

Week of Compassion

Special Offering | February 20-27

A woman in a red dress stands in a destroyed neighborhood. The background shows a white building with a damaged roof, a yellow cabinet, and a red tricycle. The ground is covered in debris, including a blue and yellow toy. The sky is blue with white clouds.

Love remains

*And now these three remain: faith, hope and love.
But the greatest of these is love.*

- 1 CORINTHIANS 13:13

2022 PLANNING & RESOURCE GUIDE

weekofcompassion.org

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mission

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

vision

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

core values

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

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

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

FRONT COVER PHOTO:
Craig Thompson, Disciple Design

A MESSAGE FROM THE *Week of Compassion Executive Director*

Dear Friends,

The world has changed dramatically in the last 2 years. Communities around the world have been both socially and economically affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. That impact has been felt even more deeply in the most vulnerable communities and in those also affected by other disasters.

Wildfires continue to get worse year after year in the U.S. and Canada, and the same is true in Europe. Severe drought affects communities around the world, making safe water even more difficult to access in a time when it is needed more than ever to stop the spread of disease. Earthquakes have destroyed homes, lives, and livelihoods in many global locations, including Haiti. And conflict continues to uproot families and communities, forcing more people to be displaced. In the past year alone, we have witnessed this in places like Myanmar, Afghanistan, and elsewhere in the Middle East.

Even so, through your support for Week of Compassion: love remains. In the midst of so much uncertainty and suffering, Week of Compassion continues to respond—walking with communities in times of crisis.

Together, we provide immediate relief and long-term recovery support after disasters; equip churches and leaders for disaster preparedness; offer assistance to refugees; and support global development projects that empower communities around the world to thrive. Our partners have persisted in this life-saving work despite the challenges of the pandemic and in the face of other disasters and humanitarian crises that continue to escalate in frequency and severity.

As Disciples, we are called to witness to this gospel truth: in spite of all evidence to the contrary, even in the heaviest of circumstances, love remains. When you give to Week of Compassion, especially during our church-wide Special Offering, you put that love into action. Your giving shares faith, hope and love, around the world, around the year.

But the greatest of these is love.

With hope and thanksgiving,

Rev. Vy Nguyen

Executive Director, Week of Compassion



Hood River Valley Christian Church



Growing Hope Globally



ACT Alliance/Hawkey



Christian Church in Oregon/SW Idaho



ACT Alliance/Elisa Iannaccone/DKH

THEME INTRODUCTION and SCRIPTURAL REFLECTION

Love is water and sand

And now these three remain:
faith, hope and love.
But the greatest of these is
love.

- 1 CORINTHIANS 13:13 (NIV)

The Apostle Paul helped newly converted Christians at Corinth embrace the virtue of love. Love is an active decision—to think of others before self; to work on behalf of others; to care for others with acts of kindness and advocacy. Christian community is less about “me” and more about “us.”

Paul defines “us” broadly—it is not limited to one’s household or home church or immediate neighborhood. Church crosses boundaries, creating realities where differences in ethnicity, gender, socio-economic status, cultural diversity, and social location can be acknowledged and celebrated.

Paul taught that Jesus formed a group of diverse persons into a new kind of community—a **community whose very fabric of communal life is woven with threads**

of love and service. For Paul, persons are called to think, live, and behave differently. The challenges at the Corinthian church are testimonies to the truth that living and loving in community can be difficult and messy at times.

Living in love and living by love does not mean there are no tensions, disagreements, or conflicts—in human relationships, these are natural and expected. Paul reminds the Corinthians that love holds them together, no matter what. They are no longer mere individuals; rather, they are part of the Body of Christ. They are connected in ways that defy individualism and selfishness. In the Judeo-Christian traditions, connection and unity are esteemed. A commitment to community does not erase differences—they are valued and embraced. It’s all about love.

What does love look like in community?

In 2016, Hurricane Matthew devastated the Grand Anse department of Haiti. The aftermath of the hurricane required massive rebuilding projects. One important project was to build a school. The site of the old school was not accessible by car. Community members used their own bodies, as well as their donkeys and horses, to carry supplies up from the bottom of a hill to the construction site—while working to improve the road along the way.

“The school building we had before was not constructed well,” recalls Ernsou Louis Charles, a school teacher. “During hurricane Matthew, we thought it could serve as a shelter, but



The impact of your past giving is evident in Haiti. Because you have supported efforts to “build back better,” the facilities that Week of Compassion helped construct following past disasters withstood the 2021 earthquake! Children were able to return to school shortly after that disaster in a way that was not possible just a decade ago. Photo: CWS

unfortunately it was among the first buildings that were affected... When the school was destroyed, we had no hope for reconstruction. We used tarps, but whenever it rained the children got wet. When it rained for weeks, the school had to close.”

Week of Compassion partners taught sustainable construction techniques to community members, so the new school is soundly built to resist future hurricanes and other natural disasters. Louis Charles Lucette, a mother of two students, shared her story. “I helped carry water and sand...When we saw how the foundation and trenches were being dug, how the work was done, we were happy because it was different from how we had seen construction...done before. Now...wherever we go, we are proud and happy of the way we hear people talk about this school, how beautiful it is and such good quality construction.”

Luxama Jean Baptiste, the School Director, said “This work was not done for one person, but for the community and the next generation.”

Merene Simon, who serves on the school’s committee of parents, said, “Hats off for the population of Cassavon because whenever I announced there was work to do, the people came. **When we live together in a community, it is important to join hands to produce something good.**”

In the aftermath of one of Haiti’s most difficult seasons in recent years, your gifts of love to Week of Compassion provided this community with six new classrooms, four latrines, an office, and a 13,000-gallon water reservoir! But it provided much more than that. Through this new school, your tangible gifts of love will last for generations to come.

The love that the Apostle Paul taught the Corinthians recognizes the connection between and among people, across geography, nationality, and ethnicity. Week of Compassion brings resources to communities, near and far away—for a common cause, to make a difference—embodying acts of service from a place of love that spans generations of Christian community.

Your gifts to Week of Compassion resurrect dreams and reconstruct spaces for new dreams to happen. When you give, you show that love is more than just a word; your generosity is the embodiment of our connection to sisters, brothers, and siblings that extends across space and time.

Love is generous and compassionate. Love is action. Love goes the extra mile. Love responds to need. Love makes a difference. Love joins hands. Love works together. Love hikes up and down hills. Love is resilient. Love is big and small. Love is water and sand.

SCRIPTURE COMMENTARY and SERMON STARTER

Love is a luggage tag

What does love look like for your congregation? Can love be given and received via Zoom or FaceTime, through a glass window, or behind a face covering? In a post-pandemic reality, we are rethinking what love feels and looks like, aren't we? Fortunately, Paul reminds us that while the delivery may be different, love remains the same.

Although we read parts of 1 Corinthians 13 at wedding and anniversary ceremonies, Paul wrote this letter to a church in crisis. All his work to bring people to Christ is on the verge of dissolving, and his pastoral work, done remotely, is unraveling.



ACT Alliance, Chambers; Indonesia

The congregation at Corinth started well. Paul and his associates gathered a widely diverse group of people who committed themselves to living the life of Jesus Christ. They formed a community and focused on the common good. When Paul left them, the Corinthian congregation was growing and thriving. Then, things started to fall apart as the members reverted to old patterns: the community began honoring the rich over the poor, the religiously gifted over those gifted differently, the educated over the illiterate, men over women, and adults over children. In the early days, the Corinthians celebrated and embraced their diversity—each person valued for their uniqueness, each one's gifts celebrated as they all contributed to the whole. But now, their differences are problems. Paul issues a return to love.

In Paul's encomium on love, he uses the Greek *agape* nine times to emphasize its importance to and for communal life. For him, love is an expression of commitment to a life in community; one that values each person and the gifts they bring. Every contributor is celebrated because they are now family—biology did not matter as much to Paul as the theology of community, church, and communion. His image of the Body of Christ emphasizes that each person, each part of the Body is vital, important, and necessary for the thriving of the whole.

What does love look like for Paul? It is patient and gentle. It is not envious, boastful, arrogant,

rude, selfish, irritable, or resentful—all the things the Corinthians were exhibiting! Christian unity was turning into Christian bickering—not the behavior expected of siblings in Christ. Paul’s letter is a reminder to the folks at Corinth that God calls them to a better way—a way that is centered in love and results in unity while respecting differences; a way that sees in the other a kinship that transcends familial boundaries; a way that serves others from a place of love; a way that values others for who and what they are. The way that Paul points to is about faith and hope and love.

Howard Thurman grew up during the early 1900s in Daytona, Florida, where educational opportunities for Blacks were limited. There were only three high schools for Blacks in the entire state. The closest private church-related high school was in Jacksonville, about 90 miles away. His community pooled their resources to send him to further his education.

At the train station, Thurman learned he would have to pay extra to ship his rope-tied trunk, and he did not have the money. Alone and dejected, he sat on the steps of the rail station. A stranger, a Black man, asked why he was crying. After Thurman explained his situation, the man paid the extra fare. Before Thurman could thank him, the man walked away, and Thurman never saw him again. The dedication to his autobiography reads:

To the stranger in the railroad station in Daytona Beach who restored my broken dream sixty-five years ago¹

Thurman went on to become a renowned scholar and theologian and influenced the likes of Martin Luther King, Jr.

¹ With Head and Heart: The Autobiography of Howard Thurman (New York: Harcourt & Brace, 1979), dedication page, 24-25

The stranger saw a young man in despair and his generosity made a difference—he expected nothing in return; he just saw a need and responded. The man may or may not have thought of his gift as an act of love, but it changed the trajectory of Thurman’s life.

This is what Week of Compassion does for people across the planet—it restores broken dreams, resurrects hope, and carves a path into the future.

What does love look like for your congregation?

As you prepare to receive the Week of Compassion offering, recount for your church what love looks like in your context. Share how your gifts make a difference for neighbors near and far whose names you do not know and whom you may never meet.

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, the constant refrain has been “we will get through this—together!” That’s what love looks like—people willing to share their resources to make the way easier for others—offering hope, kindness, and care. Agape is love that is rooted in concrete acts of compassion: helping to rebuild after hurricanes and tornadoes; teaching farming methods as the climate changes; providing chickens to stave off poverty; and, yes, even paying the fare for a stranger at a railroad station.

Through all kinds of weather, and even in the unknown, love remains— and love lived in community transforms the world.

When you give to Week of Compassion, you help rebuild, renew, and restore. Your generosity means that--through it all--love remains.

MISSION MOMENT

INDONESIA

Love gives...and then gives some more.

Emiliani lives in the Balombong village of Indonesia, an area where most people rely on farming to earn their living. As a changing climate affects harvests, families such as hers must find ways to adapt.

The “DREAM team” (Disaster Risk Reduction through Enhanced Adaptive Measures) is a program of Church World Service, supported by Week of Compassion. The partnership supports community savings groups-- including the one that Emiliani joined, which is run by women in Balombong. These farmers each contribute to the group and then are able to take out loans to meet basic needs, expand businesses, or otherwise work toward economic stability. Week of Compassion partners provide workshops about organizational and bookkeeping skills, as well as sharing climate-adapted farming practices with the group, so they can continue farming even in the dry season.

“I never miss a group meeting because the opportunity to learn new things is so great,” Emiliani says. “Not to mention the friendships that bloomed within our group. With each passing month we continue motivating each other to grow our incomes.”

Some of the new things Emiliani learned from the group were how to make organic composts, fertilizers, and pesticides. Her garden began to flourish with these new techniques, but Emiliani didn’t stop there. She decided to take a risk and plant vegetables during the dry season, making \$54 from her first dry season harvest! The family’s typical income is between \$1000 and \$1400 a year, and these additional funds helped cover living expenses for her son so that he could go to school! Her success has encouraged others to also plant during this season. Now, they can all sell their harvest at the market or share their vegetables with neighbors year-round.

Through your gifts to Week of Compassion, programs like DREAM not only empower women to maintain a stable farming income in a shifting climate; they also help women to dream bigger dreams. The climate-adapted farming practices, in addition to the business-managing workshops, have given these women the confidence and skills they need to thrive year-round – through farming and through the community bond of friendship they’ve developed!

“And now faith, hope, and love remain; and the greatest of these is love.” When you give to Week of Compassion, you are participating in the kind of love that offers the women of Balombong a pathway to a sustainable future where the entire community can thrive.

MORE MISSION MOMENTS AVAILABLE ONLINE!
[weekofcompassion.org/2022](https://www.weekofcompassion.org/2022)

Your compassion empowers women like Emiliani to provide for their families--which empowers the whole community! Photo: CWS





Additional Worship Materials available online:

- Prayer of Invocation
- Responsive Reading
- Communion Prayer
- Prayer of Thanksgiving
- Offering Invitation
- Dedication Prayer
- Children's sermon and activities for all ages
- *plus additional Mission Moments!*

Visit weekofcompassion.org/2022

WORSHIP RESOURCES

Call to Worship

ONE: Love is...

ALL: all people being heard and no one being left behind.

Love is ...

acts of justice and mercy.

Love is ...

compassion, forgiveness, humility and reconciliation.

Love is ...

this and so much more.

Love is ...

truly the greatest!

Invitation to Communion

“When the storms of life are raging, stand by me. In the midst of faults and failures, stand by me.”¹ These are words from a hymn by the African-American preacher and leader Charles Albert Tindley. In those two lines, the connection between Week of Compassion and the practice of Communion comes into focus.

Physical storms like tornadoes [or hurricanes, or...adapt to local context] ravage our communities. Spiritual storms, like broken relationships and socioeconomic injustice, ravage our personal and communal lives. When we experience brokenness in any part of life, we turn toward Christ and to this communal meal, which draws us together in ways that are both mystical and comforting.

The generous Christ invites us to his table today to receive the gifts of broken bread and crushed grapes. Encounter them anew as we observe this day of sharing; for in that brokenness, we are made whole. Taste and see grace in your midst. No matter what is happening, love is found at the table. Love remains.

Charge & Benediction

ONE: Faith, hope and love will remain for the ages to come.

ALL: Faith is trust and belief rooted in Christ.

Hope is not wishful thinking, but deep trust in God.

Love is the greatest--because it is the fabric of communal life.

Love binds us together as the body of Christ.

Faith, hope and love remain forever, but the greatest of these IS love.

¹ https://hymnary.org/text/when_the_storms_of_life_are_raging_stand

TEXT TO GIVE

Text WoC
to 41444.

Share this text code with your congregation on worship slides, social media, church newsletters, or any other platform to invite members to give.



ACT Alliance, Paul Jeffrey; Gaza



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- 1 CORINTHIANS 13:13

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