

Week of
Compassion



2021 Planning & Resource Guide

Week of Compassion Special Offering | February 21-28th

A photograph of two young children, a boy and a girl, sitting on a large, rounded metal water tap. They are both smiling and splashing water on their faces and clothes. The boy is on the left, wearing a yellow shirt, and the girl is on the right, wearing a green shirt. Water is flowing from the tap into their hands. The background is a lush green field.

**Let love
flow.**

**Nobody hungry, nobody thirsty,
shade from the sun, shelter from the wind,
For the Compassionate One guides them,
takes them to the best springs.**

- ISAIAH 49:10

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: A new well means clean, reliable, accessible water for these boys, their families, and their community in rural Kenya. *photo credit: Craig Thompson, Disciple Photo*

A MESSAGE FROM YOUR Week of Compassion Staff

Dear Church,

Since last year, our world has seen significant change and experienced much suffering. Record-breaking fires on the west coast of the U.S. devastated communities and burned millions of acres. An extremely active hurricane season brought destruction to the Gulf Coast. A massive explosion in Beirut displaced thousands of individuals. And all of these events were compounded by a global pandemic. We are living in a time of great uncertainty. And yet, even with so much that is unclear about the future, one thing is certain: through this ministry of our wider Church, your compassion is at work.

Even during a pandemic, disasters continue to happen. In 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic impacted every area of our personal and communal lives. In the same way, it also touched every area of the work of Week of Compassion through sustainable development, disaster relief, and refugee support. Because of your faithfulness, in 2020 alone, Week of Compassion provided nearly \$3 million for responses all over the world. With so many in need, your compassion is more important than ever.

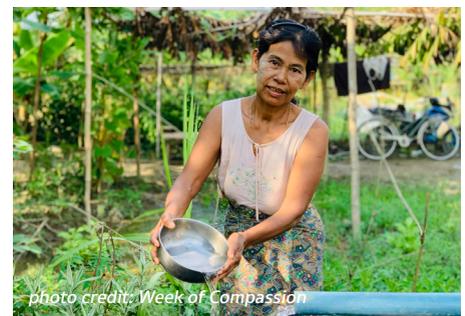
The reality is that 2021 will bring many of the same challenges—as well as some new ones. Disasters will continue to occur. Displaced populations remain vulnerable. And hundreds of millions of people around the world struggle under the weight of poverty. But thanks to your support, Week of Compassion will continue to respond. Events of the past year have shown us that, even in times when we cannot be physically together in one place, your offerings to support Week of Compassion continue to strengthen our church's presence all over the world: providing water to the thirsty, food for the hungry, and hope for the weary.

When you share your gifts to Week of Compassion, you “Let Love Flow.” Your generosity ensures that, even in the midst of uncertainty, the transforming power of compassion continues to change the world.

On behalf of our board and partners all over the world, we are grateful for your support and privileged to witness your compassion at work.

WITH MUCH GRATITUDE,
Your Week of Compassion Staff

Vy Nguyen, Caroline Hamilton-Arnold, Erin Wathen, and Suzanne McKay



THEME INTRODUCTION

Let love flow

ISAIAH 49:8-12

(The Message translation)

God also says:

“When the time’s ripe, I answer you.

When victory’s due, I help you.

I form you and use you

to reconnect the people with me,

To put the land in order,

to resettle families on the ruined properties.

I tell prisoners, ‘Come on out. You’re free!’

and those huddled in fear, ‘It’s all right. It’s safe now.’

There’ll be foodstands along all the roads,

picnics on all the hills—

Nobody hungry, nobody thirsty,

shade from the sun, shelter from the wind,

For the Compassionate One guides them,

takes them to the best springs.

I’ll make all my mountains into roads,

turn them into a superhighway.

Look: These coming from far countries,

and those, out of the north,

These streaming in from the west,

and those from all the way down the Nile!”

FOCUS VERSE:

Nobody hungry, nobody thirsty,

shade from the sun, shelter from the wind,

For the Compassionate One guides them,

takes them to the best springs. –Is. 49:10¹

¹ Peterson, Eugene. The Message: The Bible in Contemporary Language. NavPress; Colorado Springs, CO. 2005.

During the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic, it became clear that many of the western world systems intended to create a sense of safety had actually created a false sense of security. In a global crisis, we were faced with a danger that defied our usual protective hedges. While some were made more vulnerable by economic and geographical factors, the virus affected everyone.

As it turns out, lines on a map don't stop the spread of disease; a pandemic does not recognize human-made boundaries. Whether we like it or not, our lives are deeply intertwined. Our well-being is bound, inextricably, to that of neighbors close to home, and those halfway around the world.

The sooner we recognize that human codependency, the better we are able to *let love flow*—generously and indiscriminately— to those who need it most.

When water comes to a village, everything changes. It touches every area of life— literally and figuratively! Having clean water closeby means that women in Nicaragua don't have to spend their whole day walking to the source, so they might have other opportunities for learning or vocational growth. Children in Kenya no longer spend their days carrying heavy buckets, so they can go to school instead. Improved sanitation slows the spread of disease, so there is less preventable illness. Crops thrive in Vietnam, meaning that food security and nutrition improve in the whole community. Families can spend more time together. People of all ages around the world are empowered to provide for their families today, while also planning for the future of their communities.

Isaiah 49:8-12 articulates a stunning vision for a world of justice and equity; a world where everyone

has enough, and all live in safety and abundance. It is also a vision for a world of *interconnectedness*. In this vision, what is good for you is also good for your neighbor; what is good for one country is good for the whole world; and what harms any one of us harms us all.

That kin-dom kind of vision runs through the work that we share together through Week of Compassion—much like the stream that runs through Isaiah’s vision. Human-made constructs of one sort or another too often hinder human thriving, shoring up resources for some while leaving many to suffer. A world built on that sort of imbalance is counter to God’s dream for creation. In order to help bring about that more just, abundant vision for humanity, Week of Compassion supports projects around the world that create opportunity and empower communities. Through global partnerships, your offerings promote food security; enable health and wellness programs; support education and vocational training; and of course, provide access to clean, safe water.

Water, after all, is life.

In many ways, our world was not prepared for the weight of the COVID-19 pandemic. But because of your past generosity through Week of Compassion, many communities were better equipped to take safety measures during COVID-19. While the challenges remain significant, access to improved sanitation and clean, safe water for handwashing helped some of the most vulnerable populations prepare for the pandemic. Through the projects that you’ve supported in the past, more people were empowered to prevent the spread of disease among their family and neighbors.

In this vision, what is good for you is also good for your neighbor; what is good for one country is good for the whole world; and what harms any one of us harms us all.

When you continue to give generously, you continue to give life—in the form of water and so much more—to people in need around the world. You continue to build on the dream of a world in which there is no thirst, no hunger, no suffering... just the abundance of life in a living stream.

But you aren’t just sharing water. When you share what God has given, you “let love flow.” That love crosses all sorts of spaces and dividing lines, knitting together a better human story, and bringing the kin-dom of God about in our time.

When you give to Week of Compassion, you support water and other sustainable development projects all over the world. When you “let love flow,” lives are not just saved; they are transformed.

***Nobody hungry, nobody thirsty,
shade from the sun, shelter from the wind,
For the Compassionate One guides them,
takes them to the best springs.***



photo credit: CWS, Shanley Studio

SERMON STARTER/Exegesis

Picture your church's mission impact as a stream. Where does it go? What path does it take as you commission members, resources and the embodied words of the gospel to go out into the world? Whose lives are touched by that stream?

In Isaiah, God says *"I'll make all my mountains into roads, turn them into a superhighway."* How does the mission stream that flows from your congregation shape the landscape as it makes its path through the world?

The people of Israel found themselves exiles in a strange land when Jerusalem was conquered by Babylon. Now, the Babylonians themselves have been conquered by Persia and Cyrus the Great.² The prophet speaks to the people after Babylon has fallen (sometime around 586-539 BCE). On the surface, it is a heavy time of war, poverty and devastation.

But in spite of that devastation, it is also a time of restoration. This new generation of wanderers might be allowed, finally, to return home; to reclaim their land; to rebuild their homes, even restore their Temple. All the while, the prophet assures Israel that their covenant with God has never been broken— even as their structures and institutions crumbled, God remained with the people.

One critical part of that covenant is that ***Israel's responsibilities extend beyond its own boundaries.*** God has called them to care more widely for the nations of the earth; to show ***compassion*** and mercy as an expression of covenant living.³ This had been part of their identity as God's people before the exile, and it remains true at their core as they move into a season of renewal. Even (maybe especially) in a time of upheaval, they are called to be people who live outside of themselves.

Isaiah 49:10 conveys a powerful vision for creation; it's a vision that will be brought to life by these people of covenant and restoration. To be in covenant means to be "a powerful agent and partner in the practice of loyal solidarity that makes a new future possible."⁴ In this moment, God is inviting them to step into their role as a community that will let love flow in new and innovative ways.

Folk-country supergroup "The Highwomen" released their album by the same name in fall of 2019. But one of the album's tunes took on new life in the early weeks of the COVID-19 crisis. "Crowded Table" emerged as an anthem of the social-distancing era. You may have even seen it on a Campbell's soup commercial! One verse goes:

"If we want a garden, we're gonna have to sow the seed
Plant a little happiness, let the roots run deep;
If it's love that we give, then it's love that we reap
If we want a garden, we're gonna have to sow the seed..."⁵

That's the same kind of vision at the heart of the text from Isaiah; a world in which "everyone's a little broken, but everyone belongs..." as one line of the song's bridge affirms. Covenant people are those who recognize that love is what we reap, but only if we first sow it. Only if we release it from our grasp, sending it out to transform the world around us.

When you give generously to Week of Compassion, you let love flow. You empower families and communities around the world to live healthier, safer, more hope-filled lives. And ultimately, you build a world that honors the interconnectedness of all God's people.

In this time when all of life has been touched by the effects of the pandemic, we are called to be people of restoration,

² Hansen, Paul D. *Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching* Isaiah 40-66. John Knox Press, Louisville, KY, 1995. Pgs. 1-3

³ Hansen, Paul D. *Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching* Isaiah 40-66. John Knox Press, Louisville, KY, 1995. Pgs. 130-132

⁴ Brueggemann, Walter. *Isaiah (Westminster Bible Companion) (Volume 2, Chapters 40-66)*. Fourth Impression, Westminster John Knox Press, 1998. Pgs. 113-114

⁵ McKenna, Lori; Hemby, Natalie Nicole; Carlile, Brandi. "Crowded Table." *The Highwomen*, Elektreka Records, 2019.



In Ethiopia, water is life.
photo credit: ACT Alliance, Vann

releasing love into the world in new and innovative ways that answer the unique needs of this season. As the body of Christ in the world, the Church of today puts flesh on this vision: a world shaped by love's movement from one place to another.

The Body of Christ today transforms everything it touches, much like the body of water at the heart of Isaiah's vision for humankind. So take your congregation on a journey downstream: maybe with pictures; maybe using visualization; maybe even setting up worship stations to explore different expressions of mission life. Dive into questions—maybe even celebrations!—about your collective impact. Start with lives inside your own congregation, then look at your local community. And then follow that stream all the way to Nicaragua; to Kenya; to Vietnam, and many other communities where your Week of Compassion gifts are at work.

You are part of a living stream that changes lives as water reaches all who are thirsty.

If your church is a body of water, where does it go? Who does it touch? How does it carve a path and change the shape of the world it flows through?

When you give generously to Week of Compassion, you let love flow. You empower families and communities around the world to live healthier, safer, more hope-filled lives.

Of course, every body of water has one thing in common: a source. That source is not your sanctuary, your fellowship hall, or your charter. It is the love of God, made known in Christ and community. When you unleash that power and let love flow, miraculous things happen in the wake of that stream. What stories of new life might be possible when the gifts of your members are set on a course to flow through the world?

MISSION MOMENT

God's Compassion Flows Through You

*Nobody hungry, nobody thirsty,
shade from the sun, shelter from the wind,
For the Compassionate One guides them,
takes them to the best springs.*

– Isaiah 49:10

Hanh and her mother live in a poor rural village about 135 miles northwest of Vietnam's capital, Hanoi. When Week of Compassion partner CWS first met Hanh, she had never lived in a place where people had toilets. In fact, Hanh had never even seen a toilet. Hygiene facilities are also scarce in communities like hers, where few people have access to or familiarity with regular hand-washing.

This situation is all too common in many places in rural Vietnam, and across southeast Asia. That's why Week of Compassion partners are working with Hanh's school, the Khuon Pong village kindergarten, to change this situation for young children.

In September of 2018, CWS began supporting latrine and water supply improvements at the school. Since then, Hanh and her friends have had an exciting time experiencing modern latrines and clean water taps, and learning how these conveniences lead to better hygiene and, ultimately, better health.

Hanh's mom, Tiep, was pleased to see these improvements at the school, in addition to a safe new school kitchen. Tiep was also grateful for the community information sessions and what she learned about sanitation and hygiene—including the importance of washing hands with clean water, for the sake of Hanh and her 100 schoolmates.

Since Tiep wanted to make the most of the assistance and learn as much as she could, she joined information sessions about biosand water filters and sanitary toilet models for homes. She has now signed up to build a latrine at her home and buy a biosand filter with help from our partners. Soon, Tiep and Hanh will have clean water to drink at home and a safe, clean place to relieve themselves. With your help, they are among the 170 families in Trung Ha Commune who are changing their lives for the better.

The COVID-19 pandemic has taught us many things about what it means to be a global community. One of the most basic things we've been constantly reminded of is the importance of washing our hands in the battle to prevent disease.

When you give to Week of Compassion, you are providing clean water for drinking and sanitation for children like Hanh and her schoolmates. As God's compassion flows through you, your gifts bring the promise of better health to children who are precious members of our global family. Please give generously to support community livelihood and "let love flow" through springs of clean water.

MORE MISSION MOMENTS AVAILABLE ONLINE!
weekofcompassion.org/2021

Hahn and her friends have fun washing their hands, because you "Let love flow."
photo credit: CWS, Stanley Studios



Agricultural development in the Chaco region of South America empowers communities to thrive.
photo credit: Week of Compassion



Worship Resources

Call to Worship

One: We are yearning for the day...

All: The day of God's hope made real!

The day when nobody is hungry, nobody thirsty!

The day of God's Love flowing freely!

One: Shade from Sun and Shelter from the Wind,

The Compassionate One guides us to the springs of living water in the Word and in mighty deeds!

All: Let us worship our God and *let love flow!*

Opening Prayer

Source of Love-Made-Flesh, we stream to you from East and West seeking what's right and holding on to the holy. Settle us in body and soul in the land of hope your prophets proclaim. Free our hearts and minds to hear anew the call to compassion, the challenge of community, the needs of our neighbors. Call to us in this time of worship that we may gather in Spirit and in Truth and be changed. Seated and settled now, this we pray in Jesus' name: Amen.

Invitation to Communion

One: Come to the table where all are made welcome.

All: Let none hunger or thirst in the presence of our God!

One: The table is prepared! From East and West, North and South, come to the feast.

All: The people of God gather in thanksgiving and praise. Together we are made whole.

Together we remember Christ's life, love, and promise.

One: Come to the table, friends. All is ready!

Additional Worship Materials available online:

- Prayer of Confession and Words of Assurance
- Pastoral Prayer
- Litany
- Children's Sermon
- Communion Prayer
- Offering Invitation
- Dedication Prayer
- Benediction
- *plus additional Mission Moments!*

Visit weekofcompassion.org/2021

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.

Visit weekofcompassion.org/2021 for more info about mobile giving and how to set up a team page for your congregation!



Communities in Haiti continue to recover from multiple disasters. Your support helps rebuild schools like this one! *photo credit: ACT Alliance, Paul Jeffrey*



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