

# ALL AGES ACTIVITY: TRANSFORMING SUFFERING INTO HOPE

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by Week of Compassion

With this resource, a brief reflection is included on the theme for this year's Special Offering - **RISE UP ANEW** - with Activity suggestions and Discussion questions. These are suitable for use with groups of any age, and especially encouraged as an experience for a multi-generational group. Adapt to best fit the age and make-up of your group.

## THEME SCRIPTURE LAMENTATIONS 3:21-23

*Yet it is because I remember all this that I have hope.  
YHWH's favor is not exhausted,  
nor has God's compassion failed.  
They **RISE UP ANEW** each morning,  
so great is God's faithfulness. (The Inclusive Bible)*

## REFLECTION

God's mercies are new every morning. To many of us, a simple reminder, perhaps even a glimmer of breath, new life, and hope.

And yet we also know that for many people in the world, every morning still means struggle. Every morning still means worry. Every morning still means disease, and fear, and lament that will not end.

We are exhausted. But God never is.

We are fatigued. But God's compassion never fails.

We know everything that has led us here. And because of that we hope. And we rise up anew each morning. We do. Because God does.

Through Week of Compassion, Disciples recommit to the work of hope - borne out of lament, and suffering, and uncertainty, it is hope just the same. God's compassion has not failed. Week of Compassion is committed to that great faithfulness, too.

The mission of Week of Compassion - as the relief, refugee, and development mission fund of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) - is *to work with partners to alleviate suffering throughout the world*. Week of Compassion's vision is a *world where God's people transform suffering into hope*.

This activity and conversation is designed to help individuals imagine what that transformation looks like in real life terms, through creative play and guided discussion.

### MATERIALS NEEDED:

For each group, seated at tables or other work spaces:

- paper (preferably poster-size paper or sheets/rolls of newsprint-type drawing paper)
- markers, crayons, etc.
- [Special Offering Mission Moments](#), to read or retell as part of the discussion

## ACTIVITY ONE: ENVISIONING COMPASSION

Divide into groups (at least three per group, mixed by age and household however you choose), and have the groups create a "Compassion Vision Board":

Set a time limit, and list as many ways of showing compassion as possible. - **OR** - Make a list of compassionate actions that start with the same letters as the names of each person in the group.

*(Or, you might do one round of list-making, and assign a different method for a second round.)*

After either list is complete: Challenge the group to draw a picture that reflects some or most of the things on their list. Maybe groups could combine and create a large poster or mural together.

Once groups have completed their lists, you could have everyone move around the space to all the tables and add a check mark or a star by the ones they like on someone else's list.

## ACTIVITY TWO: COMMUNICATING COMPASSION

Play **Pictionary** : Give a time limit for everyone to list as many acts of compassion as possible, and then take turns within

their group drawing an action from the list while the others guess what they are drawing. Each person can work through their list in as many rounds as time allows.

Then play **Charades** : Use your same list of acts of compassion, but this time take turns having each person in the group pantomime the act without speaking, while the others guess which act it is.

Then use **1-Word Clues** : Again, use the same list. This time, each person must use a single word (not using the words actually on the list) to get the group to guess the act of compassion.

## DISCUSSION

Regather as a whole group, or combine a few small groups into slightly larger groups, for conversation. You might start with the theme scripture from Lamentations, and share the reflection thoughts. Then move into discussion/conversation.

- Tell the story of a time when God showed you compassion, when something happened in your life or around you that you knew had to be God's doing.
- Of all the acts of compassion you listed (and see on others' lists), name one or two that you've been part of, and tell about a time you put it into action.
- Tell of a time when you have received great compassion from someone else.

Read (or ask someone to read) one or more of the Mission Moment stories from the [Special Offering Resources](#).

- Name the 'suffering' in the story. How was it transformed?
- Where do you see God in these stories?

- How do you imagine the situations and responses of the people whose stories we've heard?
- What gives you hope in these stories?
- Where do you see the words of the Lamentations scripture reflected in these stories?
- How do you find hope, especially when you don't have everything you need, or when things are not going in your favor?
- How can you connect with Week of Compassion to be part of the hope and transformation these stories tell?

Invite everyone to write down on a small piece of paper, or type into their phone, or take a picture of where it's already written down, one item from all the compiled lists of compassionate work that they can take on in the coming week or month. Maybe a few would be willing to share what they select. Plan a time in a few weeks to hear back from the group about their results.

Close with a prayer, especially praying for the ways each person will be agent of compassion going forward:

*Holy One, you have given us all we need, and enough to share with those we meet. Whether we give our offerings of money or volunteering our time, whether we join in prayer or take time to learn more about someone else, we remember that you are part of all of it. We pray for the courage to be compassionate, to remember that your mercy is always new, and that even in life's hardest moments, your grace and power are always there too. Show us the ways to do what is best for you, and for those around us. Amen.*

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*Perhaps a group (or several groups) would use their lists and drawings to decorate a bulletin board at the church, promoting Week of Compassion.*



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