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Photo: Paul Jeffrey


2017 Planning and Resource Guide

Week of Compassion Special Offering February 19–26, 2017



"The Lord is near to all who call upon God." – Psalm 145:18

www.weekofcompassion.org

A woman with grey hair, wearing a white sleeveless top with a pink and purple floral pattern and black pants, stands on a dirt path. She is gesturing with her right hand towards a large, rustic brick oven. The oven is built from red and dark bricks, with a dark, arched opening. A wooden plank leans against the right side of the oven. In the background, there are green trees and a brick wall. The scene is brightly lit, suggesting a sunny day.

JUST AS YOU DID IT TO THE
ONE OF LEAST OF THESE WHO
ARE MEMBERS OF MY FAMILY,
YOU DID IT TO ME.

MATTHEW 25:40

Teresa, leader of a women's bakery and craft co-op in Paraguay, shows off their brick oven. Photo: Dawn Barnes



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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

Special Thanks to Rev. Laura Jean Torgerson, who crafted the theme introduction, worship resources, and sermon starter/theological interpretation, and to Rev. Waltrina Middleton, who crafted several of the children’s, youth, and intergenerational activities.



Photo: ACT/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.



Photo: Harvard Bjelland/Kirkens Nodhielp



Photo: Paul Jeffrey

FROM YOUR WEEK OF COMPASSION STAFF



Dear Church,

It is a common, perhaps daily, experience for many of us, as we live in our technology driven age: a pin drops on a GPS map, marking a current location or indicating a destination, orienting us in space. These map pins represent where we are and where we hope to go.

The scriptures for the special offering this year provide a similar point of reference, an orientation for our lives-- God is near; love one another in truth and action; feed those who are hungry, clothe those who are naked, welcome those who are strangers. These texts help us position ourselves in relation to God and to one another by reminding us of our call to be here for one another, loving one another as God has loved us. Our destination, where our map pin sits, is near to the heart of God, is alongside our neighbors who are suffering.

This offering season, our theme is **"You are here."**

By this simple statement, we glorify God's faithful presence, affirm that Christ is uniquely present in those whom we serve, and celebrate how you are here for your neighbors in their times of need. For over seven decades, Week of Compassion has been able to be present for people near and far in moments of crisis because of your partnership and generosity. We have been present, **so you also** have been present.

GRACE AND PEACE,

Your **WEEK OF
COMPASSION** Staff



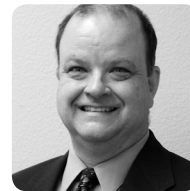
Rev. Vy Nguyen

Executive Director



**Rev. Caroline
Hamilton-Arnold**

Associate Director



Rev. David Owen

Director of Fund Development

You are here—in Rowlett, TX, where tornado survivors have been able to return to their homes, because volunteer teams were present to help rebuild and repair houses.

You are here—in Tanzania, where lower income women are taking proactive steps for their reproductive health with screenings and treatment for cervical cancer provided by our partners.

You are here—in Morocco, Jordan, Serbia, the United States, and elsewhere around the world, where refugees are receiving food, water, and medicine with dignity, as our partners offer aid and accompaniment.

Often we receive notes from those who have experienced disasters, expressing thanks because "Week of Compassion was here." In times of loss or struggle, after a fire or flood, when a child is unable to attend school because she has to search for clean water, or when a mother has fled home to keep her children safe, the church is present through the work of Week of Compassion. Through your gifts, you are here.

In grateful partnership, we offer again our thanks and rejoice in the good work of the gospel. As we continue to walk in mutuality, seeking wholeness and healing for all, let us be strengthened by the Spirit of God, here with us.



Organizing THE OFFERING

You have been asked to coordinate this year's Week of Compassion offering. How might you best prepare your congregation and community for the offering? Scan through this planning and resource guide. Other helpful resources can be found at www.weekofcompassion.org.

The suggested offering date is **February 19-26, 2017**.

If you do not already have a standing order with Week of Compassion or if you need additional offering materials (bulletin inserts, envelopes, coin boxes, etc.), please go to our website to fill out the form, or contact info@weekofcompassion.org or call 317.713.2442. Once you've received the offering materials, give them to the appropriate person(s) (e.g., the bulletin preparer) for distribution at the correct times.

INVOLVE OTHERS

- Share the worship resources with your pastor/worship leaders.
- Ask that the theme of the worship service on the offering date be connected to the offering. Worship resources in this guide and on the website can help.
- Set dates leading up to the offering for the Mission Moments (pg 21-24), the Offering Reminder (pg 25), and/or an Artistic Interpretation (online at www.weekofcompassion.org/special-offering).
- Set a challenging goal for the offering with the leadership team. Consider increasing giving by a certain percentage over last year, or increasing the number of giving units.
- Share the children and youth activities with Christian Education and youth group leaders. Ask that they be used during the weeks before the offering date.
- Recruit people to do the following and share with them the written resources they will need:
 - Offer the Minutes for Mission on several Sundays

prior to the offering date.

- Prepare and present the Offering Reminder and/or an Artistic Interpretation.
- Prepare and make the offering invitation on the offering date itself.

PERFECT TIMING

The month before the offering date: begin promoting the offering.

- Put the offering date on the church calendar.
- Send the theme introduction and sharing calendar to each household. Will you use the newsletter? A separate mailing? An e-mail?
- Display the offering poster in a prominent place. Consider changing its location each week to keep the message fresh and to reach more people.
- Do the traditional things your congregation associates with the offering—whether it be a potluck presentation on Week of Compassion, prayer time in the Sunday School classes, or reports from the children or youth about the offering-related activities they have done.

Two weeks before the offering date: Share the Minutes for Mission during the worship service. Make sure the offering date is listed among the “upcoming events” in the bulletin.

One week before the offering date: Include the dramatic interpretation in the worship service. Include in the bulletin any written material people should consider as they make decisions about their giving. Place offering envelopes in the pews.

On the offering date: Make sure extra offering envelopes are available. Help the worship leaders in whatever ways they need to make the offering theme an integral and prominent part of the worship service. Talk before the offering collection about how the offering helps us spread God's love in North America and the wider world. Specifically invite the congregation to give to Week of Compassion. Tell of your intention to increase your gift this year, and encourage others to do so, too. Remind people that needs continue throughout the year.

One and two weeks after the offering date: Report the amount received to date. Did you meet your congregational goal? Invite those who have not yet given to contribute.

At the end of the offering collection period: Report to the congregation the total amount contributed. Celebrate and praise God for the wonderful work the offering will do! Thank the congregation verbally and in writing for giving to Week of Compassion. Encourage your members to sign up for Week of Compassion Updates at www.weekofcompassion.org, like Week of Compassion on Facebook, and follow Week of Compassion on Twitter.

"In my understanding of solidarity and compassion, it's not in any way about what I do or what I give others. It's the interconnections we create with other, how we support each other."

— Ada María Isasi-Díaz

Your standing order, if on file with Week of Compassion, will be mailed after December 25. Please check your order to make sure you have the materials; if you have questions about your order, please contact:

WEEK OF COMPASSION
PO Box 1986
Indianapolis, IN 46206

Phone: 317.713.2442
Email: info@weekofcompassion.org

Your standing order should include:

- 2017 theme posters
- 2017 bulletin inserts
- Week of Compassion offering envelopes
- Coin boxes

ADDITIONAL MATERIALS

VIDEOS

Two special videos are available for this year's offering. You can download them, and past years' videos, from the Week of Compassion website:

www.weekofcompassion.org/videos

ACTIVITIES AND ARTISTIC INTERPRETATIONS

Our writers this year went above and beyond, creating more materials than could fit in this guide! Two artistic interpretations, as well as additional materials and activities for children, youth, and all ages are available on the Week of Compassion website:

www.weekofcompassion.org/special-offering



THEME Introduction

You are here.

Just as you did it to the one of least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.

.....

MATTHEW 25:40

Paul's letters remind us that as members of the church, we are so closely connected that we can think of ourselves as parts of one body. The New Testament constantly refers to followers of Jesus, not as Christians, but as a **family** – brothers and sisters.

Many churches live this out when someone is ill, mourning, or facing a crisis. You show up. You are there for your loved ones in need. You show that love in tangible ways, with casseroles and cards, with hugs and spoken words of prayer. These acts let your brothers and sisters in Christ know that you are present with them. They know they are not alone because you are beside them.

Maybe you have been through a diagnosis and treatment, an unimaginable sorrow, and your church – your family – has been there to let you know that you are not forgotten in your troubles. When someone you love suffers, all your truest words and most loving actions simply declare: "I am here."

The Bible tells us that God is like us in this respect. When one of God's beloved children suffers, God declares, "I am here." God hears the cries of the poor and oppressed (Exodus 3:9, Psalm 10:17, 69:33), is near to the brokenhearted (Psalm 34:18), and is near to all who call God's name (Psalm 145:18). The promise that God will be with us is a constant refrain from Genesis to Revelation.

When we see the latest tragedy on the news, we might ask, "Where are you, God?" But we already know the answer – God is **here**, in the midst of those who are hurting.

When Jesus tells the parable of the sheep and the goats (Matthew 25:31-40), he reveals to us a mystery. God is most tangibly present in this world where people hunger, thirst, lack adequate clothing and shelter, and are sick or imprisoned. Christ claims as family members people who suffer and says Christ is so present in them that when you feed the hungry, care for the sick, welcome the stranger – you feed, and care for, and welcome Christ.

Not just your fellow Christians, but anyone in need, anywhere in the world -- these are your sisters, your brothers, your children. Their needs might seem different than the person you worship with on Sunday, but your tangible gifts declare the same message: "I am here." By reaching out to those who suffer from natural disasters, war, or systemic poverty, you let them know that they are not forgotten. Even when the need seems far from here, by acting together as the body of Christ, we are able to be there for these members of Christ's family.

You show them love with gifts of rice and oil. You are present by providing well pumps for clean water and seeds and training for sustainable agriculture. Through medical kits, school supplies, temporary shelters, and safe housing you show up.

In the midst of suffering, where is God? God is here. Where are you? When you give to Week of Compassion, **you** are here.

Worship RESOURCES



SCRIPTURES

Matthew 25:31-46 (Artistic Interpretation 1, *available online*, is a dramatic reading using this text)

Psalms 145:18

1 John 3:11-24

CALL TO WORSHIP (BASED ON PSALM 145)

to be read by two groups (e.g. adults and children; left and right; choir and congregation)

ALL: Praise the Lord!

GROUP 1: We praise you, our God, and we bless your name forever and ever.

GROUP 2: Every day we will bless you, and praise your name.

1: Great are you, Lord, and greatly to be praised

2: Your greatness is unsearchable

1: You are near to all who call on you

2: To all who call on you in truth

ALL: Praise the Lord!

OPENING PRAYER

Sustaining God, we gather to seek your presence.
We know that when we call out to you, you are near.
You hold us up when we are falling.
You are just in all your ways,
and kind in all your doings.
You have never failed us yet.
Saving God, we gather to proclaim your power,
knowing that your words are faithful and your deeds are
gracious.
We stand in awe of your wondrous works.
Still-speaking God, we gather to listen for your voice.
Speak to us in scripture, song, and silence.
Show us the way to love, not just in word and speech,
but in truth and action.
Show us where you want to lead us.
Amen.

PRAYER OF CONFESSION (UNISON)

God of love, you created us to love you and one another.
We confess that we have sometimes limited that love to words and failed to make that love real by our actions.
We have failed to recognize Christ in the hungry, the thirsty, the homeless, the naked, the incarcerated, and the sick. Too often, we have turned away from your presence, failing to share what we have with our brothers and sisters in need.

Forgive us. Turn our hearts, and guide us to follow in your ways anew.

WORDS OF ASSURANCE

ONE: The Lord is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.

MANY: The Lord is good to all and has compassion for all creation.



A woman in the Philippines hangs laundry in the midst of rubble after Typhoon Haiyan. Photo: Paul Jeffrey

LITANY

Leader reads the regular font; **congregation reads the bold.**

O God of promises, you remind us again and again that
you are present with your people.

When our hearts are broken, **You are here.**

When we wait in worry to hear about a diagnosis,

You are here.

When we lose the ones we love, **You are here.**

Where anyone is hungry or thirsty, **You are here.**

When we feel like strangers and wonder if anyone will
welcome us, **You are here.**

Where anyone is sick, in need of care and company, **You
are here.**

When people are in prison, **You are here.**

When anyone needs clothing, **You are here.**

You, O God, are here with us when we suffer. Empower us
to be with others as they suffer, our neighbors both near
and far. You are here, God, in the midst of suffering –
and we want to be where you are. **Amen.**

INVITATION TO OFFERING

We worship a God who gives, generously and abundantly.

God gives to all creatures their food in due season,
and from God's open hand the desire of every living
thing is satisfied.

God has given us so many blessings:

The food we eat

the friends and family we cherish

the precious gift of God's love for us, a love that led Jesus
to lay down his life for us.

When that love abides in us, we cannot refuse to help
our brothers and sisters in need. Through our regular
offerings we...[celebrate the work of your congregation,
locally]. Through the special offering for Week of
Compassion, we join with other Christians to make our
presence known to people who might feel forgotten –
the hungry, the hurting, the thirsty, the sick. Our gifts,
together, provide food, shelter, comfort, and safety all
over the world.



Women collect water from a newly installed well in Ethiopia.
Photo: Håvard Bjelland/Kirkens Nødhjelp

DEDICATORY PRAYER

Gracious God, in our offering we return to you a portion
of the blessings you have showered upon us. Bless these
gifts, that they might bring comfort and food and shelter
to those who need it. Bless those who will receive them.
Let them know your love through full bellies, warm
clothing, and safe places to sleep. Amen.

CHARGE & BENEDICTION

We worship God in sanctuaries, in beautiful, holy spaces.
But Christ has told us that if we want to find him in this
world, we will seek out the lost, the least of his brothers
and sisters – those who are hungry, thirsty, sick, in
prison, naked and estranged. May we go forth this day
with eyes open to seeing Christ in our world, and may we
know God's love by loving one another.

May we love, not just in word and speech, but in truth
and action.

.....

"Christ Has No Body," Teresa of Avila –
Christ has no body now on earth but yours; no hands
but yours; no feet but yours. Yours are the eyes through
which the compassion of Christ must look out on the
world. Yours are the feet with which He is to go about
doing good. Yours are the hands with which He is to
bless His people.

COMMUNION

Invitation to Communion

"We know love by this, that Christ laid down his life for us."

We come to this table to celebrate and experience that life-giving love.

There is a Latin American table grace that says "Bless, O Lord, our bread. Give bread to those who are hungry. And to those who have bread, give hunger for justice. Bless, O Lord, our bread."

We come to this table to break bread together, joining with the church across the world and throughout the ages at this foretaste of the great feast to come. Some come to this table hungry, struggling to find the bread they need for each day. Some come to this table with access to plenty of food, but starving for God's nourishing love.

What we see in this feast of love, a table where all are fed, can also make us hungry for a world that is more like this table. This bread and cup can sustain us, give us the strength to lay down our lives for one another.

At this table, we remember ...

"While they were eating, Jesus took a loaf of bread, and after blessing it he broke it, gave it to the disciples, and said, 'Take, eat; this is my body.' Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he gave it to them, saying, 'Drink from it, all of you; for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. I tell you, I will never again drink of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom.'"

(MATTHEW 26:26-29)

Blessing of the elements

Bless, O Lord, this bread, and us as we receive it, that we might be the body of Christ, united in love and service. Bless, O Lord, the cup poured out to draw us in, let it renew in us your covenant of love, and our shared commitment to you. Amen.

Prayer of Thanksgiving

We thank you, gracious God, for your gifts of bread and wine, the gifts of Christ's body and blood. We thank you for nourishing us, sustaining us, and empowering us to live as one body. We thank you for your most amazing love, and pray that your love would abide in us always. Amen.

HYMN SUGGESTIONS (CH: CHALICE HYMNAL)

- *I Was There To Hear Your Borning Cry* (CH 75)
- *We Meet You, O Christ* (CH 183)
- *God Is Here!* (CH 280)
- *Here I Am, Lord* (CH 452)
- *Sister, Let Me Be Your Servant* (CH 490)
- *In Loving Partnership* (CH 497)
- *Jesu, Jesu* (CH 600)
- *Here Am I* (CH 654)
- *Cuando el Pobre* (When the Poor Ones) (CH 662)
- *Where Restless Crowds Are Thronging* (CH 672)
- *In Christ There Is No East or West* (CH 687)

CONTEMPORARY SONG SUGGESTIONS

- *Joy of the Lord*, by Rend Collective
- *With Every Act of Love*, by Jason Gray
- *God With Us*, by All Sons and Daughters
- *Jesus is There*, by Christopher Grundy
- *Be Known*, by Jamie Wolf
- *Beautiful Stranger*, by Rebecca St. James
- *I Will Be Your Friend*, by Michael W. Smith

**"When the poor ones who have nothing
share with strangers,
when the thirsty water give unto us all,
when the crippled in their weakness
strengthen others,
then we know that God still goes that road
with us."**

From the hymn, "Cuando el Pobre"



Sermon Starter

THEOLOGICAL INTERPRETATION

People who have been helped by Week of Compassion frequently comment that “**you were here**” after the flood, the earthquake, the fire. The shared offering allows the church to show up and be here when people are in need. Because Week of Compassion works with congregations and organizations that are on the ground, with deep roots in affected communities, we can be present quickly – *and* stay for the long-term. This means that after the news cycle has moved on, **you are still here**, helping people rebuild their lives.

This is wonderful from the perspective of aid and material development, but what does it have to do with our faith? The theme for the offering, “you are here,” provides multiple possible avenues to explore the connection between human need, our faith, and this shared offering in your sermon.

1) You are here could be the response to a question provoked by tragedy and suffering: “Where are you, God?” Psalm 145:18 echoes the refrain throughout scripture that God is nearby, present with God’s people. As soon as a person calls on God, God is *here*.

When have you felt God’s presence in a time of deep need?

2) Through the lens of Matthew’s parable, **You are here** answers the question: “Where do we find Christ in the world?” He is **here**, in those who hunger and thirst.

The parable of the sheep and the goats (Matthew 25:31-46) begins with something of a mixed metaphor – the Son of Man is seated as king on a throne, but acting as a shepherd – separating sheep from goats. This shepherd

king divides people based on their response to basic human needs. Both groups are taken by surprise, and ask “when was it, Lord...?”

The needs described are anything but metaphorical, and are so basic that we can easily imagine them 2,000 years later – food, water, clothing, welcome, care when sick, visits when in prison. These needs are so basic that we can easily relate to them, because they are our needs, too. We don’t need to look outside our congregations or even our own lives to find examples.

At the core of this passage is the claim that Christ is present in the human needs of this world, so that feeding the hungry is feeding Christ himself. This is a more dramatic claim even than the idea that Christians can show Christ’s love through our deeds of kindness and work for justice. Rather, Christ completely identifies with “the least of these who are members of my family.” When someone is thirsty, Christ is thirsty. When we see a situation of need – **Christ is here**.

The images of the throne, the king, and the kingdom may be harder to grasp. But in this context, they show us the kind of glory that is worthy of God’s kingdom. The glory of God is shown when hungry people are fed, strangers are welcomed – wherever human need is met.

How has your congregation fed the hungry, welcomed the stranger, or reached out to the “least of these” in other ways at the local level?

When have you personally encountered the face of Christ in people in need?

3) **You are here** shows the church uniting to respond to those needs – when you, collectively, along with many others, give, it means that the church can be **here**, in the midst of need even when it is far away. Together, we are able to respond quickly and be **here to stay** when the needs are long-term. Pooling resources allows our reach to extend much farther into the world than any one person or congregation, to be there sooner and stay for the long haul.

Do the mission moments or other stories illustrate the ways we can be present through our giving to people who are far away?

4) **You are here** addresses the question that each individual has: “Where do I fit in this picture?” – when God’s love abides in us, we are moved to respond with our own material goods to the needs of other members of the human family.

The first letter of John poses a pointed question: “How does God’s love abide in anyone who has the world’s goods and sees a brother or sister in need and yet refuses help?” (3:17) The letter writer, like the gospel writer, sees human community as united into one family in Christ. This letter is concerned with the ethical application of love – how love is lived out in life together. The question is followed with an admonishment, “Little children, let us love, not in word or speech, but in truth and action” (3:18). True love, then, is expressed in deeds of generosity, not empty words. It also makes a theological point – when God’s love is **here**, abiding within you, you will respond generously with your worldly goods.

When have you felt or seen love expressed more powerfully through actions than words?



A teacher leads the class in a lesson about community and hygiene as part of an effort to reduce cases of waterborne illness in Cambodia. Photo: Week of Compassion



Children's SERMON

“My Tummy Hurts”

FOCAL TEXT: Matthew 25: 35-40

Try to remember a time when your belly ached. Perhaps it hurt so terribly you wanted to crawl into a ball and cry your pain away. Maybe you felt better when someone brought you your favorite teddy bear and you hugged it tightly. Or maybe your best buddy—a pet dog, cat, or frog, offered a few wet licks to your face or cuddled next to you. Perhaps a loved one brought you some medicine or a supersized cup of warm soup in your Harry Potter themed bowl. Such kind gestures can surely help one feel better.

LET US IMAGINE TOGETHER:

There was once a little girl, who got a very bad tummy ache. As the child lay sick in bed, her grandmother came to check on her. She peeped into the girl's room, kissed her on the forehead, and covered her with one of her colorful and thick homemade quilts. Then she whispered: “Your grandmamma is here.” The little girl mustered enough strength to crawl into her grandma's lap as she rocked away in an old, rickety rocking chair. The little girl drifted to sleep listening to her grandma hum softly. Every note hummed was a drop of medicine that echoed with melodies of love. The next morning, the little girl's tummy still hurt a little—but she felt better because her grandmamma had been there. She felt special, comforted, and cared for. The young girl remembered that she was not alone.

There are many people all around the world aching and in pain. They are crying because they have a great need for help. Some are crying because their tummies hurt from hunger or thirst. Others are crying because they feel all alone. Our scripture today teaches us how to respond to the aches and pains of people around the world when they cry out for help, just as our loved ones respond to our cries when our tummies hurt. We may not know who they are, but they are our brothers and sisters in Christ and we should treat others with the same gentle and loving care as the grandmother in our story. After all, we are each members of God's family. When a member of our family hurts, we often feel their sadness and pain, too.

TO CONSIDER

- ▶ Adapt the story to make it appropriate to your context. You might make the “grandmother” character a dad or grandpa.
- ▶ You might stage the story as a skit, puppet show, or pantomime to make it more “real” and engaging.

STORY IMAGES: Grandparent, God's love, blanket, tummy ache, teddy bear, sharing and friendship. **Scriptural Images:** Hungry, thirsty, lonely, sick, strangers, God, prayer, encouragement, community.

We can help make people feel loved, welcomed, and special by being kind and offering to help whenever we can, like we do through the Week of Compassion offering. Week of Compassion provides assistance to families needing food, water, and shelter. It helps children go to school and provides help in a time of need. Can you remember how nice it felt to be snuggled in your grandma's quilt or to have a warm cup of soup when your tummy hurt? The bible story teaches us that every act of kindness we demonstrate toward others can be felt by God, too. Each time grandma gives her famous bear hug to help you feel better; God is giving and receiving a hug, too! That's amazing! When someone is hungry and you share your meal, you also share a meal

with God. You not only show them that "You are here," you also help them know: "God's is here!"

We may not always be able to respond to every cry in the world; but we can do our best to be friendly; welcome old and new friends; and love our sisters and brothers near and far by sharing what we can. The Week of Compassion offering helps us to do just that.

PRAYER: Dear God, when there are cries for someone to help, please help me to care and share. Amen.

"COMPASSION asks us to go where it hurts, to enter into the places of pain, to share in brokenness, fear, confusion, and anguish.

COMPASSION challenges us to cry out with those in misery, to mourn with those who are lonely, to weep with those in tears.

COMPASSION requires us to be weak with the weak, vulnerable with the vulnerable, and powerless with the powerless.

COMPASSION means full immersion in the condition of being human."

HENRI J.M. NOUWEN



Children's Activity: THIRSTY

SCRIPTURE: Matthew 25:31-46; FOCUS TEXT: Matthew 25:35

Pre-K, Lower Elementary

OBJECTIVES

Children will imagine what it is like to be thirsty and use problem solving skills to imagine ways to ensure everyone has enough to drink. Children will learn about real-world situations where people do not have access to clean water.

SUPPLIES

Cups and a pitcher of water.
(Recycle bin, if using recyclable cups).

INSTRUCTIONS (PART 1):

Read the primary scripture (or just the focal text). Focus on the term “thirsty.”

Ask for examples of what might make someone thirsty (e.g. a long walk, climbing a tree, or helping rake a large yard full of leaves). You might act out these examples. Help the group imagine being “thirsty” after such hard work.



Ask the children who would like a drink of water by a show of hands. Then invite the children to come forward and receive one of the clear plastic cups, splitting them into two groups as you go.

Once all of the children have their cups, take the pitcher of water and fill up the cups for all of the children in group #1. Remind them not to drink yet. Leave the cups empty for the children in group #2. Invite all of the children to drink their beverage. Remind them to hold onto their cups.



PROCESSING (PART 1):

ASK: For those of you with empty cups, how did it feel not being able to drink?

For those of you with filled cups, how did it feel drinking when others couldn't?

SAY: Imagine to yourself—don't say it out loud! Just think it in your head— how we might help everyone who is thirsty have something to drink.

INSTRUCTIONS (PART 2):

Divide the group into two once again and fill the cups in group #2, again reminding them not to drink yet. Invite the children to share aloud what they imagined and decide together how they will make sure everyone has something to drink. Once everyone has some, invite the children to drink.

PROCESSING (PART 2):

ASK: I wonder—how did this time feel different from the first time we passed out the drinks?

Was it difficult to give up some of your drink?

Can you think of a story in the world about someone who doesn't have enough to drink?

Conclude with one of the provided stories about access to water.

In the city of Flint, MI, chemicals caused a mineral called lead to make the water unsafe to drink. People who lived in Flint tried to tell the local government, but were told the water was OK, even though it wasn't. Many people, especially children, started to get sick, and so people all across the country started to help them. Week of Compassion helped provide clean water for the people of Flint.



Volunteers pass out water at Vermont Christian Church in Flint, Michigan. *Photo: Vermont Christian Church*

After a big storm or disaster—like a hurricane, tornado, or earthquake—people need water. Often, storms damage water systems and pipes so they don't work. Other times, the water gets filled with mud or trash that makes it unsafe to drink. Week of Compassion partners help provide clean water right after the event, and then they help communities repair their water systems, dig new wells, or filter the unclean water.



A Haitian girl washes her hands to prevent the spread of cholera after the earthquake in Haiti. *Photo: Paul Jeffrey*

At an elementary school in Viet Nam, there was no running water. The closest water was a long walk away, and the water was not always safe to drink because of chemicals that would get in the river. Week of Compassion partners helped the school install water pumps and filters. Now the kids have water to drink, to prepare their lunch, to wash their hands, and to take home with them! It helps them stay healthy so they can learn.



Kindergarten students wash their hands using water from the new well at their school in Thanh Cong, Viet Nam. *Photo: CWS Viet Nam*

Remind the children that every kind act of sharing is an act demonstrating God's love, presence and care for every member of the community. Giving to the Week of Compassion Offering is one way to share in this important ministry of service to communities in their hour of need.



Children's Activity:

SOUP POT PARABLE



SCRIPTURE: Matthew 25:31-46; **FOCUS TEXT:** Matthew 25:35
Upper Elementary and Middle School

OBJECTIVES

The children will begin to imagine ways they can share and invite others to the table and will explore in story how we rely on one another. The children will be introduced to the Week of Compassion offering and its importance.

SUPPLIES

Printed copies of the story, props or materials to make props for imaginary pots of soup, bowls, serving spoons, eating spoons, tables.

INSTRUCTIONS:

(VARIATION 1)*

Gather the group to hear the story. Read it aloud once or twice. Discuss as a group what the important parts of the story are and what the message of the story is.

Split the group into “casts.” Invite them to stage their own versions of the story—they might have someone read the story while the others pantomime, or turn it into a script they can act out, or put on a puppet show. If time allows, encourage them to create props; if time is short, provide props for them to choose from.

Have each “cast” perform their version for the whole group.

* This variation could be very elaborate and span multiple weeks, if you have a consistent group for Sunday school, children’s church, or another children’s group.

(VARIATION 2)

Gather the group and ask for four volunteers. Give child #1 the big pot of imaginary soup (perhaps even have

oven mitts and a chef’s apron). Give child #2 the bowls. Give child #3 the four spoons. Child #4 should sit alone at a small table or sit on a community mat big enough for four or more people. The remaining children may volunteer to help read the story aloud. As the story is read aloud, the volunteers will act it out, silently.

The Story:

There was once a place called Good Hope. Around supper time, the people of Good Hope would imagine their favorite meal with delicious flavors, and aromas. Alas, no matter how much they imagined, their plates were empty.

One person had a drawer full of spoons but no bowl or soup. Another had a nice bowl, but it was empty. Finally, the third neighbor had a pot and ingredients for soup, but no spoon to stir or serve it.

The neighbor with the pot sat down on his stoop and cried, “I don’t even have a spoon to stir soup. I will surely starve.”

The neighbor with the spoons sat down across the street and said, “I do not have bowl to eat from nor soup to eat. I will surely starve.”

Lastly, the neighbor with the bowl sat down and wept, "I have been staring at my empty bowl all day, and my stomach is growling. I will surely starve."

As the three neighbors sat with their items, with their stomachs growling, a fourth friend arrived. This friend was known all around as someone who was wise and kind. Without a word, she started collecting sticks to build a fire. When the fire was hot, she exclaimed, "Dear neighbors, you will not starve! Come sit with me by this fire, and you will see that we will all have enough to eat."

The three neighbors came and placed their items one by one before them. The neighbor with the soup pot set it down on the fire, and soon it was bubbling and steaming and smelling so good. The neighbor with the spoons began to stir the bubbling soup. When the soup was ready, the neighbor with the bowls set them down, and they filled each one.

Then the neighbor gave one spoon to the neighbor with the pot of soup, one to the neighbor with the bowls, and kept one spoon for her/him self. The three neighbors were so excited! This soup smelled better than any meal they had ever imagined. Just as they prepared to bless their food and eat, the neighbor with the spoons said to the fourth neighbor, "Dear neighbor, come sit with us and eat."

But the fourth neighbor said, "I do not have a pot of soup; I do not have any bowls; and I do not have any spoons. I do not have anything to contribute to this wonderful meal." The friends disagreed and one said, "Oh, but you brought the greatest ingredient of all. You taught us the importance of sharing with our neighbors."

Another friend said, "You brought us together around this fire. We have one more spoon, so you must join us to make the meal complete."

The fourth neighbor joined the others and together, one and all, they shared a meal.

PROCESSING:

ASK: What were the important ingredients to make the meal complete?

Were there important "ingredients" other than food and dishes?

(If you did variation 1): How was it different hearing the story and performing the story? Can anyone give an example of how the story is true today? (perhaps in their school cafeteria, in a soup kitchen, or at a shelter for refugees)

Where is God in the story?

(If you did variation 1): Reflect on the unique ways the "casts" told the story. If they made interesting artistic choices, talk about them! Remind the group that sometimes people experience homelessness, hunger, inadequate clothing or shelter—sometimes because of disasters like floods or tornadoes, sometimes because their jobs do not pay enough or their crops are not growing, and sometimes because they have to leave their homes because of war or violence.

The Week of Compassion Offering helps us to make space at the table for our neighbors. Our Week of Compassion offerings teach us how to share the resources we are able to give. Even if our offering appears small, it may make a big difference when combined with the gifts of others. We demonstrate God's love by being hospitable and compassionate in the midst of suffering. When we give to Week of Compassion, we welcome others to the table and we are also welcoming God to the table to share in our meal with us.

Conclude with the focus text or primary scripture.



Youth/Intergenerational

Activity: **SCENES**

OF TRANSFORMATION



High School, or Intergenerational • [additional youth activity available online]

OBJECTIVES

Groups will work cooperatively across generations, explore situations of conflict or injustice, and envision possibilities for transformation.

SUPPLIES

Printed copies of the provided list of situations.

INSTRUCTIONS:

Divide the group into teams of 4-6 people, ensuring that multiple generations are present in every team (dividing by birth month often works well).

Give time for introductions in the teams, with the prompt: when was a time you felt someone was really “there for you?”

INVITE THE TEAMS TO:

1. Select a situation of conflict or injustice from the list
2. Discuss the situation: Where is the conflict or injustice? What real situations in your life does this prompt make you think of?
3. Discuss how the situation could be transformed into a situation of hope.
4. Create a “human statue” (a still scene or tableau) that expresses the conflict.
5. Transform the “human statue” to express the transformation to hope.

Have teams share with the whole group by naming the situation they chose then “staging” their human statue—first the conflict, then the transformation.

(Example: A group selects the situation—“a family loses their home in a natural disaster.” In the first tableau, several group members huddle together, crying, around some overturned chairs. In the transformation, two other group members come in to make a “tent” with their arms as a shelter over the family, and the family stops crying.)

SITUATION LIST:

- One of the statements in Matthew 25:35-36 (hungry, thirsty, naked, stranger, sick, in prison).
- A family loses their home in a natural disaster.
- A drought is causing food shortages.
- A war has displaced people from their homes.
- Missionary efforts have ignored the needs and contexts of the people.
- A child is unable to attend school because she must collect water for her family.
- A community does not encourage leadership of women.
- Chemicals have contaminated a city’s water source.
- A child is sick with a waterborne illness because of lack of access to sanitation.
- A child is being held in a detention center while awaiting an asylum hearing.



Mission MOMENTS

NEIGHBORHOODS

When we think of our neighborhoods, we may think of block parties, garage sales, pool parties and children playing in front lawns. We may even think of homeowners' associations.

But did you ever think that a neighborhood could save a life?

You made it happen in Haiti.

In a number of small towns in Haiti, your support helps cooperatives. These are groups of neighbors and community members who unite to accomplish together what none of them could do alone. They work on shared services, like improving roads and building bakeries. More importantly, these cooperatives become banking units that give out low-interest loans to members.

Without the cooperatives, families in need have to borrow money from wealthy landowners who charge huge interest rates. Think about the interest rate that you have on your mortgage. Or your car loan. How much is it? In Haiti, some of these rates were as high as 25 percent.

It was one of these low-interest microloans that saved a life.

Marcel is a member of a cooperative called KABM. When his pregnant wife went into labor, the couple traveled to a nearby town for the birth. They couldn't afford to pay for the medical services, so they were being transferred from place to place without care. Marcel's wife had complications while she was in labor, and she needed urgent care.



Marcel Photo: CWS

Marcel called KABM, and they gave him a low interest loan to help cover the costs of the care his wife needed. When he was telling this story, Marcel said, "It saved her life, it saved our family, and without her I wouldn't have been able to care for our kids."

We're urged in John's first letter: "let us love...in truth and action" and by supporting KABM, you did just that by helping ensure that Marcel could obtain the same support that you would want for your own family.

When this family needed help, you were here. You are here when a cooperative builds a new school to empower the next generation. You were here when a vegetable nursery that a cooperative built had to be expanded three times to keep up with its flourishing production. You are with the people in small towns across Haiti's Northwest Department as THEY build the future that they deserve.

Thanks for being here. Thanks for being a good neighbor.

WHERE THERE IS WATER

Think of all of the ways that you have used water so far today. Did you take a shower this morning? Did you flush your toilet? Or wash your hands? When you made breakfast, did you use water? How about when you cleaned up after the meal?

Now imagine walking each morning to gather water for your family, knowing the water you were collecting was unclean and could make the members of your family sick.

Then for several months a year, you wouldn't have access to water because it was the dry season and your water source had dried up. How would you get by? What parts of your daily routine would you have to abandon? How would you provide water for your family?

Unfortunately, this is a reality for many people around the world.



Som Bee and her granddaughter now have access to clean water for cooking, drinking and gardening. Photo: CWS

In a rural community in Cambodia, the only water available was from a shallow, hand-dug well. Each day during the rainy season, a grandmother named Som Bee would walk to the well to collect the water for her family. But the water from the well was unclean, sometimes leading to health problems, including diarrhea.

Thanks to your support, the community was able to address the unclean water problem by installing a ring well. The members of the community also received training on how to filter the water, keeping it clean for daily use.

Because of your support, the members of the community now have access to clean water year round, and they are sick less often.

Because of your support, Som uses the clean water for her garden to help her grow tomatoes, pumpkins, spinach, gourds, cucumbers and mushrooms. Of course, her family eats the vegetables, so they now have a healthier diet!

Som's garden is so bountiful, she is able to sell her vegetables in her local community, earning money to support her family and buy other items that her family needs.

Your support has reached 16 villages in central Cambodia with clean, safe water. You were here with Som and her neighbors as they gathered to build their well with your support. Now, you are with Som each time she leaves her home and only walks a matter of yards to the well. You are here when she waters her gardens and prepares nutritious meals. You are here as her granddaughter grows healthy and strong.

You are here. And the future is bright.

HERE IS HOME

Written by Carol Fouke-Mpoyo

For as long as he can remember, William H. has loved listening to the sound of rain on the roof of his rural South Carolina mobile home. "It's peaceful," he said.

But that love was sorely tested when, last October, it rained hard and without a break for more than a week. "The rain was so heavy that water leaked in through all the edges of my home, including the roof and door and window frames. I had towels all around to try to soak up the water," the 50-year-old homeowner said. He duct-taped cardboard here, there and everywhere to keep the water-saturated, mold-infested, warping, drooping walls and ceilings from falling in.

"They say you can fix anything with duct tape," he said, "but after a certain point, there was nothing left to stick the duct tape to. It was a mess." Once the rain stopped, William faced the daunting challenge of recovering with very modest means. He was working as a standing forklift operator, but had to go on medical disability when leg vein problems developed. His wife also is on medical disability. And they have a growing teenaged son.

"We don't have insurance," he said, citing annual premiums higher than the book value of their home. And they were declared ineligible for federal disaster assistance - even though he is a U.S. veteran. "I had no choices," he said - until a FEMA representative referred him to the Disaster Recovery Support Initiative, a joint on-the-ground program of Week of Compassion and Disciples Volunteering in partnership with the disaster ministries of the United Church of Christ and Church of the Brethren.

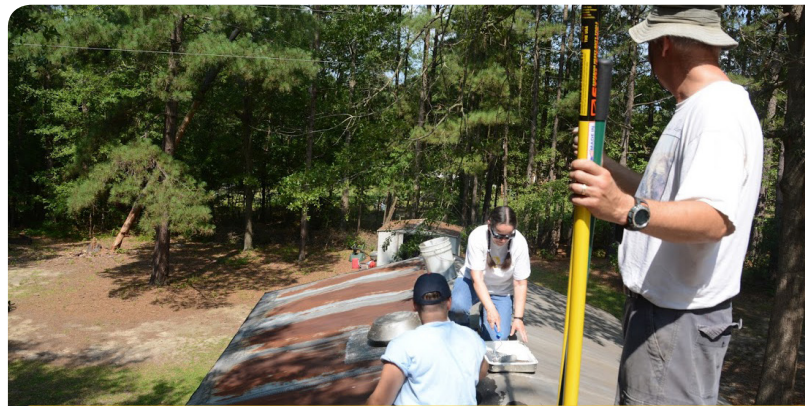
"The organization said it would come help me," William said. "Volunteers assessed the damage and did the paperwork. A few gentlemen came out before Memorial Day and staged supplies at the end of my home. The first volunteer work crew came the following week."

William remarked at the unselfishness of the volunteers who have come from other states - Missouri, West

Virginia, Florida - to spend a week at a time "to help someone they didn't even know. I feel blessed that people are taking their time to help me. I could not do this on my own. One lady came here from Virginia. She works a full-time job. She took a week's vacation to come help. I said, 'Ma'am, you are on vacation and you are here?' She said, 'Yes, I like to help people and to learn how to do new things. I couldn't think of anything better to do.' That means everything to me," he said. "When the woman told me that, a tear came to my eye. She came to do hot, sweaty, dirty work and had never met me in her life. She left Friday and was going back to her full-time job on Monday."

Volunteers repaired and tarred the roof, which has proved to be an effective barrier against downpours. "I still love to hear rain on the roof, so long as it's not for eight days straight," William commented. Inside the home, soggy ceilings have been torn out and replaced, as have been the kitchen floor and sections of sheetrock. It's not easy living in a construction zone and constantly fighting dust, but William said he is grateful the family is able to stay in the home. "Especially with our health issues, no way could we have continued to live in here, especially with the mold. We could have ended up homeless."

William is here, in his home, thanks to your generosity. Thank you for being here for him.



Volunteers repair the roof of a storm-damaged house in South Carolina. Photo: DRSI

REFUGEES

Written by Virginia White

Home.

A place that is our own. Where we feel safe and secure. Where we can rest, recharge, and refuel. A place of refuge.

When war strikes, homes are threatened and people may be forced to leave them behind. People become refugees as they seek safety and security in new and often distant lands.

Today we face one of the largest refugee crises in history: over 11 million Syrians have been displaced by the violent Civil War raging in their country. For these refugees, much more has been lost than brick and mortar.

When we gather with family and loved ones in our homes, how often do we find ourselves not lounging on comfy couches in living rooms, or seated around tables, but, instead, leaning against counters in kitchens? For many, quite often. Yet, the majority of Syrian refugees no longer have access to a kitchen—this cherished space of sustenance, comfort and human connection.



Six mornings a week, three Lebanese women and two Syrian refugee women gather in the Akkar community kitchen to prepare a hot and hearty soup or stew that will feed 240 Syrian refugee families in the Miniara area of northern Lebanon. *Photo: IOCC*

Mission MOMENTS



Week of Compassion partners in the Miniara region of Lebanon are working to restore a sense of home, a place of gathering, and a source of nutrition and health, through the Akkar community kitchen. Here, Syrian women have been hired and trained as cooks to prepare community meals. The daily menu, which includes many traditional Syrian dishes, is overseen by nutrition experts to ensure that the meals provide refugees with a balanced diet.

Amid the bustle of the kitchen, Samar, 40, a Syrian refugee who fled Homs with her husband and six children, reflects on arriving in Lebanon with no belongings and very little money. "My husband used to work as an employee in a company and we had a decent life in our own home in Homs. But then war came and took everything." The community kitchen not only helps nourish Samar's children, the wages she receives for working there also help sustain the family with desperately needed income.

Samar's Lebanese coworker, Zeina, 40, understands her pain, having experienced war firsthand during decades of conflict in Lebanon. "We endured war for 30 years here in Lebanon," said Zeina. "Our own homes were destroyed and we became refugees too, just like these families now. I know what they are going through, and I want to help. I want them to have hope and not to lose faith in humanity."

Zeina's hospitality and empathy are vital to the well-being of Syrian refugees who have arrived in Lebanon, providing emotional and spiritual support to people who have faced much violence and trauma. Working together, Samar, Zeina, and the other cooks at the Akkar community kitchen ladle the hot meals into more than 100 covered metal pots which will be delivered by van to Syrian refugee families in the area.

Thanks to your support, the life-giving relationships being built and life-sustaining food being prepared in the Akkar Community kitchen are made possible.

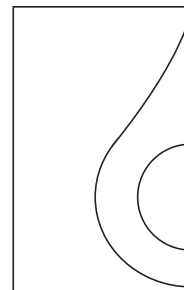
Offering REMINDER



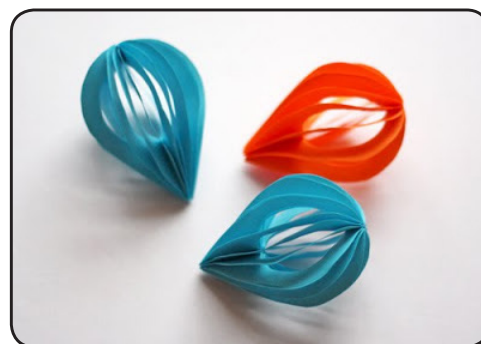
- ▶ **Make a tear drop/map pin out of colorful paper using the instructions below.**

INSTRUCTIONS:

Fold a sheet of paper in half. Cut as shown. Align the sides of two pieces and glue them together. Keep gluing more pieces until it is as full as you like.



- ▶ **Use it as a prop with the provided script during announcements, in adult Bible study or Sunday school classes, or at fellowship hour.**
- ▶ **Make copies of the instructions and various paper sizes available for people to make their own tear drops/map pins as tangible reminders for the offering.**



SCRIPT:

💧 = **hold the visual like a tear drop**

📍 = **hold the visual like a map pin**

💧 In West Timor, a father is crying because his child is hungry...

📍 Through the Week of Compassion offering, **YOU ARE HERE** for that father with emergency food supplies and crop storage techniques.

💧 In West Virginia, a family is crying because their home is flooded...

📍 Through the Week of Compassion offering, **YOU ARE HERE** for that family with support to rebuild their home.

💧 In Greece, a young woman is crying because she is fleeing from war, but borders are closed...

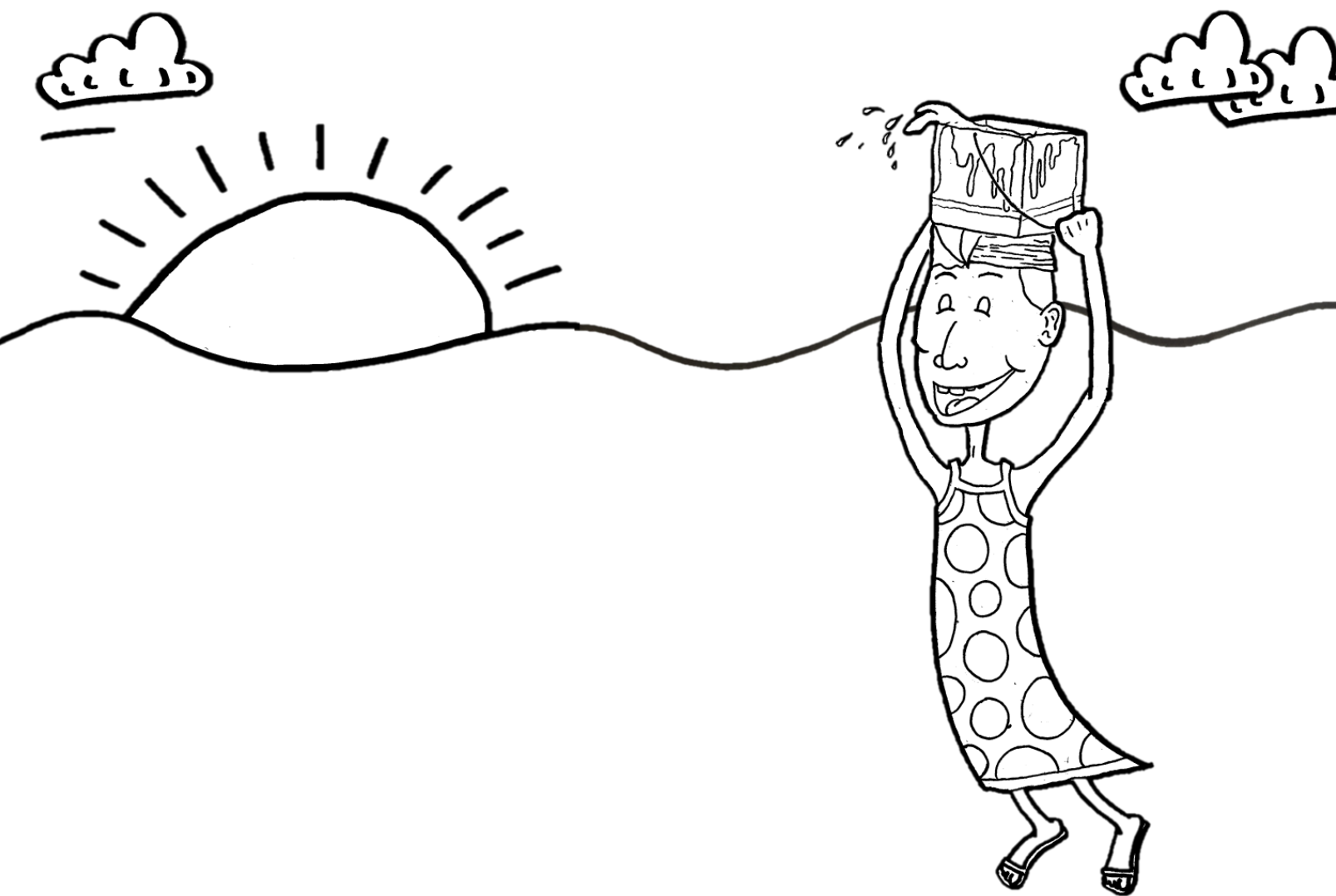
📍 Through Week of Compassion offering, **YOU ARE HERE** for her with medical and hygiene supplies and advocacy for her future.

💧 In times of human suffering and need,

📍 **YOU ARE HERE**

Our congregation will receive the Week of Compassion offering on _____. You can give [in the regular offering using the special envelopes, by writing in the memo line of the check, or in the coin boxes, etc.].

Add yourself in the scene, then color the picture!



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

	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
I was hungry...	<p>“...Jesus took a loaf of bread, and after blessing it he broke it, gave it to the disciples and said, ‘Take, eat; this is my body.’” <i>Matthew 26:26</i></p> <p>Give 2 units in thanksgiving for Jesus’ incarnation.</p>	<p>800 million, or approximately 1 in 9, people in the world do not regularly have enough to eat. Give 1 unit for every meal you eat today.</p>	<p>In 2016, 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>Since 1990, the number of malnourished people in the developing world has fallen by almost half, thanks to food security and development projects! Give 1 unit in celebration of this progress and 1 unit to continue the work.</p>	<p>Being able to start a vegetable garden, with seeds provided through WoC partners, can provide food and economic security. Give 1 unit for each vegetable in your refrigerator.</p>	<p>The U.S. wastes 33 million tons of food—\$165 billion worth!—each year. Give 1 unit in repentance for each food item that has gone bad in your refrigerator/pantry this week.</p>	<p>“I was hungry, and you gave me something to eat.” Give 3 units to someone who is hungry.</p>
I was thirsty...	<p>“A Samaritan woman came to draw water, and Jesus said to her, ‘Give me a drink.’” <i>John 4:7</i></p> <p>We remember that Jesus shared in the human experience of thirst. Give 1 unit for every drink you have today.</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>1.9 billion people have gained access to clean drinking water since 1990. Give 1 unit in celebration of this progress and 1 unit to continue the work.</p>	<p>Women and girls in Africa and Asia often spend more than 6 hours collecting water every day. Give 2 units if your commute was less than 6 hours today.</p>	<p>The water crisis in Flint, MI brought to public attention the severe effects of contaminants in water supplies and the importance of good infrastructure. Give 1 unit for every tap in your home.</p>	<p>“I was thirsty, and you gave me something to drink.” Give 3 units to increase access to clean water by helping communities build wells, small dams, cisterns, and filtration systems.</p>
I was a stranger...	<p>“You are no longer strangers... but you are citizens with the saints and also members of the household of God” <i>Ephesians 2:19</i></p> <p>Give 2 units in celebration of the full household of God.</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>“Jesus said, ‘Let the little children to come to me.’” <i>Mark 10:14</i></p> <p>More than 2000 children are being held in family detention centers in the US awaiting asylum hearings. Give 1 unit for every child in your family.</p>	<p>WoC partners help settle more than 7000 refugees in the United States every year. This year, those numbers will increase. Give 1 unit in celebration of these efforts and 1 unit to continue the work.</p>	<p>Nearly 10 million displaced persons are categorized as stateless (not considered a national of any country). Give 1 unit if you enjoy the benefits of citizenship.</p>	<p>Poverty and hunger are key reasons for unauthorized immigration from Latin America to the U.S. Give two units to help address these root causes.</p>	<p>“I was a stranger, and you welcomed me.” Give 3 units to support relief and resettlement efforts for refugees and humanitarian responses for immigrants.</p>
I was sick...	<p>“But a Samaritan while traveling came near him... He went to him and bandaged his wounds...brought him to an inn, and took care of him.” <i>Luke 10:33-34</i></p> <p>Give 2 units in thankfulness for those who show mercy.</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>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>Since 2000, global rates of HIV/AIDS, Malaria, Tuberculosis, and several other major diseases have seen decreases of 40% or more. Give 1 unit in celebration of these efforts and 1 unit to continue the work.</p>	<p>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>“I was sick, and you took care of me.” Give 3 units to help provide medical care and prevent illness around the world.</p>



Additional RESOURCES

can be found at
www.weekofcompassion.org/special-offering

Artistic Interpretation 1 • Dramatic Reading, Matthew 25:35-40

Artistic Interpretation 2 • "You Are Here" Skit

Intergenerational Activity • Notes of Presence

Youth Activity • Vision Maps

Additional Printable Children's Activities

Statistics and Quotes

Video 1 • You Are Here

Video 2 • The Church Together



"The Lord is near to all who call upon God." – Psalm 145:18

www.weekofcompassion.org