

2020

PLANNING AND RESOURCE GUIDE

Week of Compassion Special Offering | February 16-23

Invest in FUTURES



weekofcompassion.org



For we are co-workers in
God's service; you are
God's field, God's building.

1 Corinthians 3:9



Mission

As the relief, refugee, and development mission fund of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Week of Compassion works with partners to alleviate suffering throughout the world.

Vision

A world where God's people transform suffering into hope.

Core Values

CONNECTION Partner with individuals, congregations, and organizations to serve the needs of the world.

INTEGRITY Honor the commitment to faithful stewardship, ensuring gifts entrusted to Week of Compassion are making the most impact.

ACCOMPANIMENT Embody God's grace by committing to a long-term presence with communities in need.

FRONT COVER PHOTO: New Life Center in Thailand. *photo credit: Craig Thompson, Disciple Design*

ABOVE PHOTO: Week of Compassion supports tsunami relief in Central Sulawesi, Indonesia. *photo credit: Week of Compassion*

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Youth Activity

All-Ages Activity

Bingo Card

MISSION MOMENT: Eldon, Missouri Church Serves Neighbors After Storm

MISSION MOMENT: Water is Life: Response to Indonesia Tsunami

Through our partners, children in India
have an opportunity to go to school and
receive an education.

photo credit: Week of Compassion



A MESSAGE FROM YOUR *Executive Director*

There is something sacred about investing in the future.

Working toward a better future is an act of faith in and of itself. Whether we invest time, energy, or resources, we give a part of ourselves to a future time that we can't yet see, trusting that God will bring about good things in a new and unknown season.

Even more sacred is an investment in the future of our children.

Across time and space, and across the many cultures and places that I am privileged to visit in my work with Week of Compassion, people share this in common. Everywhere I go, families and communities are thinking about what is best for their children and what investments of time, talent, and treasure right now will build the best world for them tomorrow.

Sometimes it is hard for families to dream of a hopeful future. In many of the places where we serve, families have been hurt, separated, or displaced. Their community or government might not have the infrastructure or resources to help them recover, or they may not have the possibility of education for their children. They might not have access to safe water, adequate food, or medical care. With so many challenges, it takes everything just to survive the day, much less dream of a future.

So we dream about the future--for our own children, and for theirs. We dream of a future where all are empowered to thrive; where every child has what they need to grow and reach their potential. We dream of a world where everyone can be safe and healthy, sharing the gifts God has given them.

More than twenty years ago, a group of young men were living in a refugee camp in southern Mexico. Their families were preparing to return to their home village in Guatemala, and these boys had the opportunity to go to school in Guatemala City. With support from Week of Compassion, they completed high school, and then university.

From the beginning, these young men made a commitment to give back, using their education not only to make a living but also to improve conditions for others. Now, more than twenty years later, some work as human rights attorneys; some provide agronomy services; and some are teachers. They serve in

leadership roles in their village of Santa Maria Tzeja, where one of them is even in local government.

Recently, a group from Central Christian Church in Indianapolis traveled to Guatemala for a visit. Pastor Linda McCrae says, "I wish all Disciples could see the impact that these scholarships have made. One of the men, Emiliano, is the oldest of five children. When he finished his studies and began to work, he paid for the education of the next oldest brother. They continued that practice until all five had completed college. In addition to supporting their siblings, this group of former students has contributed about \$5000 to educate eight other young people in the community who are not related to them."

Through your support to Week of Compassion, 50 members of this community are now going to college-- more than two decades later. As one of the men told the recent visiting Disciples: "We are the fruit of the sacrifices that you have made."

We plant, and we water. But God gives the growth.

For 75 years now, our work has been about creating a better future for those displaced by war, famine, or economic realities. Sometimes, we plant trees whose fruits we will never see. But in the work of investing in futures, there is hope. When the Church builds toward that future together, we bear witness to our belief in the resurrection. Giving to this ministry and planting seeds of a blessed future is a sacred act; and the land that we water together is holy ground.

Thank you for participating in this year's special offering. Your partnership, throughout the year, makes a big difference throughout the world. On behalf of the Week of Compassion's board and staff, thank you for your compassion and care for the least of these.



WITH MUCH
GRATITUDE,

Rev. Vy T. Nguyen,
Executive Director
Week of Compassion

Week of Compassion partners provide humanitarian aid for displaced persons in Bangladesh. *photo credit: ACT Alliance/ Paul Jeffrey*



PAT DONAHOO

Disciples Women

Dear Friends,

For more than ten years, Disciples Women have been focused on the crime of Human Trafficking. The victims of this crime, while representing every age and geographical area, are often the most vulnerable: women and girls.

That's why we participated in the 63rd UN Commission on the Status of Women-- focused specifically on sustainable development goals for women and girls.

We learned that these populations are often made more vulnerable by circumstances like lack of clean water and sanitation; access to education; and gender inequality, just to name a few. Lack of clean water is clearly a problem for everyone who does not have access to it. However, it is most often the girls who are required to walk great distances to obtain the water. These distances not only consume much of their time, but also put them in dangerous places where they are susceptible to assault and trafficking. Furthermore, the time required by the task often leaves no time for education-- which means their chances of an improved future are limited, once again making them more susceptible to traffickers.

Missing out on education is obviously a barrier to becoming trained for future work, but girls who do not attend school often are also not aware that they have human rights. Dismantling systems that keep girls vulnerable is a priority.

To that end, Disciples Women have been working to educate our wider Church about the horrors in which we often participate--sometimes passively, often completely unaware. Buying chocolate is one example. The candy industry is a \$70 billion industry in the U.S., and most of the commercial chocolate we buy in local stores is not ethically sourced.

Because of low wages, parents often cannot afford the costs of sending their children to school, so the children work on the farm instead. Hundreds of thousands of children perform dangerous tasks on cocoa farms, like using machetes, lifting and carrying heavy loads, and working with pesticides while unprotected. There is no access to medical care for these children. Some of the largest candy companies in the U.S.

have made promises to change their supply chain to ethically sourced products; but in the 14 years since the agreement, little has changed.

Meanwhile, at least 12,000 child cocoa workers have come to their present situation through trafficking.

That's why Disciples Women and many partners across the Disciples Church-- along with our ecumenical partners-- work for both prevention and recovery programs to protect children from trafficking.

In Matthew 19:14, Jesus says *"Let the little children come to me, and do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of heaven belongs."* Our responsibility as people of faith is to care for the children of the world and to remove obstacles that hinder them in their growth and well-being.

Human trafficking affects children in ways that will have long-lasting impact **on their future and ours**. Giving to Week of Compassion is one way you can protect women and children from trafficking, and also assist survivors.

In places of need--whether from disaster or oppressive conditions and systems--there are many ways in which we are called to act. My family's response is to work first through Week of Compassion, where we know that our money goes to offer immediate relief, as well as ongoing relationship and support. Together, we can invest in the futures of vulnerable children; creating a better world for them, and for us all.



**Rev. Doctor
Patricia A. Donahoo**
Executive Director,
Disciples Women

THEME INTRODUCTION

Invest in Futures

1 CORINTHIANS 3:5-9

What then is Apollos? What is Paul? Servants through whom you came to believe, as the Lord assigned to each. I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. So neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth. The one who plants and the one who waters have a common purpose, and each will receive wages according to the labor of each. For we are God's servants, working together; you are God's field, God's building.

FOCUS: We are co-workers in God's service, planting and watering seeds for God to nurture.

"Let us plant dates even though those who plant them will never eat them," writes Brazilian theologian Rubem Alves. "We must live by the love of what we will never see."¹

Date trees can take a decade to bear fruit and 100 years to reach their full height. The hands that plant such a tree may do so knowing they may never rest in that tree's shade. Moved by love, they invest in that unseen future.

"We are all co-workers together in God's service," writes Paul in 1 Corinthians 3. Some of us plant. Some of us water. But God gives the growth. Through Week of Compassion, we become like date tree planters: serving the fruitful future for which God yearns. Who knows what growth God may bring when we join hands together across distance, across traditions, and across time for the love of what we may never see?

Young women arriving at the New Life Center in Thailand have escaped difficult pasts, and often face uncertain futures. Whether they're survivors of abuse, trafficking, or just a lack of access to education, they may find it hard to envision a life beyond their present situation. But at New Life Center, they are met with kindness and compassion. They encounter people willing to invest the time and resources

to help them imagine abundant futures full of opportunities for education, friendship, and healing.

Hands that once shook with fear now move swiftly across a keyboard, operate a sewing machine, or warmly clasp the hands of a friend. The support they receive at New Life empowers these young women to share their own gifts for the future thriving of our world.

When we give to Week of Compassion, we help make all of this new life and growth possible. Through our sharing, we are connected as co-workers. Our combined gifts have the capacity to travel all over the world. Whether we are empowering young girls through education, or helping women learn a trade; rebuilding communities after disaster, or supporting communities through agriculture as they learn to sustain themselves; in these and so many other ways, we release the waters of God's growth when we invest in the lives of others.

In sharing our gifts, we join together as both donors and recipients of generous investment in the growth God will bring. As Paul writes, "the one who plants and the one who waters have one purpose." Moved by our common purpose, we share our gifts for the glory of God and for our neighbors' good.

¹ Rubem Alves, "Tomorrow's Child" New York: Harper & Row; 1972.

While we cannot know the future, we do know that our future depends upon the future thriving of others and that God calls us together as co-workers to bring about a world in which all can thrive. In giving to Week of Compassion, we invest in that shared future, and we trust that through our combined generosity, God will indeed give the growth!

The growth that God brings does not always look like more money in the bank, fancy new buildings, or even more people in our pews. Sometimes the growth God brings looks like opening hearts, forgiving each other, seeing new possibilities, and mending broken communities.

Investing in the future God will bring is not the same as investing in a retirement fund from which the investor hopes to one day benefit. Investing in the future God will bring is more mysterious than that. For there is no guarantee that any growth God brings will look as we expect.

Investing in the future God will bring is rewarding in immediate ways. For when we invest in each other and in each other's futures, we delight in knowing that we take part of God's holy work of growing and thriving. We celebrate the profound joy of living "for the love of what we may never see."

*For additional
online resources
including children and youth
activities, visit our website,
**weekofcompassion.org/
special-offering***



A young woman tends a garden in Mozambique, an area devastated by Cyclone Idai. photo credit: ACT Alliance/Simon Chambers

REFLECTION FOR

Preaching and Teaching

In the church, we often talk about the virtues of “servant leadership.” At its best, that term encourages church leaders to model their ministry after Jesus, who stooped to wash the feet of his disciples, who served them at the table, and who prayed for them faithfully even in his final hours.

God invites each of us to lead by serving, to share freely of our gifts so that God may work through us. Indeed, the word translated as “servant” in 1 Cor. 3: 5 in the NIV is *diakonos*, the root of the term “deacon.” Paul uses the term to describe someone whose work may be of benefit to others. Specifically in this context, he describes someone whose efforts God may use as a channel for good and growth. In choosing to humbly give their gifts, “servant-leaders” become channels of God’s healing love, so that all may enjoy the powerful experience of shared value, worth, and investment.

When we work and share our gifts together, none of us has to be Paul or Apollos, or any famous spiritual leader, in order to be faithful to the responsibilities we have been given. None of us is expected to solve all the problems of the world alone, or even as individual churches. Rather, we are called to use the time, talent, and resources we have been given for the opportunities before us. In so doing, we have the joyful opportunity to participate in the growth God is already up to in the world.

Week of Compassion works through a global network of partners, so that none of us has to do this work alone. Strong relationships are at the heart of this shared ministry, recognizing that true servant leadership empowers each person and community to use the gifts they’ve been given.*

The Greek word translated as “co-workers” in 1 Cor. 3: 9 in the NIV is *synergoi*. It shares a root with the English word synergy, meaning the interaction of two contributions--which, when combined, produce a greater effect than the simple sum of those contributions. When we give to Week

of Compassion, our gifts join with others and the effects multiply exponentially as God gives growth.

The growth of any garden depends on the soil in which it grows. Different plants give and take different nutrients from the soil. Good gardeners are careful to balance plant varieties so that everything growing in the garden will have what it needs to thrive and bear fruit. If the balance of the soil nutrients is thrown off, all the plants in the garden may suffer. Keeping that balance does not mean treating all plants the same. Rather, it means giving each plant what it needs. As co-workers in God’s garden, when we share in the work of Week of Compassion, we make an investment in the future and receive abundant blessing in return.

Unlike with the stock market or a retirement account, we do not invest in God’s growth to receive a benefit to ourselves. Rather, we give, receive, plant, and water in the service of the future for which God yearns.

A little-known band called *Yurtfolk* set to music² the words of the Brazilian theologian Rubem Alves’s quote: “We must live for the love of what we may never see.” The song tells the story of an old man who plants a date tree in whose shade he will never sit, and whose fruit he will never eat. Why would he do that? Simply-- for the love of what he may never see.

In this letter from Paul, the Jesus-followers in Corinth are encouraged to give and grow without undue attachment or ownership to the end result. It matters little who takes credit for the good fruits borne by the faith community in Corinth--Paul or Apollos. What’s important is that they bear the fruit God has called them to grow.

Church leaders may want to reflect on how our churches learn to live for the love of what we may never see. How might we invest in futures, trusting that even if we may never see it, God indeed will give abundant growth?

² yurtfolk.com

CHILDREN'S SERMON

THEME: Planting Seeds for Future Generations

SUPPLIES: apple seeds, apple cut in half horizontally so you can see the seeds, photo/picture of an apple tree

SCRIPTURE: 1 Corinthians 3:5-9 NIV

SCRIPT:

[show the children the apple seeds]

Does anyone know what these are?

[give time for guesses]

They are apple seeds! They are inside every apple that we eat. I cut open an apple to show you what it looks like inside. See? There are the seeds. *[show the children an apple cut horizontally showing the seeds inside]*

Inside every apple are seeds. And if we plant the seeds, they grow an apple tree like this. *[show photo/picture of apple tree]*

And apples trees grow big and tall and make more apples. And if you plant the seeds from those apples, what do you get? *[wait for answers]* You get more apple trees!

Have you ever heard the story of Johnny Appleseed? Johnny Appleseed was a man who used to travel across the country planting apple trees. He planted many orchards and brought trees to Pennsylvania, Ontario, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, and West Virginia. Johnny Appleseed was also a preacher and a teacher who taught people about Jesus. He loved trees and animals and people. He lived a simple life, and as he traveled, he blessed those left behind with apple trees and the love of God.

As we travel through life – to school, to the store, to the park, to a friend's house – I wonder how we can bless other people by planting seeds of generosity, of kindness, of

God's love. How can we help grow a better world for us all?
[allow space for possible answers to this question]

Today we are collecting a special offering for Week of Compassion. The money that we give goes to plant seeds of hope around the world to help young people grow well and have good futures.* Our gifts allow girls who are not much older than you the opportunity to go to school when they might not get to learn otherwise. They learn all kinds of skills that help them have more choices and more opportunities for the rest of their lives!

There is a song that we can imagine Johnny Appleseed used to sing. You might know it. If not, I'll teach it to you.

Johnny Appleseed
Oh, the Lord's been good to me
and so I thank the Lord
for giving me the things I need:
the sun and the rain and the apple seed.
The Lord's been good to me.

PRAYER

God, thank you for the many blessings that you have given us. Help us to give and receive blessings from each other, each person planting seeds of goodness. Bless our offering to Week of Compassion. May it help others to also plant seeds and grow.

MISSION MOMENT

A Flowering Investment

“I have always thought what is needed is the development of people who are interested, not in being leaders as much as in developing leadership in others.”

– Ella Baker, Civil Rights Activist

Imagine how beautiful the future will be when we invest in one another.

Twenty women from an indigenous neighborhood called Lapachito in an isolated area of Bolivia don't need to imagine what that future looks like. They've been building it-- with help from an investment from Week of Compassion.

Five years ago, they formed a group called “Flowering Lapachito” because they were tired of seeing their families struggle to survive. “The neighborhood is very far from the city center,” explains Paola Portal, president of Flowering Lapachito. “Sources of employment are scarce, so women must leave their daughters and sons to go look for work. We don't have good nutrition, which leads to diseases in children, pregnant women and adults.”

The women wanted to change things for the better, but it would take courage: in this part of Bolivia, it's difficult to be a woman and even more difficult to take a leading role in the community. In fact, in 2018 alone there were seven femicides in the area – that's when a woman or girl is killed because of her gender.

But in spite of so many frightening realities, the women of Flowering Lapachito were ready to move mountains. They just needed someone to invest in their future. They received a grant through Week of Compassion partner, CWS and affiliated local organizations. “We asked for help

to train us on preparing and selling regional and national dishes so that we can improve our economic situations without leaving our families,” Paola says. “We also asked to know our rights [as women] better so that we would have more freedom in managing our businesses.”


That initial investment keeps opening doors. With the resources they received, the women of Lapachito bought equipment to prepare food and received training to cultivate small-scale vegetable gardens. Paola says that by growing vegetables, they are feeding their families better. Plus, they use them to prepare typical dishes that they sell at a farmers' market every other Sunday.

“With the profit we buy more seeds, and we harvest more. We are contributing to our families and to the community that buys our products,” she says. Now, Flowering Lapachito is working with partners to redefine gender roles and build the self-esteem in women. It means safety, opportunity, equality and a way out of poverty for the whole community.

What will the future be like when we invest in seeds that flower and grow into the Kingdom of God? What beautiful landscape is on the horizon when we lift up and empower our neighbors? Through your generous gifts to Week of Compassion, you invest in courageous neighbors like the women of Flowering Lapachito—an investment that changes the whole landscape for women, families, and communities for generations to come.

Women of the Flowering Lapachito
Project in the Chaco region of Bolivia.
photo credit: Church World Service





The people of Haiti continue to recover from Hurricane Matthew, which destroyed up to 90% of crops in some areas.
photo credit: ACT Alliance/Paul Jeffrey

*For more stories about how Week of Compassion empowers people and communities, visit [**weekofcompassion.org/special-offering**](https://weekofcompassion.org/special-offering)

MISSION MOMENT

More than Just Roofs

By Rev. Kara Foster

First Christian Church, Madisonville, KY

It was a week of roofs for our youth and adult chaperones. It was hot, sweaty, and dirty work. We cleared off debris, power washed, sealed, and painted the roofs of three different homes. Along the way we heard stories and saw the evidence of the destruction from Hurricane Maria, which caused significant damage and continues to create challenges for the community.

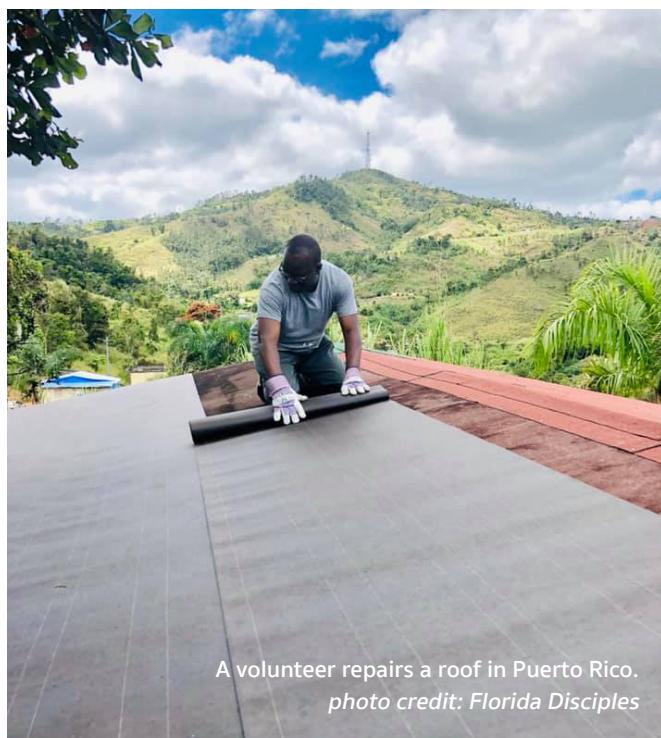
Our group traveled to Puerto Rico as an ambassador volunteer team with Programa Edifiquemos: a collaborative recovery and rebuilding program between the Disciples of Christ in Puerto Rico, Week of Compassion, Disciples Volunteering, and Global Ministries. Because Week of

Compassion is committed to ongoing presence as well as immediate response, the role of ambassador volunteer groups is as much about building relationships as it is about doing repair work.

One of the roofs we worked on was the home of a retired Disciples of Christ Pastor. He gave us tours of his wife's garden and showed us family photo albums. We talked about his years of ministry with the Church, and he and his wife made sure we stayed well fed.

As we finished up the roof and packed up to go, the Pastor offered us a prayer. We circled together and held hands and prayed. The Pastor teared up and cried as we said our goodbyes. As we drove away, Manuel, our local host, turned to me and said, "We are fixing more than just roofs here..."

1 Corinthians 3:9 says, "For we are God's servants, working together; you are God's field, God's building." We worked on actual buildings in Puerto Rico, but the long-term disaster relief work that Week of Compassion supports is mending more than just buildings. It is an investment in futures-- an investment in lives.*



A volunteer repairs a roof in Puerto Rico.
photo credit: Florida Disciples

*For information about how you can take an ambassador volunteer team to continue recovery work in Puerto Rico, visit **discipleshomemissions.org/pr-response**

Additional *Resources*

can be found at weekofcompassion.org/special-offering

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MISSION MOMENT: Eldon, Missouri

Church Serves Neighbors After Storm

MISSION MOMENT: Water is Life:

Response to Indonesia Tsunami

Girls at the New Life Center in Thailand learn computer skills and other tools that empower them for the future. *photo credit: Craig Thompson, Disciple Design*



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