



ORANGE ORCHARD
 Implementation - Nicaragua
 Size - 1 acre
 Coverage - approx. 200 trees
 Yield - approx. 50,000 fruit per year

IRRIGATION
 Hose fed ground water irrigation system
 1" diameter rubber hose connected to
 12" diameter x 8" tall concrete overflow
 cylinders, rock/gravel ring base

SUPPORT POSTS
 8" diameter x 36" tall wooden posts
 Poured concrete foundation
 Trees anchored to posts
 with .25" wrap-around chord

More Than We Can **IMAGINE**

2018 Planning and Resource Guide

Week of Compassion Special Offering February 18-25, 2018



Now to God be the glory, who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine. **Ephesians 3:20**

www.weekofcompassion.org

COVER: Luisa Maria Lopez shows off the new citrus seedlings she is planting on her farm in Nicaragua. [photo: Craig Thompson]

THIS PAGE: Vinsen Surma, a member of the CWS Indonesia staff, explains a project testing different storage methods to prevent crop loss on the island of West Timor. [photo: Week of Compassion]



Table of Contents

Welcome Letter	5
Theme Interpretation	6
Sermon Starter.....	8
Worship Materials	11
Children’s Activity.....	18
Printable Children’s Page.....	20
Youth Activity #1.....	21
Mission Moments.....	23
Quotes.....	25
Giving Calendar	27

Additional Online Materials (weekofcompassion.org/special-offering)

- Children’s Prayer Activity
- Youth Activity #2: In Another’s Shoes
- Short Videos-- Luisa: Farmer and Fighter, Seedlings, and Ripple Effects
- Mission Moment: After the Hurricane
- Mission Moment: Abundant Welcome
- Statistics

Special thanks to Rev. Thea Leticia Racelis, who prepared the Theme Interpretation, Sermon Starter, Worship Resources, Children’s Sermon, Children’s Activity, Youth Activities, and Prayer Station/Offering Reminder.

Please share this guide with outreach leaders and others responsible for your congregation’s Week of Compassion special offering. Additional copies are available upon request or can be downloaded from the Week of Compassion website www.weekofcompassion.org/special-offering

A woman in Malawi sifts grain, a sign of hope growing after severe drought.
[photo: ACT Alliance / Paul Jeffrey]



Week of Compassion is the relief, refugee and development mission fund of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States and Canada. We seek to equip and empower disciples to alleviate the suffering of others through disaster response, humanitarian aid, sustainable development and the promotion of mission opportunities.



WELCOME from your WEEK OF COMPASSION STAFF

God is doing **more than we can imagine!**

The human imagination is pretty incredible. Last fall, Week of Compassion staff and partners heard the dreams of teenage girls in Jakarta, Indonesia--unaccompanied refugees, without a permanent home. Their lives are filled with uncertainty and challenge, yet when they picture their futures, they imagine themselves as small business owners, artists, mothers, surgeons, and pilots.

The human imagination is also limited, bound by our finite human experience. Sometimes the suffering of the world outpaces our ability to imagine new life.

For many, 2017 was an apocalyptic year filled with unbelievable storms, earthquakes, fires, floods, and violence. We prayed, stood with, and gave to people and causes from next-door neighbors to global neighbors we will never meet. Even when we found it hard to envision recovery and new life, we accompanied our neighbors, strengthened by the assurance that God is working in, through, and beyond us.

The same Apostle Paul who said that God is able to “accomplish abundantly more than we can ask or imagine” also put the work of building abundance squarely at our feet: “always seek to do good to one another and to all” (1 Thessalonians 5:15).

Through thick and thin, when dreams abound and when our imaginations run dry, we continue to do good. Your Week of Compassion gifts work “around the world, around the year” to bring more of God’s love and goodwill than we can ask or imagine.

You shared your compassion with families in South Texas and Puerto Rico who were impacted by hurricanes.

You offered food and shelter to families as far away as Sierra Leone and Bangladesh who experienced the most severe floods of the century.

You extended God’s care to refugees from Syria and Somalia.

You imagined an unimaginable world -- God’s world -- for empowered women and girls in the Democratic Republic of Congo and Indonesia.

In grateful partnership, we offer again our thanks and rejoice in the abundant *good* work of the gospel. As we continue to walk together in compassion for others, let us be strengthened in the knowledge that God is able to “accomplish abundantly more than we can ask or imagine.”

GRACE AND PEACE,
**Your WEEK OF
COMPASSION Staff**



Rev. Vy Nguyen

Executive Director



**Rev. Caroline
Hamilton-Arnold**

Associate Director



**Rev. Joe
Hendrixson**

Minister for Disciples
Development

Theme Interpretation:

MORE THAN WE CAN IMAGINE

It is easy to feel overwhelmed when we look at all the areas of need in God’s world: there is hunger, sickness, and injustice in so many communities. It is easy to feel that we are too small, too insignificant to make a difference, to believe that nothing we do can help. We can feel trapped by hopelessness and fear that there is little we can do to truly make an impact.

But there is hope! Better yet: we are that hope!

For, as the Apostle Paul writes, “by the power at work within us,” God is able to “accomplish abundantly more than we can ask or imagine” (Ephesians 3:20).

Archbishop Desmond Tutu put it succinctly when he wrote, “we are the agents of transformation that God uses to transfigure [God’s] world.”

As Christians we know that we are part of God’s answer to the need in the world!

As Christians we know that God’s dream for God’s people is not that we would strive to be separate, caring only for ourselves: God gave us community to practice love and compassion.

We know that when we share our resources we find that there is enough for us all! We share our resources because, as Brian Peterson writes: “we are not simply filled ‘with’ God’s fullness as something to make us feel satisfied and content, but we are filled for the goal of God’s fullness in and for the world.”

As Christians we know that we are all connected, and we derive our identity from God “from whom every family

in heaven and on earth derives its name” (Ephesians 3:14b). We are all part of the family whether we live in an agricultural community in Nicaragua or in a bustling urban city in the United States, we are all God’s people.

Paul’s letter to the Ephesians reminds us that we do not act alone.

We act as Church: A gathering of God’s people, still living into Paul’s prayer that we be “rooted and established in love.” (Ephesians 3:17b). John Stott notes that, “Paul likens [the Christians of Ephesus] first to a well-rooted tree, and then to a well-built house. In both cases the unseen cause of their stability will be the same: love. Love is to be the soil in which their life is to be rooted; love is to be the foundation on which their life is built.”

As Christians, living into this loving legacy, we act out of faith knowing that God is using our contributions in ways that we can’t foresee, multiplying blessings in ways we didn’t expect.

We act knowing that we are part of God’s imagination.

Imagine: in God’s hands, a small fragile seedling might become a revolutionary food system that prevents famine. It might lead to access to medicine and the

In displaced persons camps in Northern Iraq, Week of Compassion helps provide food, water, medicine, and school for children like this young girl. [photo: Week of Compassion]



eradication of disease. That seedling might nourish a child who will become a visionary leader bringing peace in the world.

In God's hands this seedling may lead to richer relationships as time is devoted to community instead of toil; it may lead to innovations in learning and education; it may lead to the building of God's kin-dom of shalom.

This isn't far-fetched. This is not science fiction. This is our God at work!

That young fragile seedling will grow to be a strong and fertile tree that will yield crops to feed a community, to provide income through selling of produce and wood. Families that would have spent all of their energy working and striving to feed themselves and their community now have time for other pursuits: children can go to school without worrying about hunger or work, relationships improve with more time to devote to them and less worry, young and old have security and time to pursue other dreams! Creative energy is freed up when basic needs are met. And so that young scientist may now pursue the technologies the world needs. The community leader may work to equip others for peace-building, and the artists may now have energy and supplies for their craft. The contribution we make today

through the Week of Compassion offering--the seedling we help plant--has effects that ripple far beyond our imagination and spread far beyond what we can conceive.

Will you be part of God's dream for the world? Will you accept the invitation to make a difference and see what God will do with our giving?

Desmond Tutu, God Has a Dream: A Vision of Hope for Our Time (Crown Publishing Group, 2003).

Brian Peterson, "Commentary on Ephesians 3:14-21," The Working Preacher (www.workingpreacher.org), July 26, 2015.

John Stott, The Message of Ephesians (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1979).

Sermon STARTER

Ephesians 3:14-21

As we prepare for our offering to Week of Compassion, we get to talk about imagination in church! If your church is anything like the ones I've known, we talk more about budgets and metrics. We also talk about mission. We don't take as many opportunities to imagine together and with God.

This letter to the Ephesians, which some scholars propose may have actually been an open letter to churches, is a celebration of church, of God's imagination, and God's power within us.

This scripture gives us the opportunity to invite our communities to stretch beyond our present realities, the possibilities and challenges that we face, and connect with God's imagination. We are reminded of our connection to God and to each other. We are also reminded that we are all part of the bigger picture; that God is using the gifts that God has given us--gifts of talents, material goods, and love!

There are a few points worth highlighting as we explore this theme:

1. Kin-dom, kinship, and connection:

The term kin-dom was introduced by mujerista theologian Ada María Isasi-Díaz. Kin-dom replaces the imperialistic and gendered language of 'kingdom' with a term that puts community and connection at the center of the world that Jesus envisions for us. The letter to the Ephesians invites us to establish a new definition of connection declaring, "I kneel before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name." Racial and religious divisions that once dominated the

landscape separating Jew and Gentile have been rendered irrelevant by the love of Christ. We are now all part of one family, all "kin."

In Greek, God is "pater" or father to every "patria," every family or grouping. In my native Spanish the word patria has come to mean homeland, a place of belonging. It is a term laden with affection and deep connection. Paul reminds us that we are all now included in this same "patria." None of the arbitrary divisions we set can stand up to the transcendent love of Christ.

Giving to Week of Compassion is a concrete manifestation of our connection and a link that we can draw for our communities in recognition of God's kin-dom abundance.

2. Strength, power, faith: Paul's prayer reveals tenderness and compassion for God's people. He prays that we be strengthened with power and know the indwelling presence of Christ. This is a reminder that the strength that we have, the power we are given is the power of Christ in us. We are not given strength for strength's sake; we are given strength for God's sake. Our faith can only grow as we grow in our experience of God's amazing power in us and through us, compelling us to action and connection.

John Stott draws our attention to the Greek when we consider the dwelling of Christ in the heart. There are two Greek verbs: paroikō and katoikeō, the former being the weaker, "to inhabit a place as a stranger." Katoikeō, Stott points out, means to "settle down somewhere. It refers to a permanent, as opposed to a temporary, abode

and is used metaphorically both for the fullness of the Godhead abiding in Christ and for Christ's abiding in the believer's heart." This is no casual visit that can easily be dismissed: this is Christ dwelling in our hearts as a community-- a transformative and powerful claim. Christ has taken up permanent residence in us!

3. Love, Love, Love: This is one of my favorite prayers for all of God's people. Love. That we would be rooted and established in love, and that we would know the full dimensions of the love of Christ, even though it surpasses all knowledge. John Stott writes:

"Paul likens [the community] first to a well-rooted tree, and then to a well-built house. In both cases the unseen cause of their stability will be the same: love. Love is to be the soil in which their life is to be rooted; love is to be the foundation on which their life is built. One might say that their love is to be both a 'radical' and a 'fundamental' nature in their experience, for these English words refer to our roots and our foundations."

This is not idle love. When we become filled with the knowledge, the experience of the love of God, we become more loving. We become more grace-filled. We become more generous people and communities.

It is also not a love focused on individuals. The message of the letter to the Ephesians is directed to the community. This is essential, and in some contexts, can be countercultural. Gustavo Gutierrez argues that, "Only in community can we hear, accept, and proclaim the gift and grace of the Lord, the special call to overcome everything that destroys comradely communion (oppression, injustice, marginalization, discrimination, etc.)—because at the same time it destroys communion with God—and to struggle for the values of the kingdom that Jesus proclaimed." Love then only becomes manifest in our actions as Christian community to overcome any barriers to communion with God. Sharing our gifts with Week of Compassion is a concrete action step to be loving community as we participate in God's abundance.

4. More than all we ask or imagine:

Paul concludes the prayer and continues to stretch us by calling on the power of God that is already at work within us, connecting us to God's imagination. Stan Mast writes that, "God is willing to help us not just out of his glorious treasury of resources, but out of the riches of his own inexhaustible Self. In other words, there is no limit to what God can do in response to our prayers, because God himself is limitless."

Perhaps one of the biggest challenges the church faces today is that we place limitations on what God can do in our church and in our world, with and through us. We place God in familiar God-boxes and forget that we worship a God that created this amazing world, who continues to bring us together in community and who is still co-creating with us a world of love and justice.

As we imagine together a world that brings us closer to God's kin-dom of love, focused on the indwelling presence of Christ in our communities, we are reminded that, in Gustavo Gutiérrez's words, "There is no aspect of human life that is unrelated to the following of Jesus." Our imagining leads us to love in action. As we seek to imagine with God, we draw ever closer to the source of goodness and to an understanding of the love and power that Paul prayed over our churches.

Ada María Isasi-Díaz, Mujerista Theology: A Theology for the Twenty-first Century (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1996).

John Stott, The Message of Ephesians (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1979)

Ibid.

Gustavo Gutierrez, We Drink from Our Own Wells: The Spiritual Journey of a People (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2003).

Stan Mast, "Proper 12B," Calvin Theological Seminary Center for Excellence in Preaching: Sermon Starters (<http://cep.calvinseminary.edu/sermon-starters/proper-12b/>).

Gutierrez, We Drink From Our Own Wells.

Boys collect clean water at a refugee camp in Uganda.
[photo: ACT Alliance]



Worship MATERIALS

SCRIPTURES

Ephesians 3:14-21

CALL TO WORSHIP

ONE: We come into the presence of Love today,

LEFT: Who calls us into community

RIGHT: Who calls us God's people

LEFT: To worship

RIGHT: To sing

ALL: To pray

ONE: To imagine together

ALL: How God can use us

LEFT: To spread love

RIGHT: To spread justice

All: To spread peace in the world. Amen.

PRAYER

A Prayer by Archbishop Oscar Romero

It helps, now and then, to step back and take a long view.
The kingdom is not only beyond our efforts,
it is even beyond our vision.

We accomplish in our lifetime only a tiny fraction
of the magnificent enterprise that is God's work.
Nothing we do is complete, which is a way of saying
that the kingdom always lies beyond us.
No statement says all that could be said.
No prayer fully expresses our faith.
No confession brings perfection.
No pastoral visit brings wholeness.
No program accomplishes the church's mission.
No set of goals and objectives includes everything.



An indigenous woman of the Chaco region in Paraguay works on a craft to sell at market.
[photo: Week of Compassion]

This is what we are about.
We plant the seeds that one day will grow.
We water seeds already planted,
knowing that they hold future promise.
We lay foundations that will need further development.
We provide yeast that produces far beyond our capabilities.

We cannot do everything, and there is a sense of liberation
in realizing that. This enables us to do something,
and to do it very well. It may be incomplete,
but it is a beginning, a step along the way,
an opportunity for the Lord's grace to enter and do the rest.
We may never see the end results, but that is the difference.



Tending and watering the community gardens is a job for the whole family in Noemuke, Indonesia. [photo: Week of Compassion]

LITANY: SHARING THE BLESSINGS

Based on Ephesians 3:14-21

Regular font to be read by a leader;

italic font to be read by the congregation.

God, Creator of all that is and all that will be

We praise and honor you

God, who calls all the families on Earth

We praise and honor you

God, who recognizes and celebrates our diversity

We praise and honor you

God, who has granted the Spirit to lead us

We praise and honor you

God, whose love is our root

We praise and honor you

God, who calls us to share this love with all

We praise and honor you

God, who offers abundant blessings to all

We praise and honor you

As God calls us to open our hearts and share with each other

Make us more generous, we pray

Recognizing that we have more than enough blessings to share with the world

Open our hearts to the needs of the world, we pray

Knowing that we are the hands and feet of our God in the world

Move us to compassion and solidarity, we pray

As we seek to become a more generous community

Inspire us to see the plenty where others see need, we pray

We, your people, are ready to receive your abundant love

Strengthen us, God Parent of all

We, your people, are ready to share your abundant love

Inspire us, Jesus Christ, fellow sojourner

We, your people, are ready to continue planting the seeds of your abundant love

Guide us, Spirit of abundant love

INVITATION TO OFFERING

[Mission Moments, appropriate as offering reflections, are found online and on pages 23-24.]

As we share our gifts today, to support the work of this congregation and our work through Week of Compassion, we celebrate God's love and abundance in the world. In our generosity, we recognize that we are all part of God's family. In our giving, we dare to imagine that God will use our gifts in the world to do great things; **more than we can imagine!** Let us give generously!

PRAYER OF DEDICATION

Holy and generous God,
We pray that you would grow these gifts to bless the world.
We imagine a world with enough food, enough water;
with resources, education, justice, laughter, and freedom for all of your people.
Do with our gifts even more than we can imagine, holy one, and make of us a loving and generous people.
Amen.

SERVICE OF COMMUNION

Communion Meditation/Invitation

February comes before the ground thaws, at least for most of us in the northern hemisphere. It is a lean time when trees are bare and gardens are lifeless. Seeds and bulbs lie dormant. The fruits and nuts of fall are a fading memory or a distant hope. Imagination struggles for fleeting glimpses of warmth and life. Every farmer and gardener knows that the abundance of the soil lies in wait during February's chill. Like revelers at a surprise birthday party, overflowing joy and bounty are already present in the dark: ready to pounce from behind the couch, inside the closet, and under the table. The soil has fed us abundantly in the past. The abundance clenched in frozen seed is "our hope for years to come." The well-seasoned taste of God's compassion and care draw near to our lips once again. Before we know it, spinach and asparagus will color the

"Faith, mighty faith, the promise sees, and looks to that alone; laughs at impossibilities and cries it shall be done."

CHARLES WESLEY

garden. Wheat will fill the fields and grapes will adorn the vines. Before we know it, an abundant harvest is transformed into the bread and cup set on the Table for us today.

The poets say it best:

Life is seething in this soil
which has been millions of years
in the making.
It has been forever
in the making.

A mingling of untold billions of bodies
of plants and animals:
grasses of this prairie,
buffalo and antelope grazing down
into roots and back again
into the sun.
Birds and insects, their wings still hum
in this soil.
And this swarm drinks
sunlight and rain,
and rises again and again
into corn and beans
and flesh and bone.

The quick bodies of animals and men risen
from this black energy.

Come to the Table. Once again, our barren lives will be filled abundantly, "far more than we can ask or imagine."

"Black Energy," Joe Paddock, *In A Song of My Own* (Southwest Minnesota Arts and Humanities Council) p. 15.

Elders Prayer for Bread

God of abundant gifts for life, take hold of our feeble imaginations and reveal the fertile fields, the weathered hands, and the Body of Christ in this bread. May it fill our spirits, that we may be rooted in your garden and share in your harvest. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

Elders Prayer for Cup

O God, who fills our cup with oil until it overflows, pour yourself into this cup that we share and hold it to our lips. May each sip wet the parched garden of our hearts so that your grace and love spring forth to feed all your children. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

Prayer After Communion

How do we lift our thanks to you, O God? For you have blessed us in the bread and cup far beyond anything we deserve, with an abundance of gifts and a compassion of heart that defies our imagination. May the unity we express at this Table go with us as we work in your fields for the sake of the Kingdom. Amen.

In a gesture of hospitality,
a Somali refugee adorns a
visitor's hand with henna.
[photo: Kyle McDougal]



PRAYER STATION OR OFFERING REMINDER: A Piece of the Puzzle

Ephesians 3:14-21

AGE RANGE AND SETTING

This prayer station may be used with all age groups except for those for whom a puzzle piece would present a choking hazard.

The prayer station can be incorporated into a worship service as a sermon response, as a prayer opportunity, as part of a benediction, or in another place that fits your congregation's culture and order of worship. It could also be set up in a foyer or fellowship hall as a reminder of the Week of Compassion offering.

INTENTION

Through the selection of random puzzle pieces that show only a piece of the picture, participants are invited into imagination, wonder, and connection. This activity reinforces the idea that we are all part of God's work in the world, even when we don't yet see the whole picture!

MATERIALS

- Assorted puzzle pieces
- Baskets or containers to hold puzzle pieces
- *Optional: printed/projected introduction and instructions*

INSTRUCTIONS

Fill as many baskets as needed for your context with puzzle pieces. You need enough for

each participant to take one. These may be varied in size and may belong to different puzzles. The baskets can be placed on a table, which people can approach on their own, or they could be passed through the congregation in the style of offering baskets.

Provide introduction and instructions verbally or through projection or printed signs.

INTRODUCTION *(may be spoken or displayed)*

Today we have an opportunity to prayerfully consider our piece in the bigger picture. We may not see all that God is doing in and through us, but we trust that we are connected and that God is doing more than we can imagine.

INVITATION *(may be spoken or displayed)*

Prayerfully select a puzzle piece that appeals to you. Take a minute to consider its shape, its size, and the suggestion of an image that you see on this puzzle piece. Imagine what it might form! Maybe it is part of a mountain view, or perhaps a seascape.

Perhaps you have a corner piece or an edge, or you may have a piece from somewhere in the middle. This puzzle piece, just like us, was made to connect. You are part of the big picture! God will use our gifts to Week of Compassion to fill in the gaps and to do More Than We Can Imagine!

Take this puzzle piece with you today and place it somewhere where you will see it throughout the week. Let it be a reminder to you that your gifts and your connection matter to the bigger picture!



CHILDREN'S SERMON

Ephesians 3:14-21

Note: This sermon works best if you prepare materials ahead of time.

MATERIALS:

The items will be revealed one at a time, as you present the message to the children.

- a container with soil
- citrus seeds
- a seedling or a sprout you have grown in anticipation of the sermon

Note: Citrus seeds will take 7-10 days to sprout; for best results use your fingernail to peel off the outer layer of the seed and then place between two damp sheets of paper towel. Keep these in a plastic bag and warm them in the sunshine or using a heating pad.

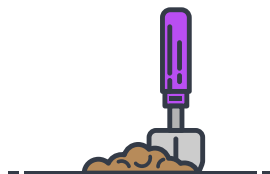
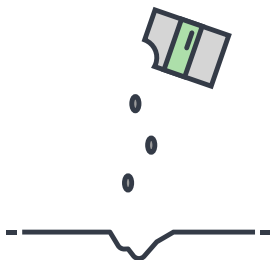
- an illustration of a full-grown orange tree
- a basket of oranges

Read the scripture passage together (if the scripture has already been read in worship, you can just reread verses 20-21):

Ephesians 3:14-21

(New International Reader's Version)

I bow in prayer to the Father because of my work among you. From the Father every family in heaven and on earth gets its name. I pray that he will use his glorious riches to make you strong. May his Holy Spirit give you his power deep down inside you. Then Christ will live in your hearts because you believe in him. And I pray that your love will have deep roots. I pray that it will have a strong foundation. May you have power together



with all the Lord's holy people to understand Christ's love. May you know how wide and long and high and deep it is. And may you know his love, even though it can't be known completely. Then you will be filled with everything God has for you.

God is able to do far more than we could ever ask for or imagine. He does everything by his power that is working in us. Give him glory in the church and in Christ Jesus. Give him glory through all time and for ever and ever. Amen.

Paul talks about God's love for all of us and of how God can do more than we can imagine. I thought we could practice doing some imagining together and think about how God might imagine things.

So, here's the first thing for us to consider together. (Reveal container of soil.)

What do you think this is? (Give children a chance to respond.)

What do you think God can imagine in this rich soil? (Invite responses that may be related to things growing in the soil, plants, food, trees, etc. as well as other playful responses.)

How about this? (Reveal seed.)

Who knows what this is? Have you ever seen one of these? (Allow for some discussion of seeds the children may have encountered in gardening or in their food.)

When God looks at a seed like this, God can already see this! *(Reveal the sprouted seed.)*

It's hard to believe that from this little seed we get a whole big, tall tree that can give us wood and fruit. But God sees it! Now, I wanted to bring a whole tree in here today to show you but that we couldn't fit a whole tree without making a big mess so here's a picture! *(Reveal picture of full-grown orange tree.)*

How are the seed and the tree similar? How are they different?

(Invite comparisons of the seed and the tree.)

(Reveal basket of oranges.)

From this little seed we get these juicy oranges that we can share and enjoy!

But that's not the end of God's work- God is able to do even more than we can imagine!

What do you think God can do for the family who grew this tree?

(Lead discussion in the direction of food and income: they can eat the oranges, they can sell the oranges.)

How does life change for a family who can now eat oranges and sell oranges?

(Receive a few responses from the children.)

Oranges can completely change the quality of a family's life: no more hunger, more time to do other things, money to buy necessities with. Like Luis... *[see the Mission Moment story on p. 24]*

That is only what we can imagine! God can do even more!

When we share our offerings to Week of Compassion, we are helping to do things like planting orange trees that will help families and communities! We give with excitement and anticipation of all the things God can do through our giving!

(You may wish to distribute or collect coinboxes at this time. The young man on the coinbox is Luis!)

(Give each child an orange, or let them know that they will be shared during the church coffee hour for all to enjoy. You may also choose to share some oranges with a local foodbank.)

Let's pray together:

Thank you God, for doing more than we can even imagine. Thank you for taking care of us. Help us to take care of each other. Amen.



To diversify his crop and reduce risk from weather and pests, Pedro is planting new seedlings. *[photo: Craig Thompson]*

Children's Activity

IF YOU GIVE A FARMER A SEED

AGE RANGE

Preschool through Middle School; can also work with any age group willing to engage with a storybook

MATERIALS

A copy of one of Laura Joffe Numeroff's books: *If You Give a Mouse a Cookie*, *If You Give a Pig a Pancake*, *If You Give a Moose a Muffin*, or another in the series.

INTENTION

This activity uses the adventures described in the book as a jumping off point to see what God can imagine. Children are given the opportunity to see how God might use even simple things to do great things.

INSTRUCTIONS

Read one of the wonderful children's books written by Laura Joffe Numeroff and illustrated by Felicia Bond that include If You Give a Mouse a Cookie, If You Give a Pig a Pancake, and, If You Give a Moose a Muffin. In these stories we follow the silly antics of each animal as the gift of the food leads them on adventures seeking the next thing. There is a process of creation that happens with each animal, whether it is Mouse's drawing, Pig's tree house, or Moose's elaborate sock puppets and scenery.

The characters in this book had great imaginations! How about God, do you think God has a good imagination?

The theme for Week of Compassion is "More than We Can Imagine." God can do even more than we can imagine. We can try to think of some of the things God has imagined in our world.

Think about a seed. A tiny seed turns into a tall, tall tree in a land where there are not many other plants, not much for animals to eat. So God makes a giraffe with a

long funny looking neck that helps it to eat the leaves at the very top of the tall trees where no one else can reach. Or maybe think about a rainstorm and the way God can take rain and sun and turn it into beautiful rainbows.

Let's look at some of the things God can use and imagine together:

What could God do with a cookie?

What could God do with the color orange?

What could God do with a seed?

[Invite children to extend the imagination as far as they can go- kids are so much better at this than adults!]

So, for example, God might use a seed to grow a cherry tree. The cherry tree is beautiful so God will make the blossoms for everyone to enjoy. The fruit is also delicious so God will share it with hungry people to enjoy. When we eat cherries, there is a pit that can go on to become another tree! More cherries! When a tree gets older, it can be used for wood. The wood can make a desk where a little girl will study. She will study hard



The produce from this women-led community garden provides food and cash for a local nutrition clinic. [photo: Week of Compassion]

and learn to speak every language on earth so she can make lots of friends! And so on!

[You may add your own prompts, making sure to include some that might be silly as well as some that lead to more serious reflection. Invite them to consider the ways God can use each thing to make an impact on our lives, our communities, and the world.]

How do our actions and our gifts contribute to God's imagination?

[As you prepare to finish with a prayer, invite children to gather in a circle. Ask each one to think of their favorite thing that God imagined.]

Let's pray together. I will start and we will go around the circle and each of us will say out loud the thing we thought of!

God of all creation,
We thank you for your wonderful imagination.
We thank you for---

[invite the children to speak- you may add ideas from earlier discussion if they get stuck! Some groups are chattier than others. Make sure you also add your own favorite thing from God's imagination!]

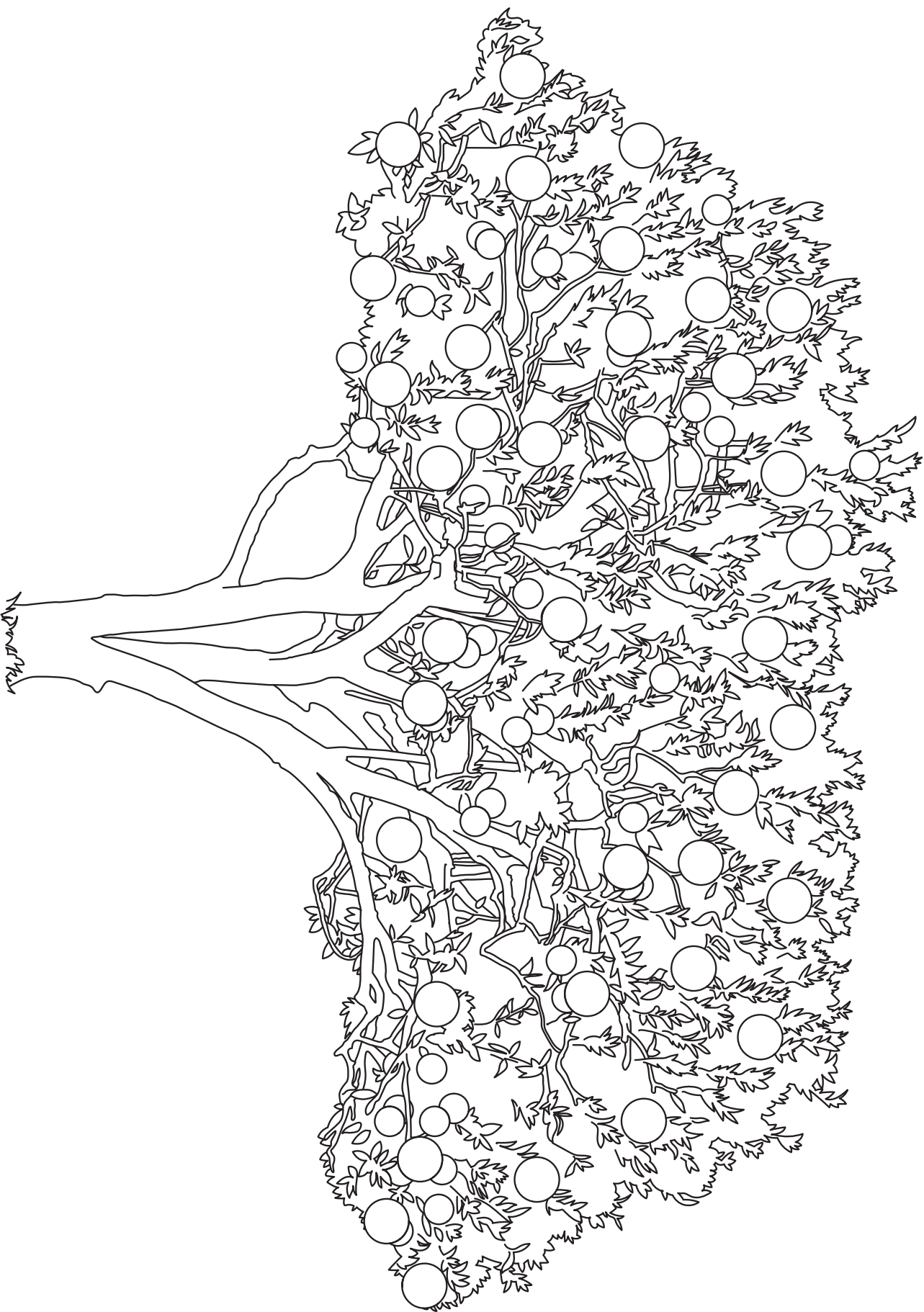
Help us to imagine a better world with you we pray.

Amen.

Week of Compassion helps farmers in Nicaragua grow stronger orange trees.

Stronger trees make more fruit. That means more to eat and sell. That means money for school, food, medicine, and fun!

DRAW IN THE FAMILY THAT CARES FOR THE TREE. IMAGINE AND DRAW WHAT THEY WILL DO WITH THE ORANGES THEY GROW!



Youth Group Activity #1:

PAST AND FUTURE *Ephesians 3:14-21*

AGE RANGE

Middle School and High School

MATERIALS

Optional- pictures or examples of the technologies described

INTENTION

This is an exercise in imagination to help youth connect with the ways in which our thinking is limited by our experience. Through discussion, youth can gain a deeper understanding of the ways in which God can use our generosity and our offerings to Week of Compassion to change the world.

INSTRUCTIONS:

*Begin by reading the focus scripture and inviting a discussion of this year's theme: **More than We Can Imagine.***

You may want to start with a few questions:

- What do you think this means in the context of the scripture?
- Why would Paul write that in the letter?
- How does it make you feel to hear that God can do more than we can imagine? Encouraged? Overwhelmed? Skeptical?

After some discussion on the scripture, transition into the next part of the reflection.

Invite the youth to practice a thought experiment with you:

Imagine a time, long ago in antiquity, when there was no internet. No cell phones. No tablets. Computers were big heavy things that lived on your desk and only

connected to dot matrix printers. Newspapers were only in print. People wrote each other letters on paper that they mailed. TV had a limited number of channels and there was no Roku, no Netflix, no firestick, no on demand. Music was played on radios or, if you wanted to take it with you, on a Walkman or discman. Information about the world was available on encyclopedias that were heavy multi-volume books that were often out of date by the time they went to print because the world had changed.

[You may want to provide photos or examples of these ancient technologies for effect.]

Having set the scene, invite the youth to consider how they would carry out some of the daily tasks they now perform:

- How would you catch up with friends?
- How would you do a group project for school?
- How would you get updates on what is going on in the world?

- How would you stay in touch with family and friends who live far away?
- What if you needed to reach someone right away?

Add other scenarios that may resonate with your group.

How has technology changed our lives? What assumptions do we make now about productivity and connectedness? Do you think people living in those times could have imagined the way we do things now?

Allow time for discussion and invite reflection on the ways technology has enriched our lives as well as the ways it has created new challenges.

Now imagine a world where you have to work to grow all of your food. Consider all the steps that go into that: you must prepare the soil, you have to plant your seeds, plan for how they will get water, protect the seedlings from anything that might want to eat them, from diseases and molds that could kill them. Then, depending on what you are planting, you may have to wait years for something to mature and give fruit: an orange tree may take anywhere from 3 to 15 years to yield crops!

- How would your days be different?
- How would you find time for things like education?
- How would your family be different?
- How might you be affected by climate change?
- Consider things like access to healthcare and other resources.
- How is life changed by regular access to healthy, nourishing foods?

Add other questions for consideration that are appropriate to your group.

If you want to expand this activity, provide some examples of older imagined technologies-- DaVinci's flying machines, the gadgets in shows like StarTrek. Consider how our technology as lived up to or surpassed the imaginations of previous generations.

Through Week of Compassion, we are helping people in places like Nicaragua where people are learning agricultural techniques that survive climate change impact and provide more diversified crops for each of the farmers. They have planted citrus seedlings that have grown to bear fruit within 9-10 months!

*[If you have time, read together one or more of the **Mission Moment** stories on p. 23-24]*

With our giving we are part of God's imagination for families who will now have extra time and resources because they do not have to worry about their crops and how to feed their family. Can you imagine the ways in which people's lives will change!? Maybe the children, who are now free to go to school and who now have enough to eat may end up inventing new technologies that will end world hunger! Maybe they will go on to create art unlike anything we've ever seen! Maybe the community will have more time for joy and connection now that they have more resources! And all because we contributed to Week of Compassion with the prayerful hope that God would do with our gifts **More Than We Can Imagine.**

Close with a prayer where you invite each of the youth to share what they imagine to help people around the world.

Mission **MOMENT**



Roger and his wife worked with our partners at Church World Service to rebuild their home after Hurricane Matthew. [photo: CWS Haiti]

MORE THAN A HOUSE

What makes a house a home? A house is a structure with some walls, a roof, doors and windows. That house becomes a home when it is a place where you can feel safe and loved. When you're at home, you can let your guard down. You can relax and rest.

Sometimes, though, a house isn't really a home. That was certainly the case for Roger Doris and his family. They built their house in Haiti's Northwest Department in 1989. It was a traditional mud-and-stick house, like so many in Haiti are. In 2000 and 2001, they renovated their home to replace the mud walls with concrete blocks and to add a tin roof. It was definitely a home.

Then Hurricane Matthew hit in late 2016. As the wind pounded on the house and the rain poured down, they did extensive damage to Roger's house. The walls shook and cracked. The wood support columns – which weren't particularly sturdy to start with – were damaged badly.

Overnight, that house was stripped of being a home. The family still lived there, but they were afraid. They didn't know how much longer the house would stand. That sense of security was gone. There was no more peace of mind, and no way to let down their guard.

We responded to help Roger and his family build a new house. Roger had training as an iron worker and carpenter, so he teamed up with professional masons to work on the new house. His family provided funds to pay for the new foundation and food for the workers. They also received seeds to plant so that the family would have a food and income source.

Now, the family has a house where they can feel safe. The house has a strong foundation and sturdy support columns made of rebar. More than just providing shelter, the house provides peace of mind. It is truly a home. Roger describes the house as a "miracle." He doesn't live in fear anymore.

Even through the 2017 hurricane season, when Hurricanes Irma and Maria caused damage across the island, Roger's house stood strong. Other houses like his, built with Week of Compassion support, became more than houses, more than homes--they became places of refuge in the storms.

Your gifts to Week of Compassion do more than just build houses, they help families create homes, strengthen their communities, and have peace of mind.

Your gifts do **More Than We Can Imagine!**

For a video about the homes built in Haiti through our partner Church World Service, see "**Hurricane Matthew in Haiti: One Year Later**" at www.weekofcompassion.org/special-offering

Mission **MOMENT**

FUTURES OF ABUNDANCE

On any given afternoon three years ago, you were most likely to find Luis Alfredo Palacio lounging in a chair watching television. Like many other young men just entering into adulthood, Luis was unsure about the direction of his life. As a soon-to-be father, though, he knew he needed to find work that was meaningful and would help provide for his family. That is when Luis connected with a Week of Compassion partner working with Nicaraguan communities to improve agriculture and address challenges of climate change and land degradation. As part of the project, local farmers are learning and developing techniques for planting, seed selection, irrigation, and soil protection. These techniques multiply the yields of crops, providing additional food and income for families.

Through this work, Luis discovered a passion—teaching. As an agricultural promoter, Luis is teaching 5 other families skills to improve their farming. He has developed a demonstration plot at his home to use in sharing techniques like soil curbing to prevent erosion, drip irrigation for water conservation, and using manure to improve soil quality. His hope is to improve the quality of life for himself and his neighbors and to protect the land for generations to come.

Just a few years ago, Luis struggled to imagine his future, now he is helping his whole community imagine a future of abundance. Through Luis and through your gifts to Week of Compassion, God is doing **More Than We Can Imagine!**

Luis shows off a lime tree seedling in his demonstration garden. [photo: Craig Thompson]



QUOTES

“We have a God who delights in impossibilities.” – ANDREW MURRAY

“If you come only to help me, you can go back home. But if you consider my struggle as part of your struggle for survival, then maybe we can work together.” – LILLA WATSON

“To make an option for the poor is to make an option for Jesus.” – GUSTAVO GUTIERREZ

“Compassion is not a relationship between the healer and the wounded. It’s a relationship between equals. Only when we know our own darkness well can we be present with the darkness of others. Compassion becomes real when we recognize our shared humanity.” – PEMA CHÖDRÖN

“The churches have to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, and shelter the homeless. But they have also to remember that the answer to homelessness is homes, not shelters. What the poor and downtrodden need is not piecemeal charity but wholesale justice.” – WILLIAM SLOANE COFFIN

“A better world will come about only if attention is first paid to individuals; if human promotion is integral, taking account of every dimension of the person, including the spiritual; if no one is neglected, including the poor, the sick, prisoners, the needy and the stranger (cf. Mt 25:31-46); if we can prove capable of leaving behind a throwaway culture and embracing one of encounter and acceptance.” – POPE FRANCIS

“Compassion is the sometimes fatal capacity for feeling what it is like to live inside somebody else's skin. It's the knowledge that there can never really be any peace and joy for me until there is peace and joy finally for you too.” – FREDERICK BUECHNER

“It is not with your own wealth that you give alms to the poor, but with a fraction of their own which you give back; for you are usurping for yourself something meant for the common good of all. The earth is for everyone, not only for the rich.”

– ST. AMBROSE

“I hope my life tries to give testimony to the message of the Gospel, above all that God loves the world and loves those who are poorest within it.” – GUSTAVO GUTIERREZ

“It just seems to me that as long as we are both here, it’s pretty clear that the struggle is to share the planet, rather than to divide it.”

– ALICE WALKER



After a tornado caused damage to hundreds of homes in Northern Illinois, Week of Compassion helped provide support for recovery through the Disaster Recovery Support Initiative. [photo: DRSI]

“Giving frees us from the familiar territory of our own needs by opening our mind to the unexplained worlds occupied by the needs of others.” – BARBARA BUSH

“I cannot think of a better definition of Christianity than that: give, give, give.” – JAMES I. MCCORD

“Alone, we can affect a few. But together, we can change the world. Let no one be discouraged by the belief there is nothing one man [or one woman] can do against the enormous array of the world's ills — against misery and ignorance, injustice and violence... Few will have the greatness to bend history itself; but each of us can work to change a small portion of events, and in the total of all those acts will be written the history of this generation... It is from the numberless diverse acts of courage and belief that human history is shaped. Each time a man [or woman] stands up for an ideal, or acts to improve the lot of others, or strikes out against injustice, he [or she] sends a tiny ripple of hope, and crossing each other from a million different centers of energy and daring, those ripples build a current which can sweep down the mightiest walls of oppression and resistance.” — ROBERT F. KENNEDY

“If you think you are too small to make a difference, you haven't spent a night with a mosquito.” – AFRICAN PROVERB

“The ends you serve that are selfish will take you no further than yourself but the ends you serve that are for all, in common, will take you into eternity.” – MARCUS GARVEY

“Genuine equality means not treating everyone the same, but attending equally to everyone's different needs.” – TERRY EAGLETON

“Love is holy because it is like grace--the worthiness of its object is never really what matters.” – JOHN AMES in *Giliad* by MARILYNNE ROBINSON

“All I ever wanted was to reach out and touch another human being not just with my hands but with my heart.” – TAHEREH MAFI

“Good works is giving to the poor and the helpless, but divine works is showing them their worth to the One who matters.” – CRISS JAMI

“Whatever God does, the first outburst is always compassion.” – MEISTER ECKHART

“Generous people are quick to admit that one person will never solve all the world's ills. But that does not slow them one bit. To them, the possibility of changing even one life for the better is enough to be getting on with” – JOSHUA BECKER

“We cannot do great things, only small things with great love.” – MOTHER TERESA

“Trusting God means looking beyond what we can see to what God sees.” – CHARLES STANLEY



With support from Week of Compassion, through our partners at Brethren Disaster Ministries, communities in Northern Nigeria rebuild homes destroyed by Boko Haram. [photo: Brethren Disaster Ministries]

“Let us love, not in word or speech, but in truth and action.” -1 John 3:18

	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Week One	<p>“To God be the Glory...” Give 2 units in an act of praise for God’s faithfulness.</p>	<p>767 million people live below the international poverty line. Give 2 units to help eliminate global poverty</p>	<p>In 2017, droughts caused severe food shortages in Ethiopia, Central America, and elsewhere. Give 1 unit for every grocery store in your town or neighborhood.</p>	<p>Primary school education enrollment in developing countries has reached 91%. Give 1 unit in celebration of this progress and 1 unit to continue the work.</p>	<p>Waterborne illnesses kill more people than all forms of war and violence combined, but access to clean water and adequate sanitation can prevent the spread of these illnesses. Give 1 unit for every toilet in your home.</p>	<p>74 per cent of the poor are directly affected by land degradation globally. Give 1 unit for every potted plant at your home.</p>	<p>Luisa, a farmer in Nicaragua, is sharing knowledge of seed selection with her neighbors. Give 1 unit for Luisa’s generosity and 1 unit for each of your neighbors.</p>
Week Two	<p>“Who by the power at work within us...” Give 2 units in celebration that God is working in and through us.</p>	<p>663 million people worldwide do not have regular access to clean water. Give 1 unit for every water bottle in your home.</p>	<p>Rain collection, cisterns, and irrigation systems help communities mitigate drought conditions. Give 1 unit if you have ever collected rain water.</p>	<p>Access to clean cooking fuel has increased by 7% since 2000, improving the health and quality of life for families. Give 1 unit in celebration of this progress and 1 unit to continue the work.</p>	<p>Since the 1900s, some 75 per cent of crop diversity has been lost from farmers’ fields. Give 3 units to help Week of Compassion partners work to restore biodiversity.</p>	<p>More than 65 million people have been forcibly displaced from their homes worldwide. Give 1 unit if home is a place where you feel safe.</p>	<p>Luisa has improved the harvest of her citrus trees through the use of good seeds, irrigation, and soil improvements. Give 1 unit for each tree in your yard.</p>
Week Three	<p>“Is able to accomplish...” Give 2 units in faith that God is able.</p>	<p>1 in 4 children worldwide suffers stunted growth due to insufficient nutrition. Give 1 unit for every bag of groceries you buy this week.</p>	<p>Week of Compassion partners provide education in refugee camps around the world, helping children pursue their dreams. Give 1 unit for each school-aged child in your family.</p>	<p>Maternal mortality rates have dropped by 50% since 1990. Give 1 unit in celebration of this progress and 1 unit to continue the work.</p>	<p>Income inequality has increased by more than 10% since 1990. Give 1 unit for every paycheck you cash in a month.</p>	<p>Poverty and hunger are key reasons for unauthorized immigration from Latin America to the U.S. Give 2 units to help address these root causes.</p>	<p>Luisa’s two sons are continuing their educations, thanks to the increased income from their family’s crops. Give 1 unit in honor of each of Luisa’s sons.</p>
Week Four	<p>“abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine...” Give 2 units in reverence for God’s limitless imagination.</p>	<p>One in five people still lacks access to modern electricity. Give 1 unit for each outlet in your home.</p>	<p>In 2015, more than 300,000 women died from maternal causes. Give 2 units if the women you know have access to reproductive care.</p>	<p>The tuberculosis mortality rate has fallen by 45% since 1990. Give 1 unit in celebration of this progress and 1 unit to continue the work.</p>	<p>OGHS/WoC partners help provide basic medical supplies and psychological care to thousands of people living in refugee camps. Give 1 unit for every bottle of medicine in your home.</p>	<p>Environmental toxins—such as fertilizers and industrial waste—contribute to weakened immune responses, especially in children. Give 1 unit if anyone in your family has recovered from an illness this year.</p>	<p>Luisa’s family has been restoring and protecting the banks around a natural spring on their property, to ensure their water stays clean and accessible. Give 1 unit for each faucet in your home.</p>

A volunteer helps clean out a home damaged by flooding in Louisiana. [photo: JT Blatty]



Women of Northern Nigeria work to rebuild their church building. [photo: Brethren Disaster Ministries]

Additional **RESOURCES**

can be found at
weekofcompassion.org/special-offering

Children's Prayer Activity

Youth Activity #2: In Another's Shoes

Short Videos-- Luisa: Farmer and Fighter, Seedlings, and Ripple Effects

Mission Moment: After the Hurricane

Mission Moment: Abundant Welcome

Statistics



Now to God be the glory, who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine. ***Ephesians 3:20***

www.weekofcompassion.org