



**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT TO THE BOARD OF STEWARDS FOR  
WEEK OF COMPASSION**

**Fall 2020 Meeting**

**Submitted by Vy Nguyen**

**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

Every morning the world is created. Under the orange	of summer lilies. If it is your nature to be happy you will swim away along the soft trails	there is still somewhere deep within you a beast shouting that the earth is exactly what it wanted—
sticks of the sun the heaped ashes of the night turn into leaves again	for hours, your imagination alighting everywhere. And if your spirit carries within it	each pond with its blazing lilies is a prayer heard and answered lavishly, every morning,
and fasten themselves to the high branches— and the ponds appear like black cloth on which are painted islands	the thorn that is heavier than lead— if it's all you can do to keep on trudging—	whether or not you have ever dared to be happy, whether or not you have ever dared to pray.

*-Morning Poem, by Mary Oliver*

## Introductions

Wildfires in the North Bay. In the East Bay. In the South Bay. For multiple weeks earlier this fall, wildfires surrounded much of the Bay Area and other parts of California, blanketing the entire region with thick and dangerous smoke. Streets, cars, driveways, buildings—wherever you looked outside—were all covered in ashes. The air quality was at an extremely dangerous level, forcing many to stay indoors as much as possible. Soon thereafter, wildfires broke out in Oregon and Washington as well, further blanketing much of the West Coast with thick smoke for weeks. The smoke could be seen from space, and eventually, it moved from the west to the Midwest, then to the East Coast, covering different parts of the US skies with a foggy, orangish look. For many weeks, the air quality was bad. At one point, the entire Bay Area's skies were red, and the sun never came out for a few days. Breathing was difficult, and many had headaches that lasted for days due to inhaling smoke. And, as of the writing of this report, most weekends are predicted to have bad air quality because of new fires happening in Northern California. This experience has not been the greatest, and extreme smoke and fire seasons are starting to become an annual occurrence with greater severity that will continue to affect many parts of the West Coast in the years ahead. Air quality and breathing difficulty will become a regular struggle for many in the areas.

While the West Coast experienced wildfires and smoke that made it difficult to breathe, across our country, racial injustice continues to take place, affecting many African American communities. We continue to see videos of police brutality and of innocent lives gasping to breathe as brutal forces are used in the name of law and order. Communities across the country are not only being affected by natural disasters, but by systematic injustice disasters, which hurt lives and perpetuate hatred.

These were not the only disasters. There still continue to be storms that have caused severe damage in the Midwest this past summer. There were multiple tropical storms and hurricanes that pounded the Gulf Coast. The recent explosion in Beirut hurt many people and displaced thousands, affecting many of our partners who were already providing needs to refugees from the surrounding countries.

COVID-19 has impacted much of the communities of color here in the United States and many refugees around the world, who are in dense camps in the developing countries where practicing social distancing is not even possible. The true impact on human lives from this pandemic won't be recognized until probably years or decades from now. And, most days, this pandemic doesn't feel like it is going to end anytime soon.

It was a year ago that the Week of Compassion Board of Stewards gathered on the campus of TCU for our face-to-face meeting. It will probably be at least another year before we will meet in person. Despite the challenges that this ongoing pandemic has created, Week of Compassion continues to implement its mission and respond to communities during this global crisis. We continue to evaluate and engage in important conversations with our partners and church leaders to better position Week of Compassion to be able to continue to respond on behalf of the church. We continue to engage with ministry and ecumenical partners to work together to "alleviate suffering throughout the world" and coordinate together "God's people to transform suffering into hope."

The number of COVID-19 cases and deaths worldwide will continue to grow in a way that we never imagined. When this board met virtually in May, we had a small sense that this pandemic was going to go on for months and possibly into next year; but now, five months later, it feels harder as we realize that the end of this pandemic is still unknown and finding a safe vaccine is still a distant future. We can only anticipate the number of COVID-19 cases and deaths to continue to rise further as we move into the winter months with the flu season in effect.

This pandemic has also given us many opportunities to think, reflect, and plan for the future of this ministry. Many institutions and organizations will not be the same after this pandemic. The landscape and the nature of our work will continue to look very different as a result of the structural changes from our partners and within our own denomination. Financially, several of our ecumenical partners are projecting as high as a 30-40% decrease in funding for next year and are strategizing how to best move forward with so many uncertainties. The phrase "there are so many uncertainties ahead" is a common phrase we continue to hear from our partners, and many of our partners have expressed serious concerns in how this pandemic will set their work back for years.

In the midst of so much uncertainty, our partners continue to express their gratitude to the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in how we continue to collaborate and support communities who are affected by COVID-19 and other disasters. Week of Compassion continues to lean in on our long history of partnership as we work closely to help vulnerable communities and care for one another. Giving care to one another and to our partners for their work is part of this ministry. Week of Compassion continues to be strong, especially in regard to our finances and the strong supporters in our churches and individual donors. We are strong because our partners are strong and are thinking through what is at stake right now. This ministry continues to be nimble and is able to change quickly when we need to; this has always been to our advantage, and we will continue to plan far into the future for what is ahead of us. There is much work to do right now, and our impact is more crucial now than ever. We are

grateful for this board and the conversations we will have at this meeting to help strengthen this ministry moving forward.

### **Internal Update**

The current pandemic and racial injustice have been overwhelming and heartbreaking. The pandemic and various natural disasters have been adding extra stress and work to staff, both emotionally and physically. We grieve with our colleague Suzie on the loss of her son Brent this past July. It was a difficult time for Suzie and her husband, Bruce, as well as for staff. The balance between work and being full-time parents at home have made it extra difficult to find the right work/life balance and to care for ourselves. The situation was made even more difficult lately when school started, and many of our children began learning virtually at home. We have been trying our best to get the work done and to be flexible when our children show up on a zoom call and make funny faces for everyone to see. Staff have shifted their schedules around to make them work while also trying to be present with their families. Different staff start their days at 4 A.M. before everyone wakes up in their house while others end their workday late into the evening when their families are asleep.

Finding time for self care continues to be difficult for staff due to this pandemic and the many ongoing disasters. The Executive Committee of the Board has been having an ongoing conversation on how to best support staff in their physical, emotional, and mental care. As part of that conversation with the Executive Committee, I am shifting staff workdays from 5 days a week to 4 days a week, with 3 days for rest and renewal. This will be for the months of November and December so staff can focus on getting away from work and focusing on themselves and their families. We also know that disaster work will not stop on the weekends, and we will prioritize our disaster response and will plan for rotating on-call staff to monitor disasters. Another way the Executive Committee is looking to support staff is by creating a clearer policy specifically for Week of Compassion in regard to sabbatical leaves for staff. This policy will be discussed at this meeting and will seek the board's approval.

Week of Compassion has put a pause on all travel since the middle of March, but that does not mean staff have not been speaking at congregations. Staff continue to preach in various congregations, lead workshops at church events, and attend regional assemblies—all online. The halt in staff travel will remain in effect while we are in this pandemic, and, if travel is necessary for disaster response, much precautions and safety will be discussed and planned.

Week of Compassion has also been working on contingency plans for this ministry, and documenting procedures of each staff position and responsibilities. We are using the same format document as the OGMP to be consistent in how we record how we each do our work and in cases where OGMP staff would be needed to take on some responsibilities in emergency situations. These contingency plans will be reviewed each August by staff to make sure they are up to date on a regular basis.

### **Financial**

The 2020 budget with projected unrestricted income that this board approved last year was a smart and deliberative decision. At the end of September, Week of Compassion's unrestricted revenue was -1.89% (-\$30k) compared to 2019 revenue. However, when compared to what Week of Compassion budgeted

for 2020, our unrestricted revenue at the end of August is down by 1.27% (-\$20k). Staff continue to watch spending closely and are lowering expenses where possible. One example area of lowering expenses is the printing cost for the 2021 offering, which will come out of this year's budget and is being reduced from \$22,000 last year to \$7,000 (we don't anticipate all churches meeting in person by the time of the February offering). We anticipate that our expenses will be below what is budgeted, and program and emergency supports will only dip up to \$800,000 as was approved at the May board meeting.

In planning for the 2021 budget and beyond, we have looked at historical financials from the 2008 recession and also engaged with ecumenical colleagues in how they are projecting their giving for the next several years. For Week of Compassion, we are anticipating an average of 20% reduction in our unrestricted giving for the next three years. For 2021, the reduction will have minimal impact on our financial support for partners as we will be able to cut our own expenses to offset the decrease. However, if the projection is what we think it will be, the budget cut for 2022 and 2023 will be more difficult as we will need to cut further into our partners' support while at the same time raising back our expenses close to the level that it was before, such as travels, in order to balance our budget. We anticipate and will cautiously go into the reserve for the next several years.

### **COVID-19**

We are grateful that this board approved earlier this May to set aside additional funds for our COVID-19 response. At the end of September, we received close to \$80k designated for our COVID-19 response and we have provided a little over \$1 million COVID-19 related to families and food ministry here in the United States, and food security and preventative measures to partners all over the world. On our meeting website you can read several reports from our international partners on their COVID19 response with the grants from Week of Compassion. Below is a brief summary breakdown of where our COVID-19 support went, and for a detailed list of all the COVID19 responses please [click here](#).

- Total distribution at the end of September: \$1,010,637 million
  - \$659,637 for global and \$351,000 for domestic
  - 36 international responses and 172 domestic responses
  - Across 25 Regions in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)
  - 656 Households received grants in the United States
  - 52 churches for food pantries support

Our global partners continue to develop and plan a 2-3 year strategy that takes into consideration this prolonged complex emergency pandemic in a way that will give their programs the space to be nimble, adaptive and responsive in order to meet communities at their greatest point of need. Since the onset of COVID-19 emergency earlier this year, many communities around the world have been impacted in various ways; from compromised health, loss of livelihoods, food security, and much more. We hear regularly from our partners that the pandemic is adding additional risk to the poor and vulnerable families and communities that we are supporting. Many of the partners are prioritizing their programs to protect communities from the health and socio-economic impacts such as WASH and Food Security as these two crosscutting areas are integral for families to stay healthy and survive. One of our partners, Church World Service, has expedited the rollout of WASH in essential areas such as the household level,

in schools and other public facilities to increase hygiene measures; as well as incorporating WASH into programs that ordinarily would not have WASH components, such as migrants protection programs in Bosnia, Egypt, Serbia and Jakarta. We also know that many communities our partners work with were already vulnerable before this pandemic began and that we must continue to support these communities. Week of Compassion is regularly in conversation and strategizing with partners to make sure we prevent these vulnerable communities from further being impacted by non-pandemic related causes.

### **Refugee and Immigration**

The COVID-19 crisis continues to exacerbate the already dire humanitarian needs globally, especially in developing countries, which already host more than 85% of the world's refugees. The UN Refugee Agency describes the pandemic as a "force multiplier," increasing the needs of displaced people while also making those needs more difficult to address. This pandemic has not stopped conflict, violence, persecution, and civil strife from taking place in areas such as the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Libya, and Syria, continuing to uproot millions of lives. Many nations also tightened and/or shut down their borders to stop the spread of COVID-19 transmission, making it more difficult for individuals seeking asylum to get protection. Additionally, global funding for refugee support has significantly declined due to the pandemic and geopolitical conflicts.

In the United States, the current administration continues to dismantle the refugee resettlement programs and infrastructures. The number of refugees coming into the US has been a historic low with the current administration; and FY20, which ended at the end of September, had one of the lowest numbers set for refugee resettlement in the US history at 13,000. As of the writing of this report, the US will not hit this ceiling and will only resettle less than 10,000 refugees for FY20. Our partners just learned that the current administration is only proposing 18,000 resettlement for FY21, another historic low for the United States. This is more devastating news and will continue to have a tremendous impact on thousands of refugees who are in the pipeline and waiting to be resettled. Our partners Church World Service and Refugee and Immigration Ministries are working hard to make sure refugees are able to resettle in the United States and that the resettlement numbers will be higher. The current situation with refugee support changes daily and will change even more in the next few weeks as we get close to the election.

The US southern border continues to be closed to most asylum seekers, and the policies put in place force those attempting to cross the southern border to wait in Mexico, dramatically increasing their wait and simultaneously decreasing their chances of obtaining asylum. Meanwhile, the administration has moved to increase deportations and enact policies labeling immigrants who access social services as a burden to the US society and, therefore, ineligible for other benefits, such as adjustment of status or even citizenship.

### **Relief**

Week of Compassion continues to evaluate the domestic disaster responses in light of organizational changes among our ecumenical partners, changes to the overall disaster response landscape, and the anticipated increase of major disasters due to climate change. The domestic disaster program is a

strategic priority; future planning involves potential financial investment and conversations about potential collaborations or shared staff positions with ecumenical partners in order to expand our response capacity.

This year has witnessed several significant disasters, which highlighted the existing crises of racial inequality and climate change, were complicated by the COVID-19 pandemic, as were our many long-term responses.

Racial inequality in disaster response has been a concern for Week of Compassion for several years. The uprisings for racial justice over the past year, alongside the disproportionate impacts of COVID-19 on communities of color have made these concerns even more pressing. Three new disasters this year have highlighted the necessity of this ongoing work -- spring tornadoes in Tennessee that had severe impacts in historically Black communities; Hurricane Hanna hit the Rio Grande Valley, affecting largely Hispanic/Latinx communities; and the derecho in Iowa, which displaced sizable immigrant and refugee communities in eastern Iowa. Our early support in Iowa included assistance to more than 50 refugee families at New Disciples Christian Church in Cedar Rapids, and we anticipate ongoing engagement throughout long-term recovery. Week of Compassion has also entered a short-term contract with Rev. Daphne Gascot Arias to help build relationships within Hispanic/Latinx Disciples communities. Rev. Gascot Arias' work includes: interpretation and contextualization of the ministry of Week of Compassion; building connections with Convenciones, congregations, and key leaders; and developing organizational infrastructure for sustainable engagement.

From the spring tornadoes in Tennessee, to the derecho in Iowa, to the record-breaking and ongoing wildfire and hurricane seasons, this year has again underscored the effects of climate change. Though COVID-19 affected the planned collaborations for 2020, Caroline continues to work in partnership with Green Chalice and to incorporate climate change information in congregational disaster preparedness resources and trainings.

COVID-19 presented many complications for domestic disaster response and recovery. Evacuations were more difficult; relief agencies had limited ability for deployments and volunteer engagement due to travel restriction; local/state governments were already beyond capacity, so disaster response coordination suffered; and people faced disasters with little or no financial cushion and diminished emotional/psychological reserves. This has meant greater reliance on local volunteers and neighbors-helping-neighbors. While this has complicated response overall, it has not significantly affected the way Week of Compassion works immediately following disasters, since our early response is always through local congregations. The greater impact for the work of Week of Compassion will be in the organization of long-term recovery in communities that have experienced disasters this year.

Long-Term Recovery in other communities is ongoing, though our partners have had to make significant changes to their operational models. Many have shifted to using primarily or entirely local volunteers, supplemented with more contracted labor (which substantially increases the cost/home). Engagement of Disciples in volunteer efforts remains restricted (see Disciples Volunteering report), and Caroline is in regular conversation with colleagues through National VOAD and CWS about how the pandemic will

change volunteer patterns moving forward. For at least the next year, safety precautions will limit the size and operation of mission stations, but this may permanently alter volunteer engagement (more emphasis on local volunteering, less willingness for congregate housing, etc.).

For a full list of ongoing recoveries, see the [attached document](#). Two notable developments: in the Dayton, OH area, Disciples continue to collaborate in the development of an innovative project to move renters displaced by the May 2019 tornado into sustainable long-term housing through a homeownership program. In Refugio County, TX, a collaboration with Mennonite Disaster Service and the Coastal Bend Disaster Recovery Group will relocate two dozen families out of flood-prone areas into a new development, thus mitigating against future floods while maintaining community cohesion.

In light of these challenges and circumstances, Week of Compassion has reaffirmed its commitment to promoting congregational disaster preparedness. Though several scheduled workshops were cancelled due to COVID-19, Caroline and Josh Baird (Disciples Volunteering) offered a virtual disaster preparedness workshop for the Kentucky Regional Assembly. In conversation with colleagues, Caroline also continues to look for ways to adapt the trainings for the COVID-19 environment and to incorporate the learnings of congregations from this time.

Caroline continues in her leadership positions as Vice Chair of the CWS DHA Advisory Group and the Community Preparedness Committee of National VOAD. She has also been representing Week of Compassion on a General Ministry Task Force focused on the trauma of COVID-19, especially among clergy.

Major Disaster Responses since Spring 2020 Meeting:

- **Hurricane Hanna, south Texas (July):** This Category 1 hurricane made landfall in south Texas. The most significant impacts were in the Rio Grande Valley, including at Southwest Good Samaritan Ministries.
- **Derecho, Iowa (August):** At least 15 Disciples congregations directly affected by this storm with winds in excess of 100mph. Tens of thousands were without power for weeks, farmers had significant crop loss, and thousands of homes were damaged. Among those most affected were immigrant refugee communities, especially around Cedar Rapids.
- **Hurricane Laura, southeast Texas and southwest Louisiana (August):** Category 4 hurricane made landfall in Cameron Parish, Louisiana. Hundreds of thousands were without power for weeks in LA and TX; as of Sept. 25, power and cell/internet service are still unreliable in hardest hit areas. In the 4 hardest hit parishes more than 9000 homes have been classified by the Red Cross as destroyed or majorly damaged. The storm directly affected Disciples in Port Arthur and Orange, TX and in Sulphur, Lake Charles, and Pineville, LA. Disciples from other parts of Louisiana have been engaging in relief efforts through FCCS and FCCLC. Conversations are beginning to plan for long-term recovery.
- **Hurricane Sally, Alabama and southwest Florida (September):** This Category 2 storm was very slow moving. The prolonged wind and rain resulted in extensive damage from flooding and falling trees. Disciples in Foley, AL and Pensacola, FL were directly affected. One week after the



storm, over 5,000 households had registered for cleanup assistance from voluntary organizations.

- **Wildfires, California (ongoing):** More than 8,200 wildfires that have burned over 4 million acres since the beginning of the year, shattering the state's previous 2018 record when 1.67 million acres burned. So far, there have been 31 fatalities statewide and thousands of homes across the state have been damaged or destroyed. Week of Compassion continues to work with the Region and local congregations to provide assistance to displaced Disciples and support relief efforts. We are expanding our support for mental and emotional wellness through Resilience Resources (a collaboration with FCC Chico, which developed after the 2018 Camp Fire).
- **Wildfires, Oregon (ongoing):** Severe fires have burned over a million acres in Oregon, with 10% of the state population under voluntary or mandatory evacuation at the height of the fires. Multiple Disciples congregations have been directly affected or have been providing assistance in their communities. Week of Compassion continues to support these congregations and to build connections for long-term recovery.

### **Sustainable Development**

Many of the sustainable development proposals that were approved in the fall of 2019 have been delayed or postponed due to COVID-19. Since the pandemic began early in March, many of our partners have shifted their focus to COVID-19 response, and Week of Compassion continues to support their response. Similar to this past spring, Week of Compassion is not receiving any sustainable development proposals for the fall as partners are unable to implement many programs due to COVID-19. We continue to get updates from partners on a regular basis on how COVID-19 has set the progress that they have made in the areas of sustainable development back. For Week of Compassion, the priority for 2021 will be to work closely with partners to help strengthen some of the programs that are vulnerable due to this pandemic.

### **Communications and Marketing**

In the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic, the primary purpose of Week of Compassion communications was to curate and share accurate information that would be useful for congregations. As the virus continues to spread and needs emerge, Week of Compassion communications are valuable in helping congregations feel connected to the wider church in a meaningful way. Connection to Week of Compassion provides a sense of mission and purpose when so many churches' regular programming and service opportunities are on hold.

Across multiple platforms, Week of Compassion communications focus on global and domestic responses; ongoing refugee and development work; and tell the story of how partners are adapting their work to meet needs during this critical time.

This season of social distancing has made the use of social media, videos, and online stories more important than ever before. While we are unable to meet with congregations in person, it is critical that we effectively use our platforms to connect, and tell the story of Week of Compassion's ongoing presence, and our ongoing commitment to the mission to alleviate suffering, especially during this time when so many are in need.

As other disasters continue to occur, even in the midst of a pandemic, Week of Compassion staff have worked to balance the needs of the pandemic with the importance of other responses. Our communications have intentionally highlighted the complexity of compounded disasters, lifting up the ways in which our wider church continues to be present in places of need despite the many challenges. Content across social media platforms and the website highlights the ways in which the pandemic touches every area of the work of Week of Compassion, makes connections between responses, and shows how disasters often highlight a preexisting need or challenge in a community. The message is that we don't have to choose 'either/or' when there are many needs and multiple disasters; the responses are always interconnected.

In order to share this message across a wider audience, Erin continues to expand the Week of Compassion social media presence, making it easier for congregations, church leaders and donors to connect with our work across multiple platforms. Some key points of elements of the social media strategy are:

- **Consistently post across multiple platforms**, using a variety of content and types of post to promote maximum engagement
- **Regularly follow and intentionally engage with related pages**, interact with followers, and encourage key leaders and supporters to also help share and promote Week of Compassion's social media presence
- Devote time to planning content, while also **remaining flexible as needs and priorities shift**
- **Cross-promote** (eg, Twitter posts that say follow us on Insta, Facebook posts that invite people to follow us on YouTube, etc)
- **Track Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)** to set goals, learn more about what type of content creates the most engagement, and which platforms most effectively convey what type of message

During the pandemic, it is especially important that we understand where our strongest points of connections exist across the church. Having a diverse and flexible approach to sharing content and telling the story of Week of Compassion's work will enable us to plan for an uncertain future. This also helps us prepare for February Special Offering. Knowing that many churches will likely still be in remote worship situations at that time, expanding our digital reach now means that we are better positioned to navigate the offering in new and creative ways.

Here is a snapshot of our current audience, indicating growth over the last two quarters.

<i><b>Platform</b></i>	<i><b>Followers</b></i>	<i><b>Increase since 4/20</b></i>
Instagram	572	200
Twitter	2137	46
Facebook	7743	113

YouTube	30	30
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Having tracked these Key Performance Indicators for two quarters, some indicators are too early for definitive insights about trends over time. However, it is clear that traffic and engagement with WoC platforms are highest when there are multiple posts in a given month related to major disasters. With this in mind, developing content that follows up on a past well-performing post may be a good strategy moving forward. (For example, if a post about a hurricane gets traction on Monday, share updates on the situation and affected communities throughout the week, even if there aren't major developments).

In the past two quarters, our highest reach was from a brief video update about the explosion in Beirut. This was a paid boost on Facebook, and had over 16k engagements. This merits further discussion about content format (videos, pictures, articles, or text) and whether we want to boost other important posts in the future. We will continue to track these and other engagement patterns moving forward to set goals and drive content, but also to develop an overall communications strategy based on what most connects with supporters, followers and congregations.

While Week of Compassion has historically used only Vimeo for uploading and sharing video content, YouTube is currently the most widely used social media platform in the world. It is also more accessible for churches using online and hybrid worship modalities. Meanwhile, Week of Compassion staff are also making more frequent use of short, informal videos to share updates about responses or emerging disasters. All this considered, Week of Compassion created a YouTube channel account. Current goals for the platform are to increase the number of subscribers that we have, which will boost our visibility in searches; and also create more content over time to make the best possible use of this additional space. The Vimeo channel is still in place, primarily for situations where churches need to download the video file. For the most part, YouTube will be the primary video platform for sharing and promoting video content.

One of the goals within Week of Compassion is to reach out to younger audiences and engage with them where they are. It's a long-term strategic investment in our relationship with a younger audience. Through our use of Instagram, Erin is working to target and engage a younger audience (current followers average 35-44 yrs; target demographic is 25-34 yrs). Instagram is one of the fastest growing social media platforms among younger audiences-- the same audience that is less likely to attend traditional church services, and less likely to give regularly to church or related causes. It is critical that Week of Compassion find ways to engage that demographic as patterns in church attendance and giving continue to evolve. That means on Instagram, Week of Compassion 'follows' younger users who have Disciples ties; engages with group accounts (like youth groups and Disciples college ministries); and develops content with the language of Instagram (using hashtags, minimizing words, etc). Over time, the goal is to establish an Instagram presence that will effectively engage younger audiences in the work of Week of Compassion.

The uncertainty of when churches will reopen and what modifications to worship will be in place pose challenges as we anticipate the 2021 Special Offering in February. The staff is thinking creatively and proactively about how to prepare for that. Erin has been in conversation with both the Disciples Communicators' Forum, as well as the OGHS table, in thinking about how to 1) gauge from church leaders what types and formats of material will be most useful, and 2) develop digital alternatives to some of our usual print materials. In light of these considerations, we are cutting back on the length of the printed resource guide, adding more video and online resources, and not producing offering envelopes or bulletin inserts this upcoming year. These changes will also reduce waste and also allow for some cost savings on both print and postage.

In spite of travel restrictions, staff have found opportunities to engage with congregations through online opportunities. Many churches are taking advantage of our availability to preach, teach, lead online discussion groups, and share pre-recorded greetings for gatherings, including Regional Assemblies.

### **Fundraising and Development**

Staff continue to reach out to donors and congregations to express our gratitude for our faithful supporters. Over the summer, the development team of this board reached out to the top giving congregations. And each Circle of Compassion congregation received a gift - a candle from our partners, Prosperity Catalyst. Along with the candle we let congregations know that their gift was made by Iraqi women, supported through a Week of Compassion program; as well as a prayer and a video from the staff, so that churches could use this candle in worship as a way of connecting with the mission of WoC, and the other congregations that share in this ministry with them.

One critical need that has emerged during this crisis, for both individual and congregational giving, is for new means of giving. One of which is through mobile giving and peer to peer, something that we did not have before. (Mobile giving in congregations increased 800% between 2014 and 2019--and that was before worship went primarily digital!) The new giving platform, MobileCause, enables us to better integrate our social media, creates specific events for churches, interact with our donor software in a way that provides our donors with multiple platforms and tools for donation and fundraising. We are still learning how to best use this tool and we hope to put it to use in a strategic way for the special offering in 2021.

An August COVID-19 special appeal served the dual purpose of 1) raising support for COVID-19 responses and 2) helping staff prepare to more fully engage the platform for Special Offering and ongoing special events. Staff worked together to create videos and worship materials for churches to use in promotion and also invited some congregations to participate in a 'peer-to-peer' virtual fundraising approach. While we did not reach our goal with this appeal, feedback about using MobileCause, especially as churches remain in online worship, has been positive overall. We continue to improve in promoting this opportunity with other special asks we may want to extend in the future.

MobileCause is a powerful platform and we are only beginning to learn how to use it. Under Erin's leadership, staff is learning how MobileCause can be used for promotion, event planning, donor

recognition, volunteer management, and even ticket sales for future events. This is also a valuable resource for churches that hold their own fundraisers for Week of Compassion (like concerts, meals, or Water to Wine gatherings).

As needs of churches continue to evolve; as worship becomes more digitized; and as giving trends change, Week of Compassion needs to adapt how we engage donors, and how we receive offerings. Just as our partners have adapted their work to meet the challenges of this time, we adapt our stewardship and communication practices to build relationships, tell meaningful stories, and fund the mission of Week of Compassion.