



3 Great Loves House Party

THE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST has recently adopted a new purpose, mission and vision statement:

- ❖ We will love the Lord our God with our whole heart, mind, soul and strength; and our neighbor as ourselves. **(Purpose)**
- ❖ United by the Holy Spirit and inspired by God's grace we love all, welcome all, and seek justice for all. **(Mission)**
- ❖ A just world for all. **(Vision)**

IN FIDELITY TO THIS STATEMENT, the denomination has invited congregations and individuals within the United Church of Christ to move in mission toward the **3 GREAT LOVES**: love of children, love of neighbor, and love of creation.

A **3 Great Loves House Party** is one way to engage this conversation. The purpose of a House Party is not to create a committee or working group to address one or more of the **3 GREAT LOVES**, but to **build** community, **generate** interest, and **foster** commitment around the **3 GREAT LOVES**. The aim is to help shape and inspire the common life of the congregation in the direction of faithful mission. Out of these house parties, a clear vision, plan of action, and collective commitment to engaging in next steps toward living into the 3 Great Loves will emerge.

SEEK ONE PERSON who is willing to serve as a facilitator for the house party — someone who is able to attend to the Spirit in the room, allow space for conversation, model a spirit of grace, move conversations along a common purpose, and provide effective follow-up with congregational leaders after the House Party.

NEXT, FIND A HOST — someone who is willing to provide space for 10-12 people to gather and who might prepare a simple meal (or have space for potluck items).

FINALLY, INVITE A CROSS-SECTION OF FOLK from church to gather for a meal. Gathering with friends from church is great; gathering with a diverse group of individuals who may not know each other well is better. Begin the meal with a prayer of gratitude for the food shared and the people in the room, and move into some opening conversations. Possible conversation starters include:

- ❖ What is your favorite potluck dish?
- ❖ Do you have a favorite memory of this dish from your childhood?
- ❖ How did you come to be a part of this congregation?
- ❖ What do you find most meaningful about being a part of this faith community?

(more)

THE FACILITATOR CAN GENTLY turn the conversation to the United Church of Christ's **3 GREAT LOVES**. The UCC's General Minister and President, the Rev. Dr. John Dorhauer, recently wrote, "The world is in need of our great love. And our love for the world can transform it."

- ❖ Where is your heart?
- ❖ Where are you already responding to the love of Children, Neighbor, and Creation in your own life and witness?
- ❖ Where is your heart leading you to deepen your commitment to one of these Great Loves?
- ❖ Who else is being led in the same direction?

CONSIDER HOW your congregation is already expressing its commitment to the **3 GREAT LOVES** or where there has been recent energy or momentum to take on a new commitment.

- ❖ What is a need in our community?
- ❖ Can the people in this room be a part of filling that need?
- ❖ Who else would we need to talk to in order to help meet that need?

IF THE ENERGY IN THE ROOM is clearly around one of the **3 GREAT LOVES** or a particular project to embody one of the **3 GREAT LOVES**, encourage participants to make a plan to gather again within the next two weeks to take next steps. If the energy in the room is more diffuse or if several ideas or projects are lifted up, invite participants into deeper prayer towards a greater sense of clarity for themselves and who they might be called to partner with. If the facilitator or other participants know of others who share interests with those in the room, encourage those connections.

THERE IS NO RIGHT OR WRONG WAY to embark upon this journey. Your group may simply want to re-commitment to the good ministry that is already happening in the life of your church. Over the next two years, all the settings of the UCC will be joining together in worship and mission to further commit ourselves to the **3 GREAT LOVES** through 3 calls to action — Basic Needs Drive (Fall 2017), School Supplies Drive (Fall 2018), and 3 Great Loves Walk (Summer 2019). We welcome your partnership with these activities.

AS YOUR TIME TOGETHER CLOSES, offer a prayer of thanks for the time gathered, the stories shared, and the visions being lifted up in the community. Depart in peace.

The facilitator should follow up with the **3 GREAT LOVES** coordinator in their congregation to debrief, share learnings and encourage cross-pollination across various dinner party groups for the 3 Great Loves.

Consider having a fun theme for your house party. For example, you can make it a **fun-due house party** by having fondue items that one can dip in cheese or chocolate.

We appreciate your engagement with the **3 GREAT LOVES**. For additional information, please visit WWW.3GREATLOVES.ORG.