible Society (ISBN-10: 1585160172; ISBN-13: 978-1585160174). Includes clear explanatory material: background and analysis, colorful and informative illustrations, tables, charts, and maps. <http://www.tinyurl.com/33ggblg>

Bible Study Books and Resources for Adults

"What Scripture Says about Giving" This brief brochure from Stewardship and Church Finances of the United Church of Christ looks at the question of how much to give to the work of the church and why. Order from UCC Resources at <http://www.tinyurl.com/33rr6z2> or by calling 800-537-3394.

The Gifting God This compact, five-session group study based closely on the Bible will break open the subject of giving for everyone no matter how much or how little they are currently giving. Excellent for small groups, for using one session at a time with committees (especially stewardship or finance committees, and trustees). Also very effective as a personal Bible study/devotion. Order from UCC Resources at <http://www.tinyurl.com/2d9vgey> or by calling 800-537-3394.

The Bible and the United Church of Christ. United Church of Christ understandings of the Bible from Quinn Caldwell, Martin Copenhaver, Lillian Daniel, and Anthony Robinson. <http://www.tinyurl.com/uccbible>

Attachment: Extra 2, page 2

Bible for Vital Congregations by Barbara Essex. (ISBN: 978-0-8298-1732-4). Order from UCC Resources at <http://www.tinyurl.com/27pw5uh> or by calling 800-537-3394.

Reading the Bible from the Margins by Miguel A. de la Torre (ISBN: 978-1-57075-410-4). An introduction on how to read the Bible from the perspective of the poor, the oppressed, and victims of discrimination. This book focuses on how issues involving race, class, and gender influence our understanding of the Bible. Describing how “standard” readings of the Bible don’t always prove acceptable to people or groups on the “margins.” Order from UCC Resources at <http://www.tinyurl.com/29hwhsd> or by calling 800-537-3394.

The Word and You: A Lectionary-Based Exploration of the Bible, vols. 1–3 (Vol. 1 ISBN: 0-8298-1165-6) (Vol. 2 ISBN: 0-8298-1241-5) (Vol. 3 ISBN: 0-8298-1309-8). Order from UCC Resources at <http://www.tinyurl.com/29tjglm>, <http://www.tinyurl.com/22qx5kv>, and <http://www.tinyurl.com/273mqbf>, or by calling 800-537-3394.

For Such A Time As This: A Bible Study for Stewardship in Challenging Times by Rochelle A. Stackhouse. Order from UCC Resources at <http://www.tinyurl.com/2dngloj> or by calling 800-537-3394.

The Stillspeaking Bible Study, <http://www.tinyurl.com/26yopk8>.

Web sites

The Bible and the United Church of Christ, <http://www.tinyurl.com/uccbible>, click on “How to read the Bible.”

How to pray with the Bible, <http://www.tinyurl.com/uccbible2>, click on “How to pray with the Bible.”

What Does It Mean to Take the Bible Seriously? <http://www.tinyurl.com/bible3>

UCC Online Bible Studies

UCC Online Bible Forum. To register, visit <http://www.tinyurl.com/uccbible4>.

Weekly Seeds: An in-depth reflection on next Sunday’s Bible reading. To subscribe, visit <http://www.tinyurl.com/2b66amj>.

The Stillspeaking Online Daily Devotional. To subscribe, visit <http://www.tinyurl.com/dailydevotional>.

Keeping You e-Posted. Weekly e-blast that contains links to Weekly Seeds, Daily Devotional and more. Subscribe at <http://www.tinyurl.com/uccposted>.

Attachment: Activity 3

What Scripture Says about Giving

How much we give is determined by our sense of how much we have received. Everything the Scriptures say about giving is in the context of what God has first given us. And what has God given us? Our next breath. Life itself. God's love to know joy and assurance through life and death, sickness and health. Life eternal. Salvation. Confidence that no trouble we know, not even the worst evil, can defeat the goodness God wants in and for us. Beyond speechless wonder, the only genuine response to all this is gratitude—a heartfelt thankfulness that makes us generous, less as a duty than as the least we can do in response to all God does for us.

What has God given? The real question is what hasn't God given?

The Bible says three things about how much, at the least, we should give in gratitude to God:

- The Old Testament speaks of first fruits giving, in which what is shared from all we have been given comes "off the top"—a good reminder that, before all else, God and what God does for us is priority number one in our lives.
- Then, the Old Testament teaches, and the New Testament presumes, the tithe—the giving of 10 percent of one's income and belongings through one's place of worship.
- The New Testament, and particularly St. Paul, go beyond tithing to teach proportionate giving—meaning the more we have, the more we should give.

All together, these three measures or standards might be expressed this way: In gratitude to God for all that God in Christ does for us, we should give at least 10 percent of our income right off the top, going beyond that in proportion to what we have.

Some of us will protest that this is much more than we can do. But is this not also the case with Jesus' command to love our enemies? And what of the other hard demands of following Christ? Do they not go far beyond what we think reasonable and practical?

The best response to high standards is not to lower them to a comfortable level, but to ask for God's grace and guidance to help us grow. God's biddings are God's enablings: we're never asked to do anything we're not also enabled to do.

The solution for those who feel they cannot tithe is to respect the standard and grow toward it by the grace and guidance of God.

(Perhaps, for some, this will mean accepting a standard of not 10 percent, but 3 percent as a first step. Whatever one's level of giving, a commitment can be made to accept the tithe as one's standard and to move toward it on some fixed basis.)

God wants nothing but the best for the church and for us all. Following God's Word in the strength and confidence of Christ, the best comes to pass—slowly as we see it, perhaps, but surely and beyond all doubt. All that we have and are come from God or lead to God. Nothing is outside God's provision and providence. Above all, we have been given the One who makes all this known and possible: Jesus, our Savior and Friend, who is Christ, our Lord.

Reprinted from "What Scripture Says About Giving," produced by Stewardship and Church Finances, United Church of Christ. Order from UCC Resources, <http://www.tinyurl.com/33rr6z2>, or by calling 800-537-3394.

Attachment: Activity 4

Dollar, Dollar, Who's Got the Dollar?

Instructions:

Have the participants sit in a circle. Hand a "dollar bill" to each person and explain that you are going to play a game together. You will ask a series of ten questions (listed below), one at a time. All who can answer "yes" to the question must pass a "dollar bill" to the person on their right. Inform them that at the end of the game, the person with the most "dollar bills" will receive a "prize." (The "prize" will be receipt of all the "dollar bills," but don't tell them this until the end of the game. The purpose of offering this evasive "prize" is to build a sense of competition to feed the discussion following the game.) At the end of the game, the person holding the most "dollar bills" is declared the winner and receives the "prize."

Game Questions:

- Were you born in the Midwest?
- Have you ever visited another country?
- Is your favorite color blue?
- Do you have more than one brother or sister?
- Did you go to church as a child?
- Are you wearing green?
- Do you like anchovies?
- Do you have a pet?
- Can you drive?
- Are you under age thirty?

Questions for Discussion:

- Were you surprised by any actions, reactions, or verbal outbursts you may have made while playing this game?
- Why do you think you behaved that way?
- How do the emotions raised during this game compare and contrast with real life responses to money issues?
- What connections can you make between this exercise and giving in your church?
- Include your own questions appropriate to the discussion.

Attachment: Activity 6

The Bible and the United Church of Christ

The following quotations are taken from "The Bible and the United Church of Christ" found at <http://www.tinyurl.com/uccbible>.

"We take the Bible seriously but not literally. In our (United Church of Christ) tradition, we take it so seriously that we take the time to study the social and historical context in which it was written." (Lillian Daniel)

"We believe that the Bible is the opening of a conversation in which God is still speaking. We do not think the Bible will shrivel up and die because we dare to question why it says what it does." (Lillian Daniel)

"We believe that the Bible is God's own holy word passed down to us through fallible human beings. We can imagine that some of what is in the Bible was a product of a particular time and place and is not what God desires for this time and place." (Lillian Daniel)

"We do not use phrases (from the Bible) as stand-alone weapons to prove our point or to injure another person. Rather, we read the phrase as it has been nested in the text." (Lillian Daniel)

"Something does not need to be historically true to be eternally true." (Martin B. Copenhaver)

"Taking the Bible seriously means receiving it as being inspired by God as containing God's word to the community of faith." (Martin B. Copenhaver)

"Taking the Bible seriously ... means taking into account the human influences it reflects. The Bible was not dictated by God." (Martin B. Copenhaver)

"Our study of the Bible is not merely an intellectual exercise. It is a spiritual endeavor..." (Martin B. Copenhaver)

"Bring your insights and your questions and ... listen receptively to what others have to offer ... because ... one can never know whom the Holy Spirit will choose to speak through at any given moment." (Martin B. Copenhaver)

"We often learn the most from other people when we don't readily agree with them. Often that is true in our relationship with the Bible as well." (Martin B. Copenhaver)

Stewardship Questions for Discussion:

- There is a standard from the Bible in the Old Testament for giving one tenth back to God. Based on these quotes, what do you think the United Church of Christ believes about giving one tenth of your income to the church? (See Attachment: Activity 3)
- What do you personally believe about giving one tenth of your income to the church?

Living Stewardship



Exploration: Discipleship

About this Setting

The United Church of Christ encourages Christian discipleship in all of its members, but perhaps some of the most intentional discipling happens with its children and youth. The more than two-century-old congregational tradition of providing Sunday school continues to this day in the vast majority of UCC churches as one of the primary avenues for making Christian disciples of our children and youth. Yet having a Sunday school, or even a wide variety of children and youth programming, does not guarantee the forming of disciples. It is the relationships made within each community of faith, the exposure to Christian disciples of all ages, and the covenantal community engaging in worship that brings the most people (children and adults alike) to commit their lives to following Christ. Children and youth who consistently engage in the entire life of their faith community are raised to be disciples who live as stewards of the faith and the world every day of their lives.

About this Exploration

Generational and experiential differences condition how we perceive, understand, and practice discipleship. Being an intentional disciple of Jesus presumes being a person of faith who embraces life as a journey of discovery and discernment about who Jesus is and what it means to live as a steward of God's creation. Discipleship involves the stewardship of our whole lives even as it enables our stewardship.



BIBLE FOCUS PASSAGES:

Isaiah 55:1–3
Mark 10:17–22

Leader Preparation

The activities presented here are intended for intergenerational groups of youth, adults, and elementary age children in order for all ages to experience becoming good steward disciples together. Events such as pot luck suppers, all-church retreats, and after-worship programs for all are good occasions for using this exploration. It is also possible to use these activities specifically for an age-specific group. As the leader of the session, be sure to adapt the activities to the specific learning abilities in your group. For further information about forming good steward disciples, see “Additional Resources for Discipleship,” Attachment: Extra 1.

Prayer: God of all birthing, God of all living, God of all dying, hear our prayers this day. We celebrate the ever-present possibilities for your church to be a Family of Blessing for your beloved children. As church, we pray that we might always be attentive to the ways in which we can be an ever more inclusive, nurturing, stimulating, relevant, and healing community for all your children. May we recommit ourselves daily to your gospel call to serve those in need in our world as if they were our very own sisters and brothers, sons and daughters, and to advocate for them and their well-being in the halls of power as well as in our own sanctuaries. In the name of the One who came to us, loved us as his own, and gave to us new life, we pray. Amen.

(From <http://www.ucc.org/children/prayer-for-the-family.html>)

Exploring & Engaging Activities

1 Talent Worksheet (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Make copies of the handout for the participants. If desired, use the handout as a basis for your church’s own personalized talent worksheet.

Supplies:

- “Talent Worksheet,” Attachment: Activity 1
- pens or pencils

Have the participants fill out the Talent Worksheet. When they have finished, divide them up into category groups based on the category with the highest number of check marks. Invite them to share their talent with each other in these groups and brainstorm ideas for how to work together in these ministries.

2 The Table Where Rich People Sit

Leader preparation: Acquire the children’s book *The Table Where Rich People Sit* by Byrd Baylor, <http://www.tinyurl.com/29o6xhs>, and become familiar with the story. Read and reflect on Isaiah 55:1–3 and jot down the parallels between it and the storybook. Then find three places within the storybook to insert each verse of the scripture for when you read it to the participants.

Supplies:

- Bible (recommended: The Contemporary English Version or *The Message*)
- a copy of the book *The Table Where Rich People Sit* by Byrd Baylor
<http://www.tinyurl.com/29o6xhs>

Gather the group in a circle to listen to the reading of *The Table Where Rich People Sit* and the Isaiah scripture passage you have embedded in it. Then ask questions for discussion, such as: What does God give us that we don’t need to buy? How do we show God that we are thankful for these gifts? How do these gifts make us “rich”?

3 The Magic Penny Game

Leader preparation: Read the instructions for “The Magic Penny Game” on Attachment: Activity 3 and gather enough pennies for the number of participants you will have. Make game “tokens” out of cardboard and write the players’ initials on each one.

Supplies:

- “The Magic Penny Game,” Attachment: Activity 3
- five pennies for each player plus two
- the “tokens” you made

Explain the rules for “The Magic Penny Game,” then play the game. When the game is finished, tell the players: In the song “The Magic Penny,” the refrain says that love is like a magic penny in that when you give it away, you end up having more. Did you see this sort of thing happen when you were imagining the situations from the game? Why? Why not?



Session Development

Discerning & Deciding Activities

For each session leaders may choose from nine activities that help learners engage the practice of faith. It is best to select at least one activity from “Exploring and Engaging,” at least one from “Discerning and Deciding,” and at least one from “Sending and Serving.” The first activity in each category is designed for “easy preparation” (able to be done with minimal preparation with supplies normally found at the church). Using all nine activities could take 90–120 minutes.

- To plan a session of 30–45 minutes, choose three activities, using one activity from each category.
- To plan a session of 45–60 minutes, choose four or five activities, using at least one activity from each category.



4 Stewardship of Time and Talent (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Read the instructions for this activity on the handout, Attachment: Activity 4.

Supplies:

- “Stewardship of Time and Talent,” Attachment: Activity 4
- designate each corner of the room as either “a,” “b,” “c,” or “d”

Invite the participants to gather in the center of the room. Explain that you will be asking them four questions about how they spend a typical week. Their responses will help them to see how well they are practicing stewardship of their time and talent. Also explain that they will be given four responses to choose from and will show their response by moving to the corner of the room that you designate for the response. They can only choose one response, so encourage them to choose the best answer even if they want to choose more than one. This activity is a fun way for an intergenerational group to share how they give of their time and talent. When you are finished with the activity, invite each group to state one understanding about stewardship or an insight about themselves that they have discovered.

5 The Church Budget

Leader preparation: Print out as many copies of the handout as there are small groups, one set for each group. Copy and cut out enough “dollars” for each person to have twelve.

Supplies:

- a set of handout sheets for each group, six ministry areas, Attachment: Activity 5
- scissors
- “dollars” to photocopy (see Attachment: Activity 5)

Divide the participants into two or more groups with an equal number of children, youth, and adults in each. Give each group the sheets from the handout along with twelve “dollar bills” for each person. Tell the groups that each group represents a church and is charged with creating the annual church budget. As a group, they are to determine—together—how much money will go to each category listed on the sheets by placing dollars on them. Each person may divide his or her “dollars” among each of the six ministry areas. The more dollars on a sheet, the more the group wishes to fund that ministry. When each group has finished, invite them to share their results and rationales with the other groups.

6 A Rich Man

Leader preparation: Read and reflect on Mark 10:17–22 as well as the handout “What Scripture Says about Giving” Attachment: Activity 3. Recruit two actors to dramatize this scripture passage for the group.

Supplies:

- Bibles (recommended: The Contemporary English Version or *The Message*)
- “What Scripture Says about Giving,” Attachment: Activity 6
- biblical costumes for the actors (optional)



Introduce the actors and provide some brief background about what the group will be seeing. After the presentation, ask the group: What can we do to have eternal life? and encourage them to list all of the ways they can think of. Ask also: How does Jesus hope that we can accomplish all of these things? Refer to the handout "What Scripture Says about Giving," Attachment: Activity 6 to help them wrestle with this question.

Sending & Serving Activities

7 The Banjo Lesson (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Acquire the poster "The Banjo Lesson" by Henry Ossawa Tanner. Spend some personal time with the image as you reflect on the ways you were mentored and discipled as a child.

Supplies:

- poster: The Banjo Lesson by Henry Ossawa Tanner, <http://www.tinyurl.com/AllPosters4>

Allow a few minutes for the group to study the art work. Then invite them, one at a time, to tell their story in one sentence; going around the circle each one builds on each individual's story. Encourage them to imagine what happened before this scene (flashback), what might be happening right now, and what might happen next. Then invite those who wish to share a story about a time someone taught them how to do something. What was it like to receive a gift like that? Are you able to pass on that gift to another? In what ways is this good stewardship of one's talent?

8 Blessing Bowl

Leader preparation: Read the information found at <http://www.tinyurl.com/28zpjew> to determine how you would like to use the blessing bowl in your congregation or with your church's families.

Supplies:

- a bowl or bowls (or basket),
- paper
- scissors
- yarn or ribbon
- pens and crayons

See the instructions for using a blessing bowl in worship, other areas of your congregation's life, or with your church's families at <http://www.tinyurl.com/28zpjew> to foster a sense of gratitude for all of God's blessings.

9 Pledge Cards

Leader preparation: Look into inexpensive ways of printing the pledge card designs your group creates, or recruit artistic volunteers from your congregation to help make them a reality.



Supplies:

- scrap paper
- pens or pencils
- markers
- sample pledge cards from previous years (you can use 5" x 8" index cards for this)

As a group, create three pledge card designs to be used by your church's adults, youth, and children. For example, the card for children could offer categories such as "Myself, My \$, and My Minutes." Be sure that the children and youth are involved with their own designs. Be creative, lifting up words and images that help people to respond out of their gratitude for God's abundant gifts.

Reflect

What kinds of learning about stewardship took place for both children, youth, and adults in your intergenerational settings? What did the children and youth learn from observing the adults? What did the adults learn from observing the children and youth? How can you further this type of discipleship in other areas of your congregational life together?

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Attachment: Extra 1

Additional Resources for Discipleship (Stewardship with Children and Youth)

Books and Resources for Children and Families

Giving Together: A Stewardship Guide for Families by Carol A. Wehrheim (ISBN-10: 0664226892; ISBN-13: 978-0664226893). Helps families understand the importance of stewardship in the family, the congregation, the community, and in the world. Biblical passages and spiritual practice suggestions help families respond to their call to be stewards in today's world. Includes leader's guide. <http://www.tinyurl.com/24a68m2>

God's Gifts, My Gifts, by Sandy Luechsen, produced by the Stewardship and Church Finances Team, Local Church Ministries, United Church of Christ. This resource teaches that God is the source of who we are and what we have, and is our model for being generous and faithful. Elementary-age children will have fun in class or at home using these five colorful and snappy foldout sheets with individual and group activities, including scriptural texts and prayers. Set includes five active lessons to reinforce the church, personal decisions, loving God, self, and others. View flier at <http://www.tinyurl.com/24brhyo>. Order from UCC Resources by calling 800-537-3394.

Let the Children Give—Time, Talents, Love, and Money by Delia Halverson (ISBN-10: 0881775010; ISBN-13: 978-0881775013). Including creative, educational activities for children of all ages, this book instructs adults on how to demonstrate stewardship in everyday, practical ways. Also good for preparing Sunday school and Vacation Bible School lesson plans. <http://www.tinyurl.com/26qww9b>

Children and Families in the United Church of Christ, <http://www.ucc.org/children>

What Matters for Children and Families: Engaging Six Vital Themes of Our Faith, Frank Proctor, ed. Eight writers, representing several different family heritages, created this edition especially for church leaders, parents, and caregivers who minister to children ages 12 and younger. It will teach them how to initiate meaningful conversations through which children can grasp the vision and values of the UCC. Order from UCC Resources at <http://www.tinyurl.com/272z18s> or by calling 800-537-3394.

Build a Village from Church World Service, <http://www.churchworldservice.org/buildavillage>. An interactive Web site for the whole family, featuring alternative holiday and year-round gift giving opportunities in support of the life-changing work of Church World Service—as well as stories, games, and other activities from children of all ages.

Scriptographic booklets from Channing L. Bete, Inc.

Stewardship bookmarks, magnets, banks, family kits, envelopes, stickers, children's/teen's workbooks, presentation kit, etc. Order from <http://www.faiithguides.com> (search "stewardship")

The Giving Box: Create a Tradition of Giving with Your Children by Fred Rogers (ISBN-10: 0762408251; ISBN-13: 978-0762408252), ages 7 and up. Includes fables from around the world about giving. Sold with a tin bank. <http://www.tinyurl.com/2ak4jvx>.

The Table Where Rich People Sit by Byrd Baylor (ISBN-10: 0689820089; ISBN-13: 978-0689820083), grades 3–5. A young girl learns that riches consist of more than money. <http://www.tinyurl.com/29o6xhs>

Miss Fannie's Hat by Jan Karon (ISBN-10: 0140568123; ISBN-13: 978-0140568127), ages 4–8. Miss Fannie, age 99, has many hats, but will she offer her favorite for the church auction? <http://www.tinyurl.com/23b9315>

Attachment: Extra 1, page 2

The Giving Tree by Shel Silverstein (ISBN-10: 0060586753; ISBN-13: 978-0060586751), ages 4–8. A story of a boy and a tree, the gift of giving, and the capacity to love in return. <http://www.tinyurl.com/2buvcbi>

The Merchant and the Thief: A Folktale of Godly Wisdom by Ravi K. Zacharias (ISBN-10: 0781432960; ISBN-13: 978-0781432962). An ancient Indian folktale adapted for today about life's true wealth. <http://www.tinyurl.com/2aase6g>

The Riches of Oseola McCarty by Evelyn Coleman (ISBN-10: 0807569615; ISBN-13: 978-0807569610), for grades 2–5. The true story of a poor, hard-working, and frugal 87-year-old African American woman who donated her life savings (\$150,000) to the University of Southern Mississippi. <http://www.tinyurl.com/2b34hvx>

Books and Resources for Youth

Way To Live: Christian Practices for Teens by Dorothy Bass and Don Richter (ISBN-10: 0835809757; ISBN-13: 978-0835809757). Each chapter is written by a young person and an adult including Mark Yaconelli and Susan Briebl, plus a chapter written by Emily Saliers of the Indigo Girls and her father, Don Saliers, a Methodist minister. Each chapter focuses on a different faith practice such as prayer, forgiveness, creativity, creation, justice, music, and the like. <http://www.tinyurl.com/243vlcd>

Growing Up Generous: Engaging Youth in Giving and Serving by Eugene C. Roehlkepartain, Elanah Dalyah Naftali, and Laura Musegades (ISBN-10: 1566992389; ISBN-13: 978-1566992381). Explores both Jewish and Christian traditions of giving, service, and the issue of money. <http://www.tinyurl.com/y9fra3j>

Resources for Parents and Adult Leaders

Giving Together: A Stewardship Guide for Families by Carol A. Wehrheim (ISBN-10: 0664226892; ISBN-13: 978-0664226893). Helps families understand the importance of stewardship in the family, the congregation, the community, and in the world. Biblical passages and spiritual practice suggestions help families respond to their call to be stewards in today's world. Includes leader's guide. <http://www.tinyurl.com/24a68m2>

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Stewards in the Household of God: Stewards in Formation: Children, Youth and Young Adults. <http://www.tinyurl.com/2bqelvd>

Money Doesn't Grow on Trees: A Parent's Guide to Raising Financially Responsible Children by Neale S. Godfrey, Carolina Edwards, and Tad Richards (ISBN-10: 0743287800; ISBN-13: 978-0743287807). Offers exercises and concrete examples on everything from responsible budgeting to understanding the difference between "want" and "need" for children of every age. Also discusses the power of the Internet, tactics of television advertisers, and the world of eBay.

Let the Children Give: Time, Talents, Love, and Money by Delia Halverson (ISBN-10: 0881775010; ISBN-13: 978-0881775013). Including creative, educational activities for children of all ages, this book instructs adults on how to demonstrate stewardship in everyday, practical ways. Also good for preparing Sunday school and Vacation Bible School lesson plans. <http://www.tinyurl.com/26qww9b>

Kids2Kids

<http://www.tinyurl.com/kids2kids>. A children's mission program that gives children in North America opportunities to learn about and serve children from other parts of the world.

Attachment: Activity 1

Talent Worksheet

Homemaking

- Cooking/baking
- Childcare
- Cleaning
- Visiting
- Shopping/purchasing

Leadership

- Leading meetings
- Teaching
- Leading games
- Public speaking
- Working with youth

Mechanics/Electronics

- Fixing things/machines
- Computers
- Building/repairing
- Electrical
- Heating/air-conditioning

Artistic

- Musical instrument: _____
- Musical voice part: _____
- Dancing
- Acting
- Drawing/painting
- Working with fabrics, yarn, needlework
- Writing
- Arranging flowers
- Interior decorating
- Journalism

Health

- CPR
- Nursing
- Aerobics
- Physical/occupational therapy
- Nutrition

Athletics

- Sports (list here):
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Nature

- Growing plants/flowers
- Camping
- Hiking
- Walking
- Mowing lawns

Clerical

- Office work
- Desktop publishing, database
- Using copy machine
- Printing
- Answering phone

Other:

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

The Magic Penny Game

Instructions

Give 5 pennies to each player, place 5 on the church in the center of the board, and use two pennies as “dice.” The youngest player goes first and play moves clockwise. The first player gently tosses the two pennies to determine how many spaces to move.

2 heads = move ahead 3 spaces

2 tails = move ahead 2 spaces

1 heads, 1 tails = move ahead one space

The player then reads aloud what is written on that space. For spaces that describe giving, give one penny to the church in the center of the gameboard. For spaces that describe receiving, take one penny from the church. If a player gives away all of his or her pennies before the end of the game, he/she receives one penny from each of the other players in order to continue playing. The game ends when the last player reaches the Finish Penny and all of the pennies are given away.

The Magic Penny Game



You are blessed with abundance in your life. Give all your pennies to the church and move ahead one space.

Move ahead one space.

Move ahead two spaces.

Move ahead three spaces.

You said you were sorry for forgetting a friend's birthday.

Church members help repair your roof.

You read the Bible to a friend who can't see.

Take 2 pennies from the church and go back 1 space.

Your church prays for you when you're sick.

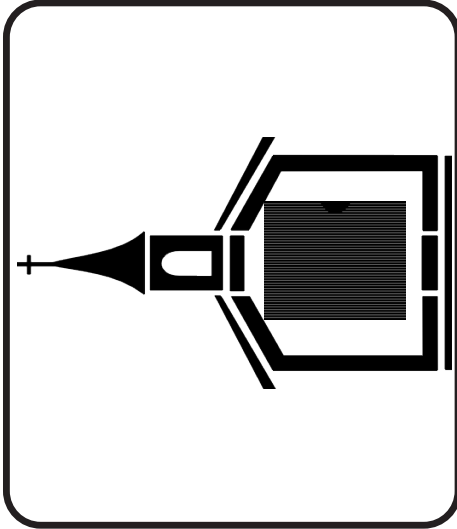
You bring your old (but still good) clothes to the thrift shop.

The church sent you flowers when your grandfather died.

You helped with the church's clean-up day.

Give a penny to the church and move ahead 3 spaces.

The church members help you pay to go on a mission trip.



Give 2 pennies to the church and move ahead 2 spaces.

A church member gave you a ride to a doctor's appointment.

You took care of a stray cat until its owner was found.

Your Sunday School teacher sent you a thank you note.

You bake cookies for Coffee Hour at church.

Take a penny from the church and go back 3 spaces.

The pastor tells your choir you sang very well.

You visit a homebound couple and make them happy.

You make friends with someone who is unpopular.

When you break your leg, a friend mows your lawn.

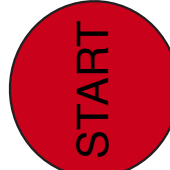
You volunteer to bring food to the elderly.

Great start! Take another turn!

When you lose your job, the church offers food.

You and your family pray for a neighbor in the hospital.

Slow start; take another turn.



Stewardship of Time and Talent — How Do You Spend Your Week?

How do you spend your week at work or school?

- I have a calendar or notebook that helps to keep me organized and get all of my homework or assignments done on time.
- I look forward to spending most of my time at work or school socializing with or playing with my friends.
- I work hard at school or work so that I can relax when I get home.
- I try not to take my school or work too seriously.

How do you spend your week at play?

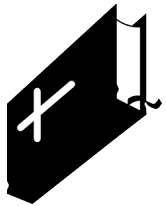
- I set aside certain hours of the day for play and relaxation.
- I try to play all of the time.
- I don't have time for play, so I don't.
- I love to play, but for some reason I never seem to get to it.

How do you spend your week doing things for others?

- I have chores that I do at home.
- I try to get involved in most of the service projects my church does.
- I don't have time to do things for others.
- My family and I find ways to serve people in need on a regular basis.

How do you spend your week resting or taking sabbath time?

- I go to church.
- I don't have time to rest.
- I relax on the golf course (or soccer field, while shopping, or . . .
- I make sure to take regular time for myself.



Worship and Music

Buy hymnals and songbooks,
candles, Bibles, and flowers. Pay
musicians. Buy and care for
instruments. Clean robes for acolytes
and choir. Make worship bulletins.

*Adapted from God's Gifts, My Gifts, written by Sandy Luechsen,
produced by the Stewardship and Church Finances Team, Local Church Ministries, United Church of Christ.*



Minister and Staff



Pay the people who work in the church. Buy insurance for when they are sick or they retire. Pay for gas money to visit people who are sick or lonely.

Adapted from God's Gifts, My Gifts, written by Sandy Luechsen, produced by the Stewardship and Church Finances Team, Local Church Ministries, United Church of Christ.

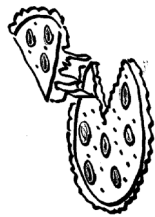
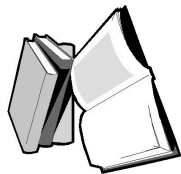


Mission



Feed hungry people. Work for laws to help people with problems. Give to the United Church of Christ to help needy people all over the world and start new churches. Buy blankets for people who are cold. Help people to have homes, jobs, and education. Help the United Church of Christ support church camps and teach pastors.

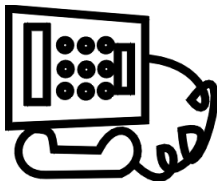
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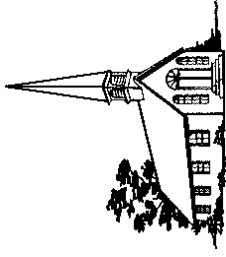
Activities for Church Members and Friends

When groups get together, buy supplies like food and drinks, paper and crayons, a CD player, games, books, chairs, and tables.

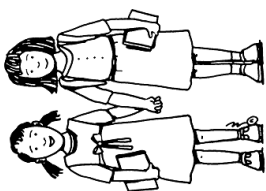
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Building Care



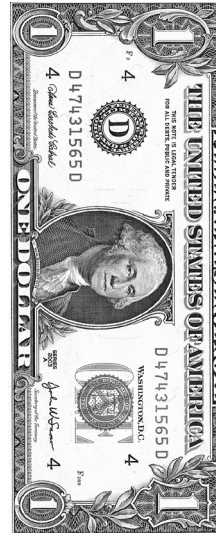
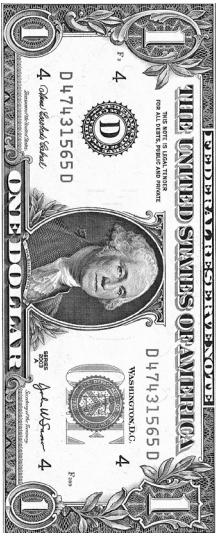
Buy or build a place to worship. Pay for electricity, heat or air conditioning. Replace worn-out carpet. Buy a copy machine and telephones. Keep paper towels by the sinks.



Invite People to Church



Invite people in the church
neighborhood to an activity or
worship. Buy space in your local
newspaper to tell how God's love is
helping people.



Attachment: Activity 6

What Scripture Says about Giving

How much we give is determined by our sense of how much we have received. Everything the scriptures say about giving is in the context of what God has first given us. And what has God given us? Our next breath. Life itself. God's love to know joy and assurance through life and death, sickness and health. Life eternal. Salvation. Confidence that no trouble we know, not even the worst evil, can defeat the goodness God wants in and for us. Beyond speechless wonder, the only genuine response to all this is gratitude—a heartfelt thankfulness that makes us generous, less as a duty than as the least we can do in response to all God does for us.

What has God given? The real question is what hasn't God given?

The Bible says three things about how much, at the least, we should give in gratitude to God:

- The Old Testament speaks of first fruits giving, in which what is shared from all we have been given comes "off the top"—a good reminder that, before all else, God and what God does for us is priority number one in our lives.
- Then, the Old Testament teaches, and the New Testament presumes, the tithe—the giving of 10 percent of one's income and belongings through one's place of worship.
- The New Testament, and particularly St. Paul, go beyond tithing to teach proportionate giving—meaning the more we have, the more we should give.

All together, these three measures or standards might be expressed this way: In gratitude to God for all that God in Christ does for us, we should give at least 10 percent of our income right off the top, going beyond that in proportion to what we have.

Some of us will protest that this is much more than we can do. But is this not also the case with Jesus' command to love our enemies? And what of the other hard demands of following Christ? Do they not go far beyond what we think reasonable and practical?

The best response to high standards is not to lower them to a comfortable level, but to ask for God's grace and guidance to help us grow. God's biddings are God's enablings: we're never asked to do anything we're not also enabled to do.

The solution for those who feel they cannot tithe is to respect the standard and grow toward it by the grace and guidance of God.

(Perhaps, for some, this will mean accepting a standard of not 10 percent, but 3 percent as a first step. Whatever one's level of giving, a commitment can be made to accept the tithe as one's standard and to move toward it on some fixed basis.)

God wants nothing but the best for the church and for us all. Following God's Word in the strength and confidence of Christ, the best comes to pass—slowly as we see it, perhaps, but surely and beyond all doubt. All that we have and are come from God or lead to God. Nothing is outside God's provision and providence. Above all, we have been given the One who makes all this known and possible: Jesus, our Savior and Friend, who is Christ, our Lord.

Reprinted from "What Scripture Says About Giving," produced by Stewardship and Church Finances, United Church of Christ. Order from UCC Resources, <http://www.tinyurl.com/2dqdr9s>, or by calling 800-537-3394.

Living Stewardship



Exploration: Christian Tradition

About this Setting

The United Church of Christ and its four predecessor denominations provide a rich history of living stewardship through service, worship, education, and daily life. Through the stories that have been recorded, through our common commitments found in the UCC Statement of Faith, and through the guidance from scripture about tithing and early Christian stewardship practices, we have a “vast cloud of witnesses” to help us live our lives as followers of Christ in ways that both honor our heritage and meet the needs and challenges of living stewardship in today’s world.

About this Exploration

Our ancestors in faith have given us a rich inheritance of living stewardship. The spiritual practice of tithing is a gift that forms us as a community and provides for all—even as it honors God. From tithing as joyful celebration in community among our Hebrew forebears and the “holding all things in common” of the earliest Christian churches, we see that people of faith before us were formed and challenged by God’s call—as we are today—to live generously and compassionately, sometimes at great cost. From the beginning of the church, shaped for stewardship by worship, education, fellowship, and service, as intentional disciples of Jesus, we embrace life as a journey of discovery and discernment about who Jesus is, what it means to live as stewards of God’s creation, and as workers for justice, peace, wholeness, and inclusion. Exploring this legacy can inspire us to add faithfully to the tradition through our own acts of generous and compassionate stewardship.



BIBLE FOCUS PASSAGES:

Deuteronomy 14:22–29
Acts 4:32–5:11

Leader Preparation

There are three focuses found in this session from our tradition: the UCC Statement of Faith, tithing, and stories from the history of the United Church of Christ. Activities about the UCC Statement of Faith are found at activities 1, 4, and 7; tithing activities are found at 2, 5, and 8; activities about UCC history are found at 3, 6, and 9. You may choose to focus the session on only one topic or “mix and match” them. The activities presented here are intended for intergenerational groups of youth, adults, and elementary age children. It is also possible to use these activities specifically for age specific groups. In the cases where an activity leans more toward older participants, a suggestion is offered for use with children. As the leader of the session, be sure to adapt the activities to the specific learning abilities in your group. For further information about stewardship in the history of the United Church of Christ, see “Additional Resources for Christian Tradition,” Attachment: Extra 1.

Prayer:

For the guidance of the scriptures, I thank you, God. For the community of faith that we have in the United Church of Christ, I thank you, God. For the rich history passed down from those who went before us, I thank you, God. For the steadfast love you have given, and will always give, I thank you, God. Amen.

Exploring & Engaging Activities


1 Of One Heart (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Read and reflect on Acts 4:32–5:11. Read about these verses in a commentary on Acts, or talk with your pastor for assistance with understanding this scripture passage. If there are children and teens in your group, invite a storyteller to tell the scripture to the group and cut out paper “money.” Also read the UCC Statement of Faith (found at <http://www.tinyurl.com/2654glw>).

Supplies:

- Bibles
- copies of the UCC Statement of Faith, <http://www.tinyurl.com/2654glw>
- pens or pencils
- scrap paper
- a large basket
- “No One Was in Need,” Attachment: Activity 1

Hand out copies of the UCC Statement of Faith and pens or pencils. Ask for two volunteers to read the scripture passage to the group: the first one will read Acts 4:32–37, and the second will read Acts 5:1–11. Invite the participants to compare the descriptions of this early Christian community with what is contained in the UCC Statement of Faith. Write scripture verse numbers in the left margin next to the phrases in the Statement of Faith that relate to them. Then discuss and make notes in the right margin of the ways that your church community lives into these ways of Christ. If there are elementary age children and young teens in your group, use the handout “No One Was in Need,” Attachment: Activity 1.

2 Tithing Detectives

Leader preparation: Read and reflect on Deuteronomy 14:22–29. Borrow as many Bible reference books from your church library or your pastor as you are able. Become familiar with how each one is used. Ask your pastor for assistance, if needed.

Supplies:

- Bibles
- various Bible reference books (such as a concordance, a Bible dictionary, a commentary on Deuteronomy)
- paper for taking notes
- pens or pencils
- copies of “Tithing Detectives,” Attachment: Activity 2

Tell the group that they are about to read a scripture passage about tithing. Invite them to jot down some notes about tithing as they listen to you read Deuteronomy 14:22–29. Then discuss the definition of the word “tithing.” (Allow them to suggest definitions and then look it up in a Bible dictionary.) Divide the group into as many teams as you have Bible reference books and give each team 15–20 minutes to discover all they can about tithing and report back to the group. Follow up the research and sharing by asking: In what ways can this scripture from ancient times guide our practices of stewardship today? If there are older elementary age children and young teens in your group, lead them in completing the handout “Tithing Detectives.” Encourage the older children to help the younger ones.



Session Development

For each session leaders may choose from nine activities that help learners engage the practice of faith. It is best to select at least one activity from “Exploring and Engaging,” at least one from “Discerning and Deciding,” and at least one from “Sending and Serving.” The first activity in each category is designed for “easy preparation” (able to be done with minimal preparation with supplies normally found at the church). Using all nine activities could take 90–120 minutes.

- To plan a session of 30–45 minutes, choose three activities, using one activity from each category.
- To plan a session of 45–60 minutes, choose four or five activities, using at least one activity from each category.

3 Five Historic Commitments of the United Church of Christ

Leader preparation: Go to <http://www.tinyurl.com/2aqe55o> to become familiar with the resource “Shine, God’s People,” an exploration of the five historic commitments of the United Church of Christ. Print out each of the five brief chapters to use with the participants: <http://www.tinyurl.com/2215x8c> (We are a united and uniting church), <http://www.tinyurl.com/275epwt> (We are a multiracial and multicultural church), <http://www.tinyurl.com/2dlp3d9> (We are a church accessible to all), <http://www.tinyurl.com/26nw896> (We are an open and affirming church), <http://www.tinyurl.com/2fhgbun> (We are a peace with justice church).

Supplies:

- a copy of each of the five chapters of “Shine, God’s People” from <http://www.tinyurl.com/2593wdm>
- copies of the handout “Five UCC Promises,” Attachment: Activity 3

Show the group the five historic commitments of the United Church of Christ and invite each person to choose the commitment he or she would like to know better. Divide the group into these five groups to study the chapter on that particular commitment. Then have each group respond to the question: What sort of stewardship is called for in a church with this commitment? Share these responses with the rest of the group. If there are older elementary age children and young teens in your group, lead them through the handout “Five UCC Promises.”

Discerning & Deciding Activities



4 “God, Whose Giving Knows No Ending” (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Become familiar with the words of the hymn “God, Whose Giving Knows No Ending.” Also read through the UCC Statement of Faith (found at <http://www.tinyurl.com/2654glw>). Invite a keyboardist to accompany the singing of the hymn during the session.

Supplies:

- copies of the hymn, “God, Whose Giving Knows No Ending” <http://www.tinyurl.com/FPSong6> and <http://www.tinyurl.com/FPSong6a>
- copies of the UCC Statement of Faith, <http://www.tinyurl.com/2654glw>
- pens or pencils
- scrap paper

Sing together the hymn “God, Whose Giving Knows No Ending.” If your accompanist is able, encourage him or her to use a different familiar tune for each stanza, such as Hyfrydol, Hymn To Joy, or Scarlet Ribbons. Divide the group into four teams and be sure each participant has a copy of the hymn, the UCC Statement of Faith, and a pen or pencil. Assign each team a stanza to present dramatically to the rest; the presentation should also include at least one corresponding phrase from the UCC Statement of Faith. They may choose to act it out literally, or create a story exemplifying its message, or find some other creative way to share its meaning. Have the rest of the group point out (“guess”) the aspect of stewardship that is presented.



5 How Much Shall I Give?

Leader preparation: Become familiar with the contents of the brochure “How Much Shall I Give?” Order copies for your participants from UCC Resources at <http://www.tinyurl.com/25qx759> or by calling 800-537-3394.

Supplies:

- pens or pencils
- copies of the brochure “How Much Shall I Give?”
- copies of the handout “How Much Will I Give?” Attachment: Activity 5

Hand out a copy of the brochure and a pen or pencil to everyone. Invite them to spend about 10 minutes individually reading the brochure and filling in the blanks. Explain that what is written in the blanks will not be shared with the rest of the group. Facilitate a discussion around the kind of incentive that the concept of tithing (giving one-tenth) provides. Does it work for you? How? And if not, what else would or does cause you to want to give back to God and the church? If there are older elementary-age children and young teens in your group, lead them through the handout “How Much Will I Give?” Encourage the older children to help the younger ones, if needed.

6 “Mission with” or “Mission To”?

Leader preparation: Read and become familiar with the information found on the handout “Mission With” or “Mission To”? If you have older elementary age children and young teens in your group, acquire and read the book *1621: A New Look at Thanksgiving* by Catherine O’Neill Grace (ISBN-10: 0792261399; ISBN-13: 978-0792261319).

Supplies:

- copies of the handout “‘Mission With’ or ‘Mission To’?” Attachment: Activity 6

Invite the participants to spend some time reading the history contained in the handout: “‘Mission With’ or ‘Mission To’?” Facilitate a discussion using the questions at the end of that handout or your own. If there are older elementary age children and young teens in your group, share with them the book, *1621: A New Look at Thanksgiving*, and help them to think about relating to people with cultural differences and sharing from abundance.

Sending & Serving Activities



7 Praying the Statement of Faith (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Read and reflect on the UCC Statement of Faith in the form of a doxology (found at <http://www.tinyurl.com/2654glw>). How can it be a prayer?

Supplies:

- a copy of the handout “Praying the Statement of Faith,” Attachment: Activity 7
- ten candles on a worship center, and matches or lighter



Give a copy of the handout "Praying the Statement of Faith" to each participant. Assign each phrase to a person to read aloud and ask each to go to the worship center to light a candle before reading. Invite the group to join you in the spirit of prayer as you pray the Statement of Faith together.

8 Exercising Generosity

Leader preparation: Read and reflect on the article "Exercising Generosity" found at <http://www.tinyurl.com/263j3ba>. What are your own experiences with tithing?

Supplies:

- a copy of the article "Exercising Generosity"

Read the article "Exercising Generosity" to the group and, if time, lead a discussion using the questions found at the end. Then brainstorm a list of tithing or stewardship exercises to keep you healthy and strong:

- My spiritual push-ups are to give . . .
- My spiritual sit-ups are to give . . .
- My spiritual jogging is to give . . .
- My spiritual power walk is to give . . .
- Others?

Share this concept (and the results of your session) with your church's stewardship committee as a possible theme for your church's next stewardship campaign.

9 Historical Stewardship

Leader preparation: Take a walk around the inside and outside of your church facility, noting the stewardship of your church's ancestors for future generations. Create a "tour" for the participants by making a list of each of these places and items they should see. (You might want to engage the pastor on this or a long-time member(s) of your congregation as tour guides.)

Supplies: None

Take the participants on a tour of your church facility to discover the historical stewardship of your church's ancestors. What did they provide for their children and their children's children—and beyond? During the tour, invite older members to tell stories about being good stewards that they are reminded of from their own childhood church experiences.

Reflect

How were the participants able to live stewardship as a result of learning about our United Church of Christ history? In what ways did they grow in their understanding and knowledge of stewardship? In what ways did you grow?

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Attachment: Extra 1

Additional Resources for Christian Tradition

The Statement of Faith of the United Church of Christ

The UCC Statement of Faith in three versions plus Spanish. <http://www.tinyurl.com/2654glw>

UCC Statement of Faith: A Historical, Biblical, and Theological Perspective (booklet) by Allen O. Miller (ISBN: 0-8298-0882-5). Order from UCC Resources at <http://www.tinyurl.com/2e5t2u4> or by calling 800-537-3394.

Confessing Our Faith: An Interpretation of the Statement of Faith of the United Church of Christ by Roger L. Shinn (ISBN-10: 0829808663; ISBN-13: 978-0829808667). Order from UCC Resources at <http://www.tinyurl.com/24pcwml>.

Affirming Faith: A Congregation's Guide to Confirmation (revised and updated) by Thomas E. Dipko (ISBN: 978-0-8298-1782-2). Order from UCC Resources at <http://www.tinyurl.com/2eyzrss> or by calling 800-537-3394.

Affirming Faith: A Confirmand's Journal (revised and updated) by Thomas E. Dipko (ISBN: 978-0-8298-1782-9). Order from UCC Resources at <http://www.tinyurl.com/2bpkwry> or by calling 800-537-3394.

Balaam's Unofficial Handbook of the United Church of Christ (ISBN: 978-0-8298-1797-3). Order from UCC Resources at <http://www.tinyurl.com/2cq9je4> or by calling 800-537-3394.

"Historical Reflections on the Statement of Faith" by Roger L. Shinn. <http://www.tinyurl.com/2buly3z>

Tithing

"How Much Shall I Give?" A brochure to help church members think about what percentage of their income to give to the church's work. Also available in Spanish. Order from UCC Resources at <http://www.tinyurl.com/25qx759> or by calling 800-537-3394.

"What Scripture Says about Giving" This brief brochure from Stewardship and Church Finances of the United Church of Christ looks at the question of how much to give to the work of the church and why. Order from UCC Resources at <http://www.tinyurl.com/2dqdr9s> or by calling 800-537-3394.

Attachment: Extra 1, page 2

Scriptographic Booklets from Channing L. Bete, Inc., <http://www.faithguides.com> (search “stewardship”)

About Tithing (booklet)

Tithing: The Gift of Giving (brochure)

Tithing: Giving Out of Love (booklet)

The Rewards of Tithing (booklet)

Also stewardship bookmarks, magnets, banks, family kits, envelopes, stickers, children’s/teen’s workbooks, presentation kit.

United Church of Christ History

Hidden Histories in the United Church of Christ, volumes 1 and 2, Barbara Brown Zikmund, ed. (Volume 1 ISBN: 0-8298-0704-7, Volume 2 ISBN-10: 0829807535; ISBN-13: 978-0829807530). Order from UCC Resources at <http://www.tinyurl.com/hidden1> and <http://www.tinyurl.com/hidden2> or by calling 800-537-3394. Also available online at <http://www.ucc.org/about-us/hidden-histories> for Volume 1 and <http://www.ucc.org/about-us-hidden-histories-2> for Volume 2.

Five Historic Commitments of the United Church of Christ. <http://www.tinyurl.com/2wpurl3>

1621: A New Look at Thanksgiving by Catherine O’Neill Grace and Margaret M. Bruchac (ISBN-10: 0792261399; ISBN-13: 978-0792261319), ages 8–12. Five chapters give background on the Wampanoag people, colonization, Indian diplomacy, the harvest of 1621, and the evolution of the Thanksgiving story. A brief introduction and an afterword serve to set the stage and bring to a conclusion the story of incipient race relations in seventeenth-century Massachusetts, the impact of which is felt to the present. Crisp, clear photographs taken at Plimoth Plantation in Massachusetts show actors in period dress with seventeenth-century artifacts. <http://www.tinyurl.com/23dfnl9>

Attachment: Activity 1

No One Was In Need

Before the session, cut out about 12 rectangular pieces of scrap paper (about the size of money) for each participant. Place them all in a large basket. Have a copy of the Statement of Faith of the United Church of Christ available (found at <http://www.tinyurl.com/2654glw>).

Invite someone who is well-versed in storytelling to tell Acts 4:32-37 to the group. Ask, "Was this sharing of everything everyone had fair? Why or why not?"

Then explain to the group that they are to take from the basket the number of "bills" requested after each of the following statements:

- Take one bill for each bed you have in your house.
- Take one bill for each car your family drives.
- Take one bill each person who lives in your house.
- Take out one bill for each pet you have.
- Take out one bill if you are 8 years old or younger.

Have each participant count how many "bills" they have. Ask, "Was this a fair way to divide this pretend money?"

Explain that in the United Church of Christ, we have a Statement of Faith that lists many of the things that we in this church believe. One of these statements is, "God calls us into the church to accept the cost and joy of discipleship, to be servants in the service of the whole human family ... " (Show them the copy of the UCC Statement of Faith.) Ask them how they think this means we should behave toward each other, and help them to show it by encouraging them to divide up their "bills" amongst each other.

Ask, "How do we know that this is how God wants us to live with and care for each other?"

Attachment: Activity 2

Tithing Detectives

In Old English, "tithe" and "one tenth" were the same word, *teotha*. Today, we understand tithing to mean giving one tenth back to God in thankful response for all that God has already given us.

Think of the things that God has given you. God created our home, the earth. God is Love. God made you who you are. List at least four things here that God has given you:

- 1. _____
- 2. _____
- 3. _____
- 4. _____

When we think of giving back to God as way to be thankful, we often talk about the gifts of our time, the things we are good at, and the money and things that we own. A good way to remember these things is to refer to them as time, talent, and treasure.

Now it's time to do some math word problems. (Don't worry, it's actually fun!)
Fill in the blanks below to discover ways that you can tithe.

Time
If you spend two hours watching a movie on Saturday afternoon, how much time could you tithe to do something for someone else? (Hint: two hours = 120 minutes, divided by 10, or one-tenth, is _____ minutes.)

Estimate how much time you spend doing things for yourself in a week: _____ hours
How much time per week can you do things for others (give back to God)? _____ hours

Talent
What is your talent, hobby, or special interest (something you enjoy doing and are good at)?

What are some ways you can help others by doing this (giving back to God)?

Can you do these things through your church or a service agency in your community?

Treasure
If you get \$5 a week for an allowance, how much could you tithe to put in the offering at church on Sunday? (Hint: \$5 = 500 cents, divided by 10, or one-tenth, is _____ cents.)

If you have ten pairs of pants and ten shirts, how many can you tithe to donate to a thrift shop or give to someone who may not have enough clothes? _____

Five UCC Promises

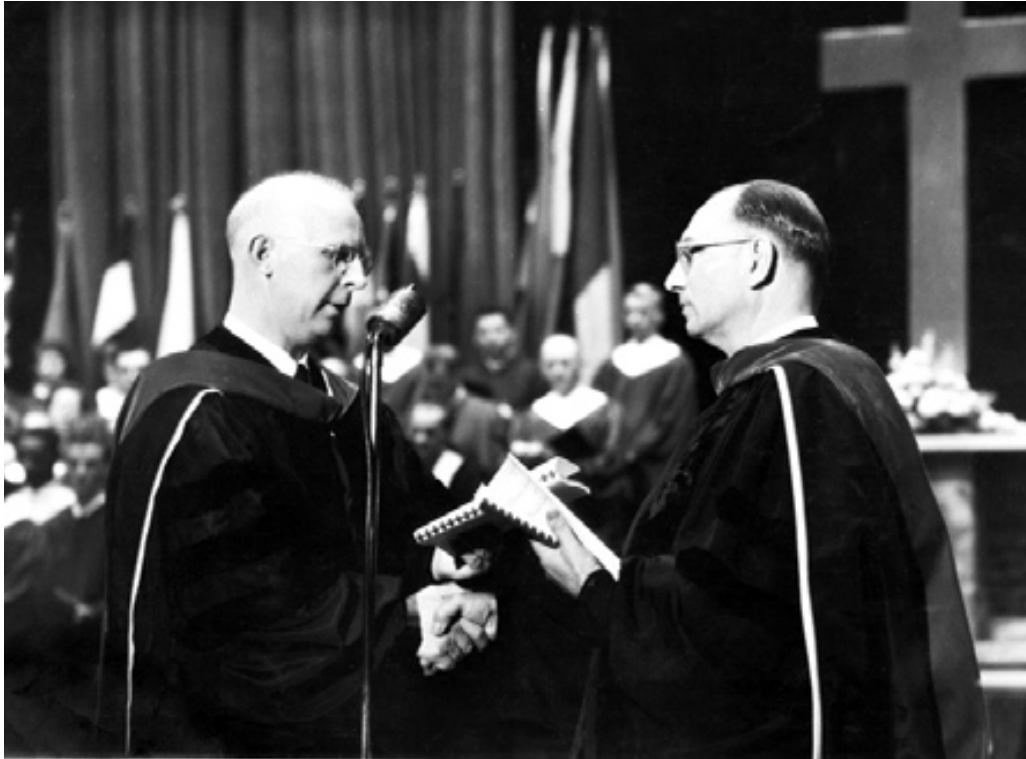
Adapted from
Shine, God's People:
A Study Guide for Celebrating 50 Years of the United Church of Christ

The complete resource may be found at <http://www.ucc.org/50/pdfs/studyguide50.pdf>.

UNITED CHURCH
OF CHRIST



We are a united and uniting church



Dr. Fred Hoskins and Dr. James Wagner in the handshake that symbolized the start of the United Church of Christ in 1957.

The United Church of Christ was a merger of two other churches: The Congregational Christian Church and The Evangelical and Reformed Church. These two men represented each church. That was over 50 years ago. Now we are one united church and we keep on working to continue this “uniting.”

Whose hands can you shake in your church to remind yourself that you are “united” with them?

We are a multiracial and multicultural church



What are the colors of all of the hands God has made?

We are a church accessible to all



Harold Wilke (back left) looks on as President George Bush signs the Americans with Disabilities Act into law.

Harold Wilke was a pastor in the United Church of Christ. He always supported people with disabilities. He was known for saying, "People with disabilities are welcome and needed in the House of God." He was asked to pray over the signing of the Disabilities Act into law. After President Bush signs his name, he hands the pen to Harold Wilke, who has no arms, but can still write his name with a pen. How does he do it? He takes the pen with his toes, says, "God Bless," and writes his name.

Why do we need people with disabilities in God's church?

We are an open and affirming church



What do you see in this picture?

What kinds of people do we welcome in God's church?

We are a peace with justice church



What could you do to bring peace to these hands?

What do you think this person needs?

How could you help?

Attachment: Activity 5

How Much Will I Give?

Adapted from the United Church of Christ pamphlet "How Much Shall I Give? A Percentage Giving Guide."

The United Church of Christ suggests giving a part of the money that you earn (like an allowance or payment for doing chores for your family or for others) to help God's mission for people everywhere.

What are some things your church does to help people who don't have enough?

Our church says that giving at least 10% is a good plan that follows what the Bible says in the Old Testament.

What is 10% of your allowance? _____

Sharing your time is just as important as giving money to help people in need.

If there are 24 hours in a day and 7 days a week, how many hours do we have in a week? (Hint: What is 24 times 7?) _____

About how many hours is 10% of the hours in a week? (Hint: Divide your answer to the previous question by 10.) _____

About how many hours is 5% of the hours in a week? (Hint: Divide your answer to the previous question by 2.) _____

About how many hours is 1% of the hours in a week? (Hint: Divide the number of hours in a week by 100.) _____

How many hours a week do you spend at church and doing something to help others? _____

How many more hours do you want to add to this? _____

Extra credit question (ask someone for help if you need to):

What percentage of hours in the week will your new number of hours be? (Hint: Divide your number of hours by the number of hours in a week, then multiply by 100.) _____

Living Stewardship

Attachment: Activity 6

“Mission With” or “Mission To”?

From “Hidden Histories in the United Church of Christ,” volume 1, Barbara Brown Zikmund, ed., found at <http://www.tinyurl.com/35vthmb>.

American Indians, missions, and the United Church of Christ

Written by Serge F. Hummon

Colonial Concern

Another active missionary in the 1700s was Eleazar Wheelock. Graduating from Yale in 1733, he was ordained and called to the Second Parish of Lebanon, Connecticut. To supplement his income, he opened a boys’ school in the parsonage. One of his students was Samuel Occam, a Mohegan youth. As a result of his experience with Occam, Wheelock conceived the idea of a school and mission where Indian boys and white boys would be trained together. The Indian boys would learn English and be introduced to Christianity and the skills of white society. The white youths would learn Indian vernacular and the ways of Indian life. Later the youth would be paired in the mission enterprise with remote tribes and sent out to establish churches and schools. Wheelock’s vision was ambitious. He was sent Delaware and Mohegan youth and established the Moor-Indian Charity School at Lebanon in 1755. All students were on scholarships. By 1765 he had enrolled twenty-one Indian boys, ten Indian girls, and seven white boys. Being continually short of funds, Wheelock quarreled with his sponsors over support.

In the 1760s the flow of Indian students declined, and Wheelock turned his attention to the education of white youth. He accepted a land grant at Hanover, New Hampshire, where he received a charter for the founding of Dartmouth College. He associated the Moor-Indian Charity School with the new college. By the time of the Revolution, Indian mission work was almost at a standstill.

Wheelock must be remembered for the Calvinist he was. The wrath of God was real to him. He desired to save the perishing souls of the “heathen.” He had contempt for the Indian culture—a shared view of his time—and felt that conversion of the Indians (was) easier, more effective, and far cheaper in lives and money than military conquest.

“Gratitude, duty, and loyalty to the King required vigorous prosecution of missions, and the King laid this duty on the colonies in the colonial charters. . . . Furthermore, the savages cannot be expected to keep treaties as long as they remain savages, for they will keep such contracts only when they have been civilized by Christian education.”³

Beyond White paternalism

In a sense the enumeration of Indian achievements can be a form of white paternalism. It implies that what was common for non-Indians was special achievement for Indians. An awareness of this condescension helped prepare white leaders for the 1960s. As this decade dawned three important streams came together: The white leaders discovered the racism in the church’s mission; the young Indian leaders brought up through the church’s ministry agreed with them; and the United Church of Christ became a reality.

Galen Weaver pioneered in recognizing white racism in Indian mission terms. He developed Indian leaders through the United Scholarship Service, a program that provided a ferment that raised fundamental questions about decision making in the church’s mission. Indian leaders spoke of self-determination, a human rights concern. Wesley Hotchkiss of the United Church Board for Homeland Ministries (UCBHM) had written an important position paper on the relation of Christ to culture, in 1958. He spelled out the implications of H. Richard Niebuhr’s seminal work as to how the Christian faith should approach a culture: “The churches were really out to destroy the Indian culture although they proposed to do it in a most beneficent manner and under the guise of doing good for the Indian. Christ was against culture in this presupposition.”¹⁶

Attachment: Activity 6, page 2

Hotchkiss called for an approach in which Christ is seen as a transformer of culture, the whites' as well as the Indians'. All cultures could find fulfillment in Christ from the injustices they embody. This mission stance related anthropology to theology in a creative way. It saw mission with Indian people as a two-way bridge: missionaries able to learn from tribal life and religions while proclaiming the gospel. Hotchkiss lamented that Indian religion and culture were so devastated from Western contacts and that this new approach would not be simple or easy.

Mission workers struggled with the concept of "mission with" rather than "mission to" Indian people. In 1964 I was liaison between the Board, the conferences, and the Indian churches, assembled at Aberdeen, South Dakota, a major Consultation on a mission strategy for the remainder of the decade. All facets of Indian work were represented. The Consultation spoke to the denomination in saying: "The Church . . . is a People of compassion. . . . The United Church seeks to use skilled staff in its mission. . . . (It must be) . . . increasingly guided by Indian people. . . . The cultural gap between white and Indian people is still large."¹⁷

Understanding the human misery in Indian homes and communities, the Consultation sought sensitively to guide the limited resources of the church into the work with children and youth. The leaders held that major social welfare loads were the government's responsibility. A group home for high school dropouts was recommended for North Dakota. The outgrowth was the Charles Hall Youth Services. A group home was recommended for Pierre, South Dakota. The merits of the Winnebago Children's Home were recognized.

The Consultation noted the migration of Indian people to urban centers and recommended that the United Church work ecumenically in ministering to Indians in the city.

Serge F. Hummon was Secretary for Church Development and liaison for American Indian Ministries with the United Church Board for Homeland Ministries from 1958 to 1982.

Notes

³ R. Pierce Beaver, *Pioneers in Mission* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1966), 212.

¹⁶ Wesley A. Hotchkiss, *Some Presuppositions in the Work of the Church among American Indians* (Minneapolis: United Church Indian Work Consultation, 1958), 1.

¹⁷ Serge F. Hummon, "Mission to Indian Americans, United Church of Christ, Aberdeen Report and Mission Strategy: 1965–1970," United Church Board for Homeland Ministries, 1964.

For more information about how the United Church of Christ relates to the American Indian communities and people today, visit <http://www.caimucc.org>.

Questions for Discussion:

- What is the difference between "mission to" people in another culture and "mission with" them?
- In what ways did each of these happen in the histories shared above?
- In what ways do you see them happening in the work of your church today?
- What are some things you can do to foster "mission with" others through the work of your congregation? How will you put these into practice?

Living Stewardship

Attachment: Activity 7

Praying the Statement of Faith

One: We believe in you, O God, Eternal Spirit, God of our Savior Jesus Christ and our God, and to your deeds we testify:

All: We gratefully bring our gift of love to you, O God.

One: You call the worlds into being, create persons in your own image, and set before each one the ways of life and death.

All: We gratefully bring our gift of love to you, O God.

One: You seek in holy love to save all people from aimlessness and sin.

All: We gratefully bring our gift of love to you, O God.

One: You judge people and nations by your righteous will declared through prophets and apostles.

All: We gratefully bring our gift of love to you, O God.

One: In Jesus Christ, the man of Nazareth, our crucified and risen Savior, you have come to us and shared our common lot, conquering sin and death and reconciling the world to yourself.

All: We gratefully bring our gift of love to you, O God.

One: You bestow upon us your Holy Spirit, creating and renewing the church of Jesus Christ, binding in covenant faithful people of all ages, tongues, and races.

All: We gratefully bring our gift of love to you, O God.

One: You call us into your church to accept the cost and joy of discipleship, to be your servants in the service of others, to proclaim the gospel to all the world and resist the powers of evil, to share in Christ's baptism and eat at his table, to join him in his passion and victory.

All: We gratefully bring our gift of love to you, O God.

One: You promise to all who trust you forgiveness of sins and fullness of grace, courage in the struggle for justice and peace, your presence in trial and rejoicing, and eternal life in your realm, which has no end.

All: We gratefully bring our gift of love to you, O God.

One: Blessing and honor, glory and power be unto you.

All: Amen.

The United Church of Christ Statement of Faith in the form of a doxology is found at <http://www.tinyurl.com/2654glw>.

Living Stewardship



Exploration: Context and Mission

About this Setting

"The church exists to bring love, hope, and generosity to whatever suffering and need exist, always and anywhere" (*Inspiring Generosity*, p. 27). This statement is particularly true for the United Church of Christ. It could be said that everything the church does is mission, for when we are followers of Christ, we live to serve others, particularly those in need. It is out of God's love for us that we respond in love to those around us. In the United Church of Christ, we find numerous opportunities and support for serving. And it is in our living stewardship that we find the gratitude and abundance from which to go forth to serve.

About this Exploration

We live in relationship with God and one another in a world created and sustained by God. The scriptures help us discover how God intends for us to live as living stewards within a grateful community that goes beyond rituals to serve the needs and celebrate the potentials of our neighbors near and far with extravagant grace and generosity.



BIBLE FOCUS PASSAGES:

Isaiah 1:10–17

Mark 14:3–9

Leader Preparation

The activities offered here are representative of the many opportunities for service provided through the United Church of Christ. They represent only a small sample. Be sure to work with your pastor and missions committee to continue the learning and commitments begun here. For further information about giving through mission in the United Church of Christ, see “Additional Resources for Context and Mission,” Attachment: Extra 1. Take a moment to think of times when you’ve served others. Then think of all of the times that others have served you. Which opportunities were easier to accept and appreciate—the times you served or the times you were served?

Prayer: *Gracious and Loving God, (extend arms upward) Be with me as I serve the participants of this session (extend arms outward) and allow me to receive the gifts they in turn share with me (hold hands over heart). Amen.*

Session Development

For each session leaders may choose from nine activities that help learners engage the practice of faith. It is best to select at least one activity from “Exploring and Engaging,” at least one from “Discerning and Deciding,” and at least one from “Sending and Serving.” The first activity in each category is designed for “easy preparation” (able

Exploring & Engaging Activities



1 UCC Statement of Mission (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Read and become familiar with the UCC Statement of Mission found at <http://www.tinyurl.com/2cgkb5k>. Then read and reflect on Isaiah 1:10–17. According to this scripture passage, what does God really want from us?

Supplies:

- Bibles
- copies of the UCC Statement of Mission, <http://www.tinyurl.com/2cgkb5k>
- white paper
- sets of markers

Seat the participants around a small table so that they may easily share the markers. Provide two or more pieces of white paper for each person and invite them to use the markers to draw whatever they are inspired to draw as you read the scripture passage, followed by the UCC Statement of Mission. (Be sure to read both slowly and clearly to allow plenty of time for the participants to draw as inspired.) After you finish reading, ask questions for discussion such as: What is God asking of us in this scripture? What is the United Church of Christ asking of us in its Statement of Mission? Invite any of the participants who are comfortable doing so to share their images with the group. Do any of the images inspire you to take action? Make arrangements to follow through on these inspirations with your congregation.

2 Strengthen the Church

Leader preparation: Read the information found at <http://www.ucc.org/stc> to learn more about “Strengthen the Church.” You should particularly check out “Frequently Asked Questions” in the left sidebar and view the video at “Want to see Strengthen the Church in Action?” in the center of the Web page. Make copies of the “Frequently Asked Questions” Web page to hand out to the participants.

Supplies:

- computer with Internet access
- projector
- paper
- pens or pencils
- copies of “Frequently Asked Questions”

View the video “A Still-Speaking Story from Journey United Church of Christ” found at “Want to see Strengthen the Church in Action?” in the center of the web page, <http://www.ucc.org/stc>. Invite the participants to jot down all of the ways they see stewardship happening in the video as they watch it. Invite participants to share their observations as a way of debriefing. Explain that churches like Journey UCC get help from the United Church of Christ through the Strengthen the Church special mission offering. Share the Web site link with the participants to encourage them to learn more about Strengthen the Church and inform others in your congregation.



to be done with minimal preparation with supplies normally found at the church). Using all nine activities could take 90–120 minutes.

- To plan a session of 30–45 minutes, choose three activities, using one activity from each category.
- To plan a session of 45–60 minutes, choose four or five activities, using at least one activity from each category.

3 Our Church's Wider Mission: Plain Talk

Leader preparation: Preview the video, “Our Church’s Wider Mission: Plain Talk” found at <http://www.ucc.org/ocwm>. It can be ordered and downloaded for free by visiting <http://www.tinyurl.com/342g6e9>.

Supplies:

- computer with Internet access and projector

View “Our Church’s Wider Mission: Plain Talk.” Debrief the video by asking questions such as: Which scenario most closely resembles our church? What are we currently doing to help Our Church’s Wider Mission? What else can we do as a congregation to contribute to Our Church’s Wider Mission?

Discerning & Deciding Activities



4 One Great Hour of Sharing (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Read the information found at <http://www.ucc.org/oghs>

to learn more about “One Great Hour of Sharing,” one of the special offerings of the United Church of Christ, particularly “Frequently Asked Questions” in the left sidebar. Make copies of the “Frequently Asked Questions” Web page to hand out to the participants, <http://www.tinyurl.com/36frut8>. Visit to choose and prepare one of the hunger activities for your group to complete.

Supplies:

- candies
- copies of worksheets
- pencils

Using the “Frequently Asked Questions” sheet, share with your group about “One Great Hour of Sharing,” one of the UCC’s special mission offerings. Explain that helping people to get enough food to eat is one of the services OGHS provides. Then lead them in the exercise you chose to help them learn more about world hunger.

5 Neighbors In Need

Leader preparation: Read the information found at <http://www.ucc.org/nin> to learn more about “Neighbors In Need,” one of the special offerings of the United Church of Christ, particularly “Frequently Asked Questions” in the left sidebar. Also read and reflect on Mark 14:3–9. Recruit volunteer storytellers who will each retell a story from one of the bulletin inserts found at <http://www.tinyurl.com/37zzx53>.

Also recruit someone (perhaps one of the Neighbors In Need “storytellers”) to begin the storytelling with Mark 14:3–9.

Supplies:

- computer with Internet access

Arrange for time during an intergenerational event, such as a potluck supper,



all-church retreat, a congregational meeting, or an event specific to the life of your congregation, to present Mark 14:3–9 and the "Neighbors in Need" stories. Help your congregation learn more about what happens to their dollars when a congregation gives to "Neighbors In Need," one of the UCC's special mission offerings, by sharing some of the information found at

<http://www.ucc.org/nin/faq.html>.

Ask questions such as: Both giving to the poor and doing something loving for another person are what Jesus calls us to do. How did these stories show kind of loving giving? The United Church of Christ is known for its "extravagant welcome." What kind of giving can we do to show this loving extravagance much like the woman in the scripture passage?

6 The Christmas Fund

Leader preparation: Visit <http://www.tinyurl.com/37u6q4a> and click on "Sample Newsletter Article" to learn about "The Christmas Fund," one of the special offerings of the United Church of Christ.

Supplies:

- computer with Internet access
- art supplies such as crayons, computer design software, cloth, clay, camera, paint, poetry, prayer, wire, and so forth

Print out a copy of "The Magi Mission Project" from <http://www.tinyurl.com/399ofec>, and lead your group through the process. Find creative ways to share your project(s) with your congregation.

Sending & Serving Activities



7 Planting (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Acquire the poster *Planting* by Rex Goreleigh. Spend some time with the image as you reflect on what you are reaping at your church today from what was planted seasons (or years) ago.

Supplies:

- poster: *Planting* by Rex Goreleigh, <http://www.tinyurl.com/UCCResources>
- newsprint
- sets of markers or crayons

Invite participants to position themselves anywhere in the room where they can see the poster. Invite them to take about five minutes to move around the room in order to view the poster from a number of different perspectives. What do they notice from these different viewpoints? Then share the following quote from *Inspiring Generosity*: "If church members and leaders see every last thing that your church does as 'mission,' you can expect: new and growing respect for the church and energy for its work, the release of trapped creativity and the revelation of hidden opportunities for mission, more patience and less pettiness, a sense of purpose, accomplishment, and satisfaction (p. 27)." Ask: What can this congregation "plant" in order to "harvest" these types of results? If there are young children present, invite them to imagine that your church is a seed and have them draw what they hope the church can "grow."



8 “Jesu, Jesu, Fill Us with Your Love”

Leader preparation: Become familiar with the words of the hymn “Jesu, Jesu, Fill Us with Your Love.” Invite a musician to accompany the singing of the hymn during the session.

Supplies:

- copies of the hymn, “Jesu, Jesu, Fill Us with Your Love” (tune: Chereponi)
<http://www.tinyurl.com/FPSong4>

Invite the group to sing the hymn “Jesu, Jesu, Fill Us with Your Love.” Ask: How is Jesus asking us to be good stewards with these “neighbors”? Then tell them that you will close this session with a singing prayer-dance. Invite them to stand in a circle and teach them the following movements to use while singing the refrain:

- “Jesu”: Take two steps to center while raising arms forward and up
- “Jesu”: Take two steps back while lowering arms to sides
- “Fill us with your love”: Take two steps to the right
- “Show us how to serve”: Take two steps to the left
- “The neighbors we have from you”: Stand in place, hold hands with “neighbors,” bring clasped hands and arms over heads and down until arms are around each other’s shoulders or backs

9 Stewardship Calendar

Leader preparation: Review the information covered during the activities you chose from “Exploring and Engaging” and “Discerning and Deciding.” Have copies of that information available for the participants to work with. Make arrangements for someone who is familiar with desktop publishing to create the participants’ calendar design.

Supplies:

- paper
- pens or pencils
- copies of the information used from the previous activities in this session

Design a stewardship calendar for the next month, unique for your congregation, based on what you learned about mission in the United Church of Christ. For example, on the first day you could have something like, “More than one in ten people in the United States can’t afford to feed their families adequately. Give [one unit of currency] for every five cans of food in your kitchen.” Consider ways to share this calendar with the rest of the congregation and then implement.

Reflect

The United Church of Christ offers a wide variety of mission opportunities through its offerings. In what ways can you and your church continue to share God’s extravagant love and abundance through mission and stewardship?

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Attachment: Extra 1

Additional Resources for Context and Mission

Book for Children

One Grain Of Rice: A Mathematical Folktale by Deml (ISBN-10: 059093998X; ISBN-13: 978-0590939980), ages 4–8. An Indian folktale about how a resourceful village girl outsmarts a greedy raja, turning a reward of one grain of rice into a feast for a hungry nation. <http://www.tinyurl.com/2fmtxog>

Web sites

Wider Church Ministries, <http://www.ucc.org/wcm>

Be a Global Mission Church (guides for youth and adults), <http://www.tinyurl.com/2w66ogm>

Church World Service (CROP Walk, School Kits, Hygiene Kits, Baby Kits, Blankets), <http://www.churchworldservice.org>

Youth and Children Resources

Global Ministries Youth and Children resources <http://www.tinyurl.com/24qfeeb>

Build A Better World (children's curriculum), <http://www.tinyurl.com/cs3bo6>

Journey to India downloadable VBS curriculum, <http://www.tinyurl.com/kids2kids>

Kids to Kids! (share your children's mission project with others), <http://www.tinyurl.com/2wqv9zm>

Child Sponsorship, <http://www.tinyurl.com/26w6hym>

Missionary Relationships, <http://www.tinyurl.com/26n4ehk>

Church-to-Church Partnerships, <http://www.tinyurl.com/2ebzqmp>

UCC Calendar of Prayer, <http://www.ucc.org/worship/calendar>

Our Church's Wider Mission: <http://www.ucc.org/ocwm>

5 for 5: <http://www.tinyurl.com/2ffff3>

UCC Basic Support: <http://www.tinyurl.com/28v7utb>

Strengthen the Church: <http://www.ucc.org/stc>

Living Stewardship

Attachment: Extra 1, page 2

One Great Hour of Sharing: <http://www.ucc.org/oghs> (includes resources for children and youth)

Neighbors In Need: <http://www.ucc.org/nin>

The Christmas Fund: <http://www.christmasfund.org>

UCC Sunday Bulletin Service

<http://www.tinyurl.com/243dwck>; Each week, these bulletins provide a brief story of UCC mission on the back cover.

UCC Statement of Mission, <http://www.tinyurl.com/2cgkb5k>

DVDs/Videos

Our Church's Wider Mission: Plain Talk, <http://www.ucc.org/ocwm>

Connecting Threads: Around the World with Global Ministries (with study guide), <http://www.tinyurl.com/2e6rt9v>

CWS: 60 Years of Help and Hope, <http://www.tinyurl.com/2dc72a8>

Living Stewardship



Exploration: Future and Vision

About this Setting

In the United Church of Christ, living as stewards of God's creation is one of the ways we affirm that God is still speaking. Working for environmental justice and learning about and putting into practice new ways of saving energy and resources are only a few of the ways that members of United Church of Christ churches respond to God's charge to us for the care for creation. In 2008, the United Church of Christ Collegium of Officers, in partnership with the UCC Environmental and Energy Task Force, composed a pastoral letter on faith and environment, calling on us to "answer a call of stewardship understood as care for and solidarity with God's good creation." The letter closed with the admonition to "let us build greening places and spaces for the holy and one another." For the sake of our children and their children's children, we must work to make this so.

About this Exploration

As we move into the future, a clear vision of where we are headed emerges out of our understanding of stewardship. This growing understanding will be enhanced as we consider far-ranging questions such as: What kind of persons do we want to be? To what purpose do devote our lives? What are our core values and beliefs? That vision will also benefit by wrestling with more immediate questions like: What choices and decisions are we making every day in our use of the money, time, talents and abilities, the environment, and other resources that have been entrusted to our care? Living stewardship comes down to individuals and the communities of which they are a part. It also involves acting in new ways; growing out of our reflections on how we are living our lives and the journey we are on; discerning the messages that we've received throughout our lives from culture, family, and God; experiencing ourselves in community; and deciding on our next explorations



BIBLE FOCUS PASSAGES:
1 Chronicles 29:1-19
Revelation 21:10,
21:22-22:5

Leader Preparation

The activities presented here are intended for intergenerational groups of youth, adults, and elementary age children. It is also possible to use these activities specifically for age-level groups of adults, youth, or children. In the cases where an activity leans more toward older participants, a suggestion is offered for use with children. As the leader of the session, be sure to adapt the activities to the specific learning abilities in your group. For further information about stewardship in the United Church of Christ, see "Additional Resources for Stewardship of Creation," Attachment: Extra 1.

In preparation for this session, spend some reflective time in nature, observing all that God has created. In what ways are you a steward of this earth?

Prayer: Gracious God, your amazing love extends through time and space to all parts of your creation, which you created and called good. Your covenant with the human family is remembered in every rainbow in the sky, symbolizing your promise of love and blessing to every living creature, and to all successive generations. In Jesus, you invite us to enter into a new covenant, in communion with all who seek to be faithful to you and to do justice. As people of faith, we are called into covenant. Your covenant of faithfulness and love extends to the whole creation. Today we pray for the

Exploring & Engaging Activities



1 Creation's Web (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Become familiar with the exercise outlined on the handout "Creation's Web," Attachment: Activity 1. Prepare four index cards or squares of paper, each with one of the following words: Sun, Air, Water, and Soil.

Supplies:

- "Creation's Web," Attachment: Activity 1
- ball of yarn or string
- index cards or squares of paper
- masking tape
- markers

Lead the group in an exercise about the interrelatedness of God's creation using the handout "Creation's Web."

2 Commercial Break

Leader preparation: Record four to eight television advertisements onto a DVD. Provide as wide a variety as possible of items or topics in the ads.

Supplies:

- computer and projector
- DVD of TV advertisements
- paper
- pens or pencils
- handout "Commercial Break," Attachment: Activity 2

Before showing the DVD you made for the group, encourage them take notes about the techniques used to convince the viewers that they need the item or service advertised. Play the DVD. Use the handout "Commercial Break" to facilitate a discussion about stewardship of the earth's resources.

3 Pastoral Letter on Faith and Environment

Leader preparation: Read the "Pastoral Letter on Faith and Environment" found at <http://www.tinyurl.com/2fgxtf5>. Also read the "Faith Sharing Guide" located at <http://www.tinyurl.com/35cu2u4> and determine which questions you would like to discuss with your group. If you wish to sing some of the hymn suggestions, make arrangements for musical accompaniment. If there are elementary age children and young teens in your group, make arrangements for someone to lead them in the reading and discussion of one of the storybooks found on the resources handout for this session.

Supplies:

- copies of the "Pastoral Letter on Faith and Environment" <http://www.tinyurl.com/2fgxtf5>
- Bibles
- children's book from the resources handout Attachment: Extra 1
- copies of a hymnal (optional)

Living Stewardship



healing of our planet so that present and future generations may enjoy the fruits of creation and continue to glorify and praise you. Amen.

From <http://tinyurl.com/2vtlojg>

Session Development

For each session leaders may choose from nine activities that help learners engage the practice of faith. It is best to select at least one activity from “Exploring and Engaging,” at least one from “Discerning and Deciding,” and at least one from “Sending and Serving.” The first activity in each category is designed for “easy preparation” (able to be done with minimal preparation with supplies normally found at the church). Using all nine activities could take 90–120 minutes.

- To plan a session of 30–45 minutes, choose three activities, using one activity from each category.
- To plan a session of 45–60 minutes, choose four or five activities, using at least one activity from each category.

If possible (but not necessary), have the participants read the "Pastoral Letter on Faith and Environment" before the session. Lead the group in those discussion questions and activities found on the "Faith Sharing Guide" that work best with your group.

Discerning & Deciding Activities



4 The Green Team (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Read the information from the United Church of Christ's Environmental Ministries found at <http://www.tinyurl.com/36uw474> as well as the stories found at <http://www.tinyurl.com/2u9rf2y> and <http://www.tinyurl.com/37xbhvh>.

Supplies:

- information gleaned from the UCC's Environmental Ministries web pages
- newsprint
- (green) markers

Invite the participants to brainstorm things your congregation can do to be better stewards of creation. Share the information you found on the UCC's Environmental Ministries web pages. Encourage participants to think both big and small; for example, from becoming intentional about using both sides of pieces of paper to making your church a recycling center for DVDs, CDs, and books. Be sure to include children and youth in this brainstorming because they often have the most ideas.

5 With Hoot and Squawk . . .

Leader preparation: Acquire the poster “With hoot and squawk and squeak and bark . . .” by Barbara Reid. Spend some time with the image as you reflect on God's charge to us to care for creation.

Supplies:

- poster: “With hoot and squawk and squeak and bark . . .” by Barbara Reid <http://www.tinyurl.com/UCCResources>
- newsprint
- markers
- sidewalk chalk

Allow a few minutes for the group to study the poster by standing very close to it. Ask the participants to choose a creature and share how God expects them to care for that creature. Expand the discussion to help them come up with slogans for caring for creation. Record these on newsprint. When all of the “slogans” have been recorded, bring them to your church's parking lot or a sidewalk to share them with the world by writing (and decorating) them with sidewalk chalk. If you have dirt instead of pavement, write (and decorate) them in the dirt.

6 Movie Night

Leader preparation: Select a movie from the resource handout for this session, Attachment: Extra 1. Preview it, and make arrangements to show it to an age-appropriate group in your congregation. If you plan to serve popcorn, be sensitive to any allergies among the participants.

**Supplies:**

- DVD and DVD player
- screen
- popcorn (optional)

Host a Movie Night to show a film that stimulates thinking about being good stewards of the earth and its resources. Engage the group in a discussion after the movie (check out some related Web sites for discussion guides).

Sending & Serving Activities



7 Commissioning (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Read and reflect on 1 Chronicles 29:1–19. Make note of all of the phrases that speak of stewardship.

Supplies:

- Bibles
- paper
- pens or pencils

Invite participants to read the scripture passage in pairs. If there are children and teens in your group, be sure to pair them with adults or older teens, and use a translation of the Bible more readily understood by elementary age children such as the Contemporary English Version or Eugene Peterson's *The Message*. Ask each pair to list all of the phrases that lift up what God has given to God's people as well as what God's people give back to God. Then put a star next to the ones that each individual likes the best. As a group, assemble all of the favorite phrases into a litany of commissioning, with a response such as "We are your partners, O God." Use this litany for commissioning the work of specific groups in your congregation (like a Green Team) that undertake tasks of stewardship.

8 The Tree of Life

Leader preparation: Acquire the poster "Baobab, Okavango Delta, Botswana" by Pete Oxford. Read and reflect on both the image and Revelation 21:10, 21:22–22:5. What images of hope do you see in each? Make black and white copies of the Baobab image for the participants so that it takes up one-third of a sheet of paper. (The other two-thirds will be used for the participants' own artwork.)

Supplies:

- poster: "Baobab, Okavango Delta, Botswana" by Pete Oxford
<http://www.tinyurl.com/AllPosters5>
- black and white copies of the poster
- sets of markers

Allow a few minutes for the group to study the full-color poster. Then invite them to use the markers and the black and white image to draw and color what they hear as you read the scripture passage from Revelation. Invite each one to share the hope for the healing of the earth they see in the image they created.



9 Stewardship of the Earth Songfest

Leader preparation: Arrange for a keyboardist to serve as an accompanist for the "Songfest" and work with him or her to choose the songs from the handout that are known and enjoyed by your congregation. Be sure to choose a few unfamiliar songs to teach as well.

Supplies:

- copies of "Stewardship of the Earth Songfest," Attachment: Activity 9
- hymnals and/or favorite songbook(s) (optional)

Hold a "Stewardship of the Earth Songfest" with your group, or prepare them to provide leadership for an all-church songfest.

Reflect

What steps forward in living stewardship with the earth has your congregation committed to make? Do these steps provide direction for future steps? What ministries need to be included in the prayers for your congregation?

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Attachment: Activity Extra 1

Additional Resources for Stewardship of Creation

Books for Children

Old Turtle by Douglas Wood (ISBN-10: 0439309085; ISBN-13: 978-0439309080), ages 5 and older

When all of creation begins arguing over who or what God is, quiet Old Turtle is the only one who has the wisdom and ability to see beyond herself to capture the essence. It is only when people start listening that they actually begin to hear—and to heal the earth. <http://www.tinyurl.com/33xuned>

The Lorax by Dr. Seuss (ISBN-10: 0394823370; ISBN-13: 978-0394823379), ages 4–8

A classic that teaches about our responsibility to our environment and what can happen if people don't stand up for what is right. At the end of the story, our fate rests in the hands of a caring child, who becomes our last chance for a clean, green future. <http://www.tinurl.com/ljczuz>

"Partners" from *Does God Have a Big Toe?: Stories about the Bible* by Marc Gellman (ISBN-10: 0064404536; ISBN-13: 978-0064404532)

From a collection of (ital)midrashim(ital), "Partners" is one rabbi's interpretation of what "really" happened during creation. <http://www.tinyurl.com/2waa6py>

And Still the Turtle Watched by Sheila MacGill-Callahan (ISBN-10: 0140558365; ISBN-13: 978-0140558364), grades 1–4

A Native American carved turtle teaches modern-day children about respect for the earth. <http://www.tinyurl.com/3aar2mc>

Planting the Trees of Kenya: The Story of Wangari Maathai by Claire A. Nivola (ISBN-10: 0374399182; ISBN-13: 978-0374399184), grades K–8, <http://www.tinyurl.com/ba4yq8>

The inspiring story of Kenyan activist Wangari Maathai, 2004 Nobel Peace Prize winner and founder of the Green Belt Movement, is told from Maathai's childhood in the rich landscape of Kenya's highlands to her deep connection with nature as a youth, which then inspired her to develop sustainable practices as an adult.

The Great Kapok Tree: A Tale of the Amazon Rain Forest by Lynne Cherry (ISBN-10: 0152026142; ISBN-13: 978-0152026141), ages 4–8, <http://www.tinyurl.com/32efjgh>

A man is sent into the Amazon rain forest one day, with instructions to chop down a great kapok tree, but each personalized entreaty from the animals offers him a persuasive argument about the interconnectedness of all living things. Includes a map of the earth's endangered rain forests.

Books for Youth

Way To Live: Christian Practices for Teens by Dorothy Bass and Don Richter (ISBN-10: 0835809757; ISBN-13: 978-0835809757)

Each chapter is written by a young person and an adult including Mark Yaconelli, Susan Briehl, and Emily Salliers of the Indigo Girls and her father, Don Salliers, a Methodist minister. Each chapter focuses on a different faith practice such as prayer, forgiveness, creativity, creation, justice, music, and the like. <http://www.tinyurl.com/243vlcd>

The Green Bible, Harper Bibles (ISBN-10: 0061627992; ISBN-13: 978-0061627996), <http://www.tinyurl.com/2wrgm2h>

Includes inspirational essays from key leaders such as N. T. Wright, Barbara Brown Taylor, Brian McLaren, Matthew Sleeth, Pope John Paul II, and Wendell Berry. Passages emphasizing the care of creation are printed in green.

Books and Resources for Adults and Leaders

Co-Workers in Creation: First Steps in Ecology by Kristin Kemper, <http://www.educationalministries.com>

A five-day vacation church school program to introduce elementary aged children to the wonders of God's world and their responsibility as caretakers of it.

Attachment: Activity Extra 1, page 2

Almost Everything You Need To Know About Environmental Justice from the UCC Justice and Witness Ministries

<http://www.tinyurl.com/36hdlz8>

Briefly outlines and explains the environmental justice movement, focusing on the UCC's environmental justice and racism contributions. As the title evidences, this booklet offers merely a taste of the environmental justice movement and is by no means exhaustive. It is available in Spanish and English, and it may be ordered for \$5 by calling 866-822-8224, ext. 3714.

"UCC Environmental Ministries Resources" brochure

<http://www.tinyurl.com/3992zb2>

Eco-Faith: Creating and Sustaining Green Congregations by Charlene Hosenfeld (ISBN: 978-0-8298-1818-5)

This book is a user-friendly guide for pastors, church leaders, congregations, and individuals to facilitate understanding of environmental issues as they relate to caring for the whole of God's creation. Each chapter contains an introduction as well as extensive lists of facts, actions, and resources. There are also inspiring stories from worship communities around the country that have made the decision to go green. Additionally, the book integrates current ecological research, religious thought, and a psychological perspective. Order from UCC Resources at <http://www.tinyurl.com/2v44zgb> or by calling 800-537-3394.

A Pastoral Letter on Faith and Environment: Living In Community with God's Creation

<http://www.tinyurl.com/2fgxtf5>

Web sites

United Church of Christ Environmental Ministries, <http://www.ucc.org/38cl7w3>

United Church of Christ Justice and Witness Ministries work for environmental justices

<http://www.tinyurl.com/38cl7w3>

United Church of Christ worship, study, and action resources for caring for the earth, <http://www.ucc.org/earthcare>

United Church of Christ EcoAction, <http://www.uccecoaction.org>

Provides resources, networking and guidance for environmental programming in the congregations and conferences of the United Church of Christ.

Stewards in the Household of God: Relationship With the Earth, <http://www.tinyurl.com/393rwqz>

DVDs/Videos

An Inconvenient Truth by Al Gore (see <http://www.eco-justice.org> for a discussion guide)

This film makes the compelling case that global warming is real and its effects will be cataclysmic if we don't act now.

Brother Sun, Sister Moon, <http://www.tinyurl.com/ytqf4d>

A 1973 musical, directed, and filmed by Franco Zeffirelli, about the life of St. Francis of Assisi, who expressed his love for God through his love of nature.

Affluenza

<http://www.tinyurl.com/yku4kls> (Teacher's Guide available on the Web site)

A one-hour television special that explores the high social and environmental costs of materialism and overconsumption. Do you have it? Diagnose yourself at <http://www.tinyurl.com/yku4kls>.

Attachment: Activity Extra 1, page 3

Escape from Affluenza

<http://www.tinyurl.com/3836d6f>

A one-hour PBS special providing practical solutions to the problem of “affluenza”—an epidemic of stress, waste, overconsumption, and environmental decay, it shows how some Americans are calling a halt to keeping up with the Joneses and abandoning the consumer chase. The program is a sequel to the popular special, *Affluenza*.

The 11th Hour (a 2007 documentary with narration by Leonard DiCaprio), <http://www.tinyurl.com/3ppey4>

The film explores the perilous state of our planet, and the means by which we can change our course. Contributing to this crucial film are noted politicians, scientists, musicians, and other ambassadors for the importance of a universal ecological consciousness.

Flow: For Love of Water (a 2008 award-winning documentary), <http://www.tinyurl.com/62ka2p>

This film investigates why experts label the world water crisis the most important political and environmental issue of the twenty-first century and introduces many of the governmental and corporate culprits behind the water grab.

Troubled Waters, a UCC documentary narrated by the late Lynn Redgrave.

<http://www.ucc.org/troubled-waters> gives a good overview of the issues surrounding the global water crisis.

A Crude Awakening: The Oil Crash (a 2006 award-winning documentary), <http://www.tinyurl.com/2rouwk>

This film tells the story of how civilization’s addiction to oil puts it on a collision course with geology. Compelling, intelligent, and highly entertaining, the documentary concludes that our industrial society, built on cheap and readily available oil, must be completely re-imagined and overhauled. The film provides not only questions, but also possible solutions to the most perplexing issue of our time.

The Story of Stuff by Annie Leonard, <http://www.storyofstuff.com>

Annie Leonard, an activist who has spent the past ten years traveling the globe fighting environmental threats, narrates *The Story of Stuff*, delivering a rapid-fire, often humorous and always engaging story about “all our stuff—where it comes from and where it goes when we throw it away.”

Attachment: Activity 1

Creation's Web

Explain to the group that you will be participating in an exercise to help them see the interrelatedness of everything in God's creation. Each person will wear an index card or square of paper representing a different part of creation. Most of the group may choose the plant or animal they wish to be and write it on their "nametag," but you will also need four volunteers to be Sun, Air, Water, and Soil.

Then invite the participants to form a circle. Tell them that you will be tossing the ball of yarn or string from person to person in order to make a web. While tightly holding the strand of yarn or string in your fingers, toss the ball across the circle to someone whose plant or animal is dependent on what is on your "nametag" and explain the relationship. Continue tossing the ball of yarn in this manner, sharing the relationship between animals, plants, and elements. For best results, encourage tosses across the circle rather than to the person beside them. When everyone has at least one piece of the yarn or string (some may have more), stop the tossing.

With everyone still holding onto his or her piece(s) of yarn or string, explain that you all have just created a metaphor for the interrelatedness of everything in God's creation. Show the group how when one person's piece of yarn or string is raised or lowered, tightened or loosened, there is an effect on the entire web. Each person (or animal or plant) in the group is in a relationship with every other person (or other living creature).

Ask what would happen if there were no water; have the person who is Water let go of his or her piece(s) of yarn or string. How does this affect the web? Ask another to drop out. The web should be able to support, with some adjustments, a couple of missing pieces, but then take away Air, Sun, and Soil—the remaining foundations for life—and the web will fall apart.

Begin a discussion about the effects on the environment when one piece is destroyed. How do we as humans fit into this web? Are we being good stewards of God's gifts of creation? What have we done to change the balance of the web? In what ways can we be better stewards of God's earth?

Attachment: Activity 2

Commercial Break

After viewing the television advertisements, read and reflect on this quotation from *Inspiring Generosity* (a resource of the Stewardship and Church Finances Ministry, Local Church Ministries, United Church of Christ):

"(W)hat we don't often see is . . . the attitude and values of the majority culture so influenced by the marketplace. What is the chronically felt need for 'more' of something but the fear of scarcity that fuels consumerism and drives our whole economy? . . . always pursuing more of what it lacks, never convinced that what it has right now is truly enough" (p. 4).

Questions for Discussion:

- What have you observed lately about our culture's "need for more"?
- What were these television ads trying to get you to feel?
- What were they trying to get you to do?
- Are they successful? How?
- As we try to be better stewards of the earth's resources, what are some ways we can counter the effect of advertisements that promote wasteful consumerism?

Activity

As a group, write a television commercial to promote good stewardship of the earth's resources. Try using the same techniques that you saw in the television commercials shown in this session. Select "actors" to present this commercial at an upcoming stewardship event within the life of your congregation.

Inspiring Generosity (a resource of the United Church of Christ, Stewardship and Church Finances Ministry, Local Church Ministries). Order from UCC Resources at <http://www.ucc.org> (click on "Buy It," then "UCC Resources") or by calling 800-537-3394.

Stewardship of the Earth Songfest

Choose from the following hymns about God’s creation from *The New Century Hymnal*.

- Wakantanka Taku Nitawa (#3)
- Joyful, Joyful, We Adore You (#4)
- I Sing the Mighty Power of God (#12)
- To You, O God, All Creatures Sing (#17)
- For the Beauty of the Earth (#28)
- All Things Bright and Beautiful (#31)
- God of the Sparrow, God of the Whale (#32)
- Alabanza (#34)
- Cantemos al Creador (#39)
- Awake, Awake to Love and Work (#89)
- Spirit, Spirit of Gentleness (#286)
- De Colores (#402)
- In the Bulb There Is a Flower (#433)
- All Beautiful the March of Days (#434)
- O How Glorious, Full of Wonder (#558)
- Stars and Planets Flung in Orbit (#567)

Other Songs or Hymns

God Left the Whole World in Our Hands

Living Stewardship



Intergenerational

About this Setting

Intergenerational experiences are rare in our North American society, although they used to be more common and still are the norm in many parts of the world. Faith communities are one of the few places where people can experience being part of a “village” where children can experience nurture and care from adults who are neither their parents nor paid professionals; where adults and youth can be part of the “whole village” that it takes to raise a child; and where all ages can learn and grow together. An intergenerational event offers an opportunity to focus on this unique dimension of being church, by intentionally bringing together all ages. There is no one right way to create a positive intergenerational experience, but careful preparation is key (so that younger participants do not have a lot of “empty” or unfocused time). It is also important to encourage interaction across age groups and to invite a spirit of mutual playfulness and creativity so that older participants do not participate only as helpers or observers. This setting offers an “intergenerational event”—a workshop style experience for all ages, including children, youth, and adults. Activities are designed so that all ages can participate and take something meaningful from the experience (although what a teen or five-year-old or adult will take from the experience may be very different). Because of this wide age span, participants will engage in learning activities in a variety of ways and at many different levels. Group members will learn from one another and assist, challenge, or inspire one another. Children may become “teachers” for youth or adults, helping them to participate more playfully or spontaneously. Adults and youth may share experiences or ideas that may stretch and enlarge the worldview of younger participants, and children will also have important ideas and experiences to share. It will be important for leaders to be open to the variety of gifts, spirituality, wisdom, and experiences present in the group. The activities in this component are written as if there were a single leader. Ideally, however, you will have youth and other adults sharing in the leadership of the intergenerational event.



About this Faith Practice

As a way of life, expressed in gratitude, living stewardship is a practice that involves all that it means to live as faithful followers of Jesus Christ. It grows out of a deep caring for and joy in who we are as God's created people and the natural world in which we live. Living stewardship is about how we live our lives and how our lives express our values. It affects all of our decisions, especially the ones we make about the natural and human resources entrusted to us for care. Living stewardship is shalom: living in harmony with others and the world. It is about our relationships, liberation, grace, justice, peace, and mutuality as well as our material possessions. As faithful stewards, we are joined by our common gift of life and the reality of finite resources. We recognize that each of us is a mixture of neediness and fullness and so have responsibility to care for each other as we honor the holy in creation and ourselves. As faithful disciples, we are called to live as generous creatures created by a generous God who mutually shares responsibility with us for all creation. Stewardship involves all people because all are connected in mutually covenanted stewardship within God's original intent for creation.

Intergenerational Options

These activities may be used to build an intergenerational event for the commencement or conclusion of your series on "Living Stewardship" (up to 3 hours). Or the activities may be used independently (15–20 minutes each), interwoven with age-specific activities throughout the series. An intergenerational event might be used during a time of year that is already set aside as special, such as Advent, Kwanzaa, Lent, Vacation Bible School, or forty days of prayer for children.

Familiarize yourself with all twelve activities, Consider the age of participants and the time available for this event, and choose a group of activities that will meet your needs. For an event lasting 1–2 hours, choose three or four activities from the list of twelve. There are enough activities for three or four events! Or choose a single activity (15–30 minutes) to use as the activity at a community meal or other gathering. Wearing name tags is a good idea, as often older and younger members of a church do not know one another's names.

Each activity ends with a prayer appropriate for the end of the session. Gather as a church family to grow together and have fun!

Intergenerational Leader Preparation

As you prepare to lead this intergenerational experience, read Genesis 1:26–31 and consider how you have heard this passage before. What stands out as you read it now? You will be gathering with a group of all ages, each entrusted by God with the care of creation, each equipped for the task with particular skills, resources, passion, and energy, and each made in the image of God the Creator. What are your hopes for this event? What gifts, commitment, or resources do you bring to your role as leader? How does the knowledge that you are made in God's image empower you for this ministry of leadership?

Prayer: Creator God may your Spirit blow through us as it did at the birth of creation. Keep us attuned to your presence and alert to your wisdom. Help us to honor one another as bearers of your holy imprint. Inspire us as we seek to share the gifts you have entrusted to our care. Amen.

Exploring & Engaging Activities

Whether we are new to a particular faith practice or an old hand with much experience, all of us benefit from new opportunities to explore the shape of the faith practice and to engage the issues of faith that the practice offers. Sometimes this is a matter of learning new ideas about the practice. Sometimes this is more about reflecting on what we have done in our practice. The activities in the Exploring and Engaging sphere help us figure out how a faith practice intersects with our life and the life of the community of faith.



Discerning & Deciding Activities

Practicing our faith always involves discernment: naming the realities of our community and world and seeking the will of God for our lives and for the world. We then decide how we will act, what we will do, what values move us forward, what faith has called us to do. The activities in this sphere give us opportunity to practice by discerning and deciding.

Sending & Serving Activities

Practicing our faith involves serving others and being sent out as empowered disciples of Jesus Christ. We need time in our exploration to plan how we will serve. We need moments that send us forth blessed by the community from which we venture out. The activities in this sphere offer opportunities to practice our faith through sending and serving.



Exploration: Discovery

BIBLE FOCUS PASSAGES:

Genesis 1:26–31
1 Timothy 6:6–10, 17–19

1 Make a Stewardship “Connection” (Discerning and Deciding)

Leader preparation: Imagine the kinds of gifts participants might mention and consider how they might interconnect. Reflect on what gifts you offer for care of the earth.

Supplies:

- a large ball of yarn (choose a medium weight—something that you can break if you pull hard your hands but doesn't snap easily)
- a teaspoon
- scissors

Tie the end of the yarn securely to a spoon handle. Invite everyone to stand in a circle. Explain that each person must thread the spoon and yarn through themselves in some way (through a sweater sleeve, through a shoe lace or belt loop, under a bracelet or watch band, but NOT AROUND THE NECK). As each person receives the spoon, each should share one or two ways in which they help to care for the gifts and resources that God has entrusted to us by giving money, time, or talents. Start by looping the spoon with the yarn through some part of your clothing. State a way you offer gifts of time, money, or talent. Pass the spoon with the yarn to the next person in the circle. That person loops the yarn through something, states a way they share, and passes the spoon on to the next person around the circle. Continue until the yarn and spoon have gone all the way around the circle and everyone is connected. Note: All the people who have received and threaded the yarn through themselves will need to pay attention and continue to help pass out the yarn around the circle.

When the yarn and spoon have traveled all the way around, ask the group to leave the learning area and reenter, without breaking connection. This will be challenging and requires the group to cooperate. When you are safely back in the learning area, use scissors to disconnect yourselves from the yarn. Gather in a circle to reflect on the experience. Invite the group to recall the different gifts people in the group can offer one another and our world. Even though we are not connected as we were with the yarn, we are still connected in other ways as



we care for one another and our world. Invite the group to suggest some of these connections. Ask: How does what someone does in one way connect with what someone else is offering? (Suggest particular examples, based on what the group has shared. For example, someone might give money to help an organization working with the poor, while another might help protect the environment by recycling, but both are working to care for God's creation).

2 Washing Machine: A Drama Game (Easy Preparation) (Discerning and Deciding)

Leader preparation: Prepare a movement to illustrate the "washing machine" (see below).

Supplies:

- Bible (preferably a children's Bible)

This is a fun cooperative game. Enjoy yourselves! Ask participants to form groups of three or four. Ask each small group to find a way to act out the object or situation that you ask them to depict by a single repetitive motion. Begin with an easy example, such as a washing machine. One person (or two) could be the tub, and the other one (or two) could be the agitator (the big part in the middle of the tub that moves back and forth to wash the clothes). The tub might rock back and forth repetitively while the agitator does a back and forth flailing motion. If you have more people, someone could be the clothes in the machine. Encourage groups to use their whole bodies. Invite groups to be creative, but stress that they must make a continuous repetitive motion, like a machine, rather than a series of actions.

Next, ask groups to add a single sound, repeated over and over, to go with their movement, for example "chug, chug" or "swish, swish" for a washing machine. First have every small group be a washing machine. Then ask them to be something else: perhaps a pair of scissors cutting paper, an axe cutting a tree. Remind participants to keep the motions simple and repetitive and to add only a single repeated sound. Then, suggest something more complex such as a train. Gather in a circle. Read aloud Genesis 1:26 or share a paraphrase such as the following: God said, let us make human beings in our image, just like me. Let them care for the fish of the sea and the birds of the air. Let them tend the cattle. Let them protect the wild animals and the snakes and insects. Let them care for all the creatures that I have made.

Have participants think of ways that we care for the creatures of the planet. Return to the small groups and have each group create a movement and sound that depicts one way people can care for the creatures of the earth. Give each group an opportunity to present their sound/movement creation.



Exploration: Scripture

3 Tell a Creation Story (Exploring and Engaging)

Leader preparation: Read the following paraphrase of Genesis 1:26–31 or write one of your own, and prepare to tell it to the group. Do an Internet search for a creation story from another culture or context. For example, see Australian *dream-*



time creation stories at <http://tinyurl.com/2fo95s7> or Native American creation stories at <http://www.tinyurl.com/25rjj8a>.

Supplies:

- poster: Orion Nebula by Stocktrek Images
<http://www.tinyurl.com/AllPosters6>

Put up the “Orion Nebula” poster and ask the group to gather around to look at it. Use the following information to tell the group about the Orion Nebula. Nebulae are enormous clouds of dust and gas far away in outer space. Over millions of years, gravity pulls the gas, dust, and other materials together to form larger and larger clumps which eventually become big enough to form stars and planets. The Orion Nebula is 100,000,000,000,000 kilometers away from Earth (on the scale of the universe, that’s fairly close). It is the closest place to Earth where stars are being made. But because the Orion Nebula is so far away, it takes light a long time to get from there to here. So when we look at the Orion Nebula we’re looking at what happened almost 1500 years ago.

Explain that in the Bible there is a story about creation. It is a story that was written down long before people knew anything about the Orion Nebula. Tell the story using the following paraphrase:

God created people to be like God. God blessed them and said to them, “You will have children and grandchildren and great-great-great grandchildren. Soon, people will live everywhere on earth. Take care of all the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and the creatures that live on the ground. I have given you plants to eat and berries to pick and trees with fruits and nuts. And all the creatures will have plants and berries and grasses to eat as well.” So, that’s what happened. God saw everything that was made and it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning on the sixth day.

Ask questions to promote conversation about this story: What do you like about this story? What does it make you think about? Tell another creation story from a different culture or context. Then invite the participants to work in small groups to make up a story of their own about creation. It might begin like this: “Long, long ago, when the universe was very new . . .” Encourage each small group to practice their story so that they can tell it to the whole group.



4 Reflect on an Image of Tenderness (Exploring and Engaging) (Easy Preparation)

Leader Preparation: Spend a few minutes in silence with the poster “Planting” and consider how this image speaks to you today.

Supplies:

- poster: Planting by Rex Goreleigh, <http://www.tinyurl.com/UCCResources>

Put up the poster “Planting” and invite participants to gather around to take a look. Ask people to share what they notice in this picture. Ask people to form groups of three to talk about it. Suggest a question such as one of the following for them to talk about: How does this picture feel to you? Does this picture remind you of anything? If so, what does it make you think of? Gather back in the whole group. Invite the group to imagine this as a picture about God’s care for the world. Pause for a moment. Then say: Imagine that you are the plant and God’s hands are caring for you. How do you feel?



Gather in a circle, standing if possible. Ask participants to cup their hands the way the hands are cupped in the poster. Say, “Pretend I am going to ‘pretend’ to pass something very special around the circle something that we must care for. Each person must take it in their hands, very carefully, and pass it on to the next person.” Do not say what it is, but pass something light such as a soft, fluffy feather around the circle. Ask people to say what they imagined they were passing. Next, pass something heavy but very fragile, such as a beautiful glass ball. Again, ask people to say what they imagined they were passing. Invite other participants to choose something special to pass around the circle. Close by passing an imaginary butterfly, have it alight on one finger then carefully transfer it to your cupped palms. When the creature returns around the circle to you, let the butterfly go (release it with your hands) at the end.

Say a short prayer such as the following: *Thank you God, for all the special and beautiful things in our world. Help us to hold them in our care as you do. Amen.*



Exploration: Discipleship

⑤ Sing a Song and Respond with Watercolors (Exploring and Engaging)

Leader preparation: Experiment with watercolor paints. If you have not used watercolors before, ask someone to show you some basic watercolor techniques or invite a painter from your church to do this activity with the group. Arrange for an accompanist or someone to teach the group the hymn.

Supplies:

- watercolor paints
- brushes
- cups of water
- flat dishes or plates to use as palettes
- masking tape
- damp towels
- hymnbooks with the hymn “Jesu, Jesu, Fill Us with Your Love” (tune: Chereponi), <http://www.tinyurl.com/FPSong4>

Teach the hymn “Jesu, Jesu, Fill Us with Your Love.” Invite conversation about the lyrics of the song. What might it be like to be filled up with Jesus’ love? What would it be like to spend time with someone who was filled with love? How do we show the love of Jesus in our world? Encourage participants to create art that responds to this song in some way. Show them how to tape the paper to the work surface by putting strips of masking tape all around the edge. Wet the paper using water and brush (so that the surface of the paper is damp but not soaking wet). Create a “wash” using a very wet brush and a very small amount of paint. Paint the color over the paper to produce a very pale background color. Then choose a second color of paint and place a small dot of paint on the wash (while it is still wet). The paint will bleed out in a star-like pattern. Repeat with different colors but do not overwork the art (if too many colors are used it will end up as an overall brown or gray). Leave paintings taped in place until they dry so that the paper doesn’t curl.



If participants wish to share their art, after the finished paintings are hanging up, take a tour of the pieces that have been created. Sing "Jesu, Jesu, Fill Us with Your Love" again.

 **6 Self-Portraits of Gifted People (Deciding and Discerning, Sending and Serving) (Easy Preparation)**

Leader preparation: Take a moment to reflect on what it means to see yourself as "made in God's image."

Supplies:

- washable markers
- charcoal or drawing pencils
- paper (large sheets if possible)
- masking tape

Set out paper and markers, charcoal, or drawing pencils. Ask each person to make a self portrait using the art supplies that you have provided. Have everyone sign their self portrait. Remind the group that as creatures who are "made in God's image," who we are reflects the creativity and giftedness of the Holy One. Encourage participants to be creative—this portrait can be an abstract or impressionist piece, or they can use words and colors rather than an exact line drawing of themselves. The key is for people to try to convey a sense of who they are, their individual "style" or personality, and so on. When the self portraits are complete, post them in the learning area with masking tape. Tape another piece of paper beside each self-portrait. Have an "artist's tour" of each portrait. Stop at each person's self portrait and take a moment to share appreciations of the piece (things the other participants like, appreciate, notice, things the self-portrait reminds them of, and so forth.) Encourage positive responses. Then, ask the group to think of some of the gifts this person has to share with the world, things that help them to celebrate, share, and care for the gifts that life offers. For example: Sammy's jokes help people feel good; Ying helps the younger kids with crafts; Miguel is generous and shares his allowance. Encourage specific, positive comments. Have participants write their comments on the paper beside the self portrait or have people say out loud the gifts they see in each person while a leader records them.



Exploration: Christian Tradition

7 Take a Tour of Your Church (Exploring and Engaging)

Leader preparation: Gather information about the history of your congregation and the history of your denomination (date founded, major events over the years, mission involvements over the years and currently, pastors). Plan a tour through the building or arrange for someone to act as a "tour guide" for the group.

Supplies: None

Tell the story of Acts 4:32–36, as follows:

The believers gathered to talk about Jesus. They gave thanks for all that he had taught people of love, of God, and of the way to live. If someone had never heard of Jesus, they told him or her stories. Some of their favorite stories were . . . [invite the children to suggest stories about Jesus]. Some



of the believers were rich; they owned houses and land. Others were very poor. The believers who had lots of property sold it and shared the money with the poor. Then, everyone had enough and no one had too much. A man sold a field that he owned. He came and laid the money at the feet of the apostles. His name was Joseph but everyone called him Barnabas—a name that means “son of encouragement.”

Talk about what the earliest Christians did (told others about Jesus, cared for people who were poor and sick, worshiped and prayed together). Ask: What kinds of things do we do as a church family? Invite older members of the group to share memories of the way your church has helped to care for others and the world over the years.

Take the tour of your church building. Have fun. Pretend you are tourists visiting a historic site. As you visit the different spaces, talk about what goes on there. Ask participants, both old and young, to share special memories they have of something happening in that part of the building. Ask: What does our church family do to care for one another and our world?

8 Share a Meal (Sending and Serving)

Leader preparation: Invite others to help you with the meal (and with leadership in this event); this is not something you should do single-handedly.

Supplies:

- ingredients for a simple meal (something that does not require a lot of time to cook, such as soup made ahead of time, or make-your-own sandwiches)
- supplies to decorate the tables

Recall with the group how the earliest followers of Jesus shared their possessions and worked together so that everyone had enough to eat, shelter, and care. At their community meals, they remembered how Jesus had shared bread and wine with his friends at the last supper and told them to do this in remembrance of him. From the shared meals of the early Christian community, we get our communion celebration. The meal is an act of justice-making—an act of sharing equally with everyone. Prepare and eat a simple meal together. Make sure that everyone has a role to play in the meal preparation or setting up and decorating the tables.

Before you eat, invite participants to say aloud things for which they are thankful as well as concerns they have for themselves, for other people, and for the world.

Alternative: Say a prayer of thanks before the meal; give thanks for the food and for those who prepared it. Invite God to help you discover ways to care for one another and the world around you.



Exploration: Context and Mission

9 Saving the Birds: Action Research (Discerning and Deciding, Sending and Serving)

Leader preparation: Do an Internet search for information on a “Lights Out” program near you. “Lights Out” programs work to reduce nighttime lighting of high rise buildings in an effort to help prevent migratory birds from hitting the build-



ings. Go to a site such as <http://lightsout.audubon.org> or search the Internet with the key words “lights out” and “migratory birds.” Find out what volunteers can do to help protect migratory birds that strike high rise buildings.

Supplies:

- poster: With hoot and squawk and squeak and bark ... by Barbara Reid
<http://www.tinyurl.com/UCCResources>
- crayons or markers
- pencils
- paper

Post a copy of the poster of the painting by Reid “With Hoof and Squawk and Squeal and Bark . . .” and invite the group to look at the poster. Ask participants: What do you like about this? How does this picture make you feel? Remember the story of Noah saving animals from the flood? What did Noah do to save the birds and animals? What are some things that people can do to protect or care for wildlife? Share information you have located about Lights Out programs to prevent migratory birds from hitting high rise buildings. Invite participants to work in groups of two or three to create their own illustrated story about someone or some group working to save a wild creature or group of creatures that are in danger, such as a group working on a Lights Out program (or helping clean up birds fouled by an oil slick, a dolphin caught in a fishing net, and so forth. You can also find lots of images to go along with these incidents.) Talk about how your group might participate in a project to help local wildlife (such as volunteering with a group that rescues migratory birds that strike high rises or making posters for a Lights Out campaign). Plan an action project in which everyone can participate.

Alternative: If you have access to computers with Internet connection, have participants do this research themselves.

⑩ Caring for the Earth: A Tissue Art Activity (Sending and Serving)

Leader preparation: Think about what the balls might look like when completed. How will you help the group to work together on this project? Consider the anticipated (or possible) size of the group so that you prepare sufficient supplies. This activity will not work well if groups are too large or too crowded together. If your group is large, have several balls and supplies (about one small ball for every three to four participants or one large ball for every five to six participants).

Supplies:

- large beach ball or exercise ball (the ball can be reused later)
- paint brushes
- blue and green tissue paper (if possible, obtain a variety of different shades of green and blue)
- water-soluble white craft glue (not Podge or acrylic-based glue)

Create a large planet Earth using the ball. Cover the ball with craft glue (use brushes) and paste on pieces of blue tissue paper; overlap the pieces until the ball is completely covered and none of the plastic is showing. Then tear pieces of green paper in the shape of the continents (approximate shape is fine). Paste the continents over the blue tissue using layers of green paper.

When the ball is complete and dry, have participants sit in the circle and slowly pass the ball from one person to another in turn around the circle. As the ball is held by each person, have them say one thing they love about the planet Earth.



Wonder together how God feels about Earth. Say a prayer of care for the Earth, such as the following: *Thank you, God, for this beautiful planet that is our home. Thank you for mountains and seas, forests and skies, plants and birds and animals. Help us to find ways to work together to keep our world safe; help us to keep it always blue and green and beautiful as it spins through space. Amen.*



Exploration: Future and Mission



⑩ Vision of a Future World: Body Sculpture (Discerning and Deciding) (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: This activity does not require any outside supplies but it will help if you can offer some examples or ideas to illustrate what is meant by "body sculpture." For example, show the group how an arm can be gently shaped to form a tree branch by lifting it up, curving it slightly, separating the fingers, and so on. "Practice" some possibilities in your imagination.

Supplies: None

Help the group make a collective sculpture as follows: Ask for two volunteers to be the sculptors. The rest of the group is the clay. The sculptors shape the "clay" into a statue by gently moving people's bodies or asking them to move into a particular position. Practice with a simple idea, using just one person, such as "make a statue of a child playing with a balloon." Then, make a complicated statue using many bodies.

Ask the sculptors to create a statue of a problem in our world that they would like to change. When the sculpture is created, have everyone "freeze" in position. Have people take turns stepping out of position (the sculptors take their places) so that everyone has a chance to look at the sculpture.

Reflect

Remind yourself of some of the gifts (inspiration, hope, ideas, new learning) that you gained from this intergenerational experience. Recall some of the highlights of the session. What leadership or gifts did the participants share? Pause to give thanks to God for the gifts life offers. What do you celebrate? How has this experience enriched your faith or hope? How can you let the participants know of your appreciation for the gifts they have given you? What will you do again, because it was joyful or seemed particularly meaningful? What will you do differently in future events of this kind?

Then, talk about how you could make a statue of this problem being fixed, solved, or changed. Have two new sculptors make the new statue. Again, give everyone a chance to see the new statue.

Alternative: Have people work in small groups to create a sculpture of "our hope for a future world."

⑪ Sing a Song With Movement (Sending and Serving)

Leader preparation: Arrange for an accompanist; if necessary, arrange for someone to teach this song to the group.

Supplies:

- hymnbooks (or photocopies) with the song "Take My Gifts and Let Me Love You" (tune: Talavera Terrace), <http://www.tinyurl.com/FPSong5>

Teach the song "Take My Gifts and Let Me Love You" and sing it together. Invite the group to make up simple actions to go with the words to the song. Plan to sing this song in a congregational service of worship.