

CONTINUED BY POPULAR REQUEST

EYES TO SEE

*A mission project of
the Wider Church Ministries*



DONATE YOUR NEARLY NEW AND USED EYEGLASSES

What price would you put on seeing the sun rise or a baby smile? Vision is a priceless gift we often take for granted. For many impoverished people around the world, a pair of glasses would be an answer to their deepest prayer.

The United Church of Christ works in partnership with Interchurch Medical Assistance, Inc., a nonprofit, private, voluntary agency that procures and distributes medical supplies for overseas medical ministries. IMA receives numerous requests from many parts of the world for children's and adult's eyeglasses, frames, and lenses.

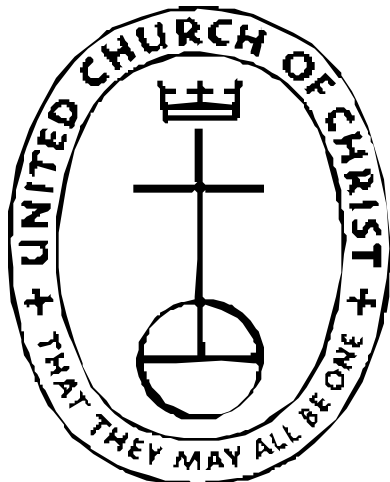
WCM invites children, youth, families, and others in our local churches to participate in this healing ministry of Christ by collecting eyewear and sharing it with those in need around the world. All eyewear will be received by vision specialists and distributed free of charge.

HOW IS THIS POSSIBLE?

A grant from the United Church of Christ **ONE GREAT HOUR OF SHARING** offering to IMA covers all overseas processing and shipping costs. You are responsible only for collecting, packing, and the cost of shipping eyewear to a collection center in the US.

WHAT IS THE FIRST STEP?

Before beginning this project in your local setting, please request the EYES TO SEE information packet with educational and worship resources, along with details about packing and shipping the glasses. To receive the EYES TO SEE information packet, contact:



Ms. Susan Sanders
Wider Church Ministries
700 Prospect Avenue
Cleveland, OH 44115
Phone: 216-736-3210
sanderss@UCC.org
Fax: 216-736-2294

Suggestions for Collecting and Celebrating

Gathering Eyeglasses

- Check cupboards, drawers, and storage boxes at home.
- Ask neighbors and relatives for contributions.
- Ask your local eye care professional for contributions.
- Invite the whole church to participate.

Showing What You've Gathered

- Prepare circles or ovals of construction paper. Draw a face wearing glasses for each pair gathered. Idea: Use multicultural construction paper with many skin tones.
- Put a large piece of paper on the refrigerator or on a bulletin board. Invite people to draw a simple face wearing glasses for each pair gathered. Ideas: Each family could have a piece of paper in a given size, draw their own mural, then take it to church to be combined with those of other families in a patchwork mural. Use multicultural markers with varied skin tones.
- Use a role of adding machine tape, creating a long strip of faces wearing glasses, one for each pair gathered. Hang in a prominent place in the home and/or church.

Blessing

On a given Sunday, bring all glasses to church. Display on communion table and at fellowship time. Blessing and dedicate the glasses using the enclosed litany.

Sending

Using suggestions in this packet, have a packing party to prepare the glasses for shipping. Serve simple refreshments. Go as a family or a group to take the packages on the Post Office or other shipping center.

Conversation and Activity Suggestions For Children and Families

Use these ideas as imagination-starters, adapting them to your setting. Include moments for reflection as well as for action. Adding reflection to activity increases meaning and understanding. Lift up vision as one of the many wonderful gifts of God.

- **Knowing without vision** Blindfold a person, using a clean cloth. Have that person try an activity - - assemble a simple puzzle, tie a shoe, write his/her name, identify items placed in a bag or on a tray.
- **Knowing through words only** Blindfold one or more persons, using a clean cloth. Have someone else describe an item without naming it. Then, invite each blindfolded person to try to name what was described.
- **Knowing using all the senses** Provide an orange for each person or one or two for a family group. Invite people to name the way each sense adds to one's knowing about the orange. Hint: Peeling the orange can be heard. Reflect on what would be missed if one could not see the orange.
- **Seeing clearly or not clearly** Use two similar transparent items, i.e., lids from cake pans, plates, something not breakable and without sharp edges. Coat one of these items with a very thin layer of petroleum jelly, allowing one to see through it with difficulty. Have someone hold the coated plastic/glass in front of another person while that person tries to do a simple task or even read a few sentences. Look at the results. Repeat the activity, this time looking through the clear item. Reflect on the differences.
- **Seeing in the Bible** Use a concordance to find words such as the following - - eyes, look, see, vision, choose, find, and read five of the passages. Compare with your own life and with the experiences of others, sharing stories.
- **Seeing in many ways** What are many meanings we give to the word "see?" Example: I see. Do you see what I mean? See your mind/heart. List as many ways of seeing as possible, using paper or a chalkboard. Talk about similarities and differences.
- **General Reflection Queries**
 - + Was this hard to do? Easy? Why?
 - + What is the role/importance of eyesight/vision in such an activity?

Thanks to the Coordinating Committee of the Association of United Church of Christ Educators (AUCE) for some of the conversation and activity suggestions.

Bible Study

“Seeing With The Eyes of Faith”

Text: Mark 10:46-52 The Healing of Blind Bartimaeus
also found in Matthew 20:29-34 and Luke 18:35-43

Background

“Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!” Bartimaeus was not quiet about this need! The scripture tells us “he shouted out” and even though many “ordered him to be quiet,” he shouted out even more loudly! Bartimaeus seemed to know that this Jesus was the one who could give him sight. “And Jesus stopped.” In the midst of the pressing crowd, Jesus was willing to stop and minister to this persistent man. Jesus told his disciples “Call him here.” And Jesus said to him, “What do you want me to do for you?” “Let me see again!” Bartimaeus told Jesus. And Jesus said to him, “Go; your faith has made you well.” Some scholars believe that this text was deliberately placed here where it immediately follows another example of the disciples’ lack of understanding of Jesus’ mission. The disciples’ spiritual blindness is followed by this account of a man who was with the eyes of faith even before Jesus healed him.

Reflection

- Read Mark 10:46-52 from several translations. Compare the different translations and talk about the nuances of differences. If you have time, read the parallel gospels of this story from Matthew and Luke and discuss the differences.

- Imagine yourself in this story from the point of view of -
Bartimaeus the disciples
the crowd Jesus

How might your view change after Jesus stopped and gave sight to Bartimaeus?

What did Bartimaeus do after he could see?

What do you think the crowd might do?

What do you think the disciples did?

What was Jesus’ purpose in this healing?

- What significance is it that Bartimaeus calls out the title, “Jesus, Son of David?”
- If Jesus said to you, “What do you want me to do for you?” How would you respond?
- How are we “Blind” to the purposes of Christ? How could our eyes be opened?

Thanks to Leah F. Matthews, former minister for Adult Education and Leadership, UCBHM, for the Bible study.

A MISSION MOMENT

The following Mission Moment can be read during worship.

A MISSION OF VISION

Onchocerciasis (ON-KO-SIR-SY-A-SIS), commonly called River Blindness, accounts for some 270,000 causes of blindness with almost 99% of these cases in Africa. The disease is caused by a parasitic worm that produces millions of microscopic larvae that migrate throughout the body and give rise to serious visual loss and blindness.

For the past three years, the Wider Church Ministries has been contributing One Great Hour of Sharing funds to a project implemented by our partner agency, Interchurch Medical Assistance (IMA), which is working to eradicate River Blindness in Tanzania. So far, our efforts have eliminated or reduced the risk of blindness for thousands of people there through dispensing doses of the drug, “ivermectin.”

IMA is a nonprofit, private, voluntary agency which procures and distributes medical and hospital supplies for the global health care ministries of Protestant churches and relief organizations. When you donate eyeglasses through IMA, you strengthen the church’s health ministry facilities around the world and thereby strengthen its witness.

A Blessing Ceremony

Eternal and Almighty One, we give you thanks for the miracle and gift of sight. Many we always remember that you alone are the world's Guiding Vision, as together we pray...

Loving God, Give us Eyes to See.

We praise you for blessing us with so many kinds of vision - - for spiritual insight, intuition, preception and understanding, as together we pray....

Loving God, Give us Eyes to See.

Help us to learn from our Savior Jesus, to look not only on the outside of people, but also to see the inside; to look not only in part but also to see the whole, as together we pray.

Loving God, Give us Eyes to See.

Correct our vision when we close our eyes to the truth and when our blindness makes us indifferent to injustice, as together we pray...

Loving God, Give us Eyes to See.

Open our eyes to the needs around us and help us welcome those who are visually impaired who have much to teach us about what it means to see, as together we pray.

Loving God, Give us Eyes to See.

Bless now these eyeglasses and frames which we gladly share with our neighbors around the world. Empower the medical staff who will distribute them. May a vision of your love grant peace to all those who will wear them, as together we pray...

Loving God, Give us Eyes to See. Amen

Blessing

- With one person reading, let the others gathered lightly place one hand over one of their own eyes and their other hand over one of the eyes of the person next to them -

GRACIOUS AND LOVING GOD, BLESS THE PRECIOUS EYES UPON WHICH OUR HANDS ARE LAID. MAY WE LOOK INTO THE PAST WITH FORGIVENESS, SEE THE PRESENT WITH JOY AND GAZE INTO THE FUTURE WITH HOPE. IN THE NAME OF CHRIST WE PRAY, AMEN

EYES TO SEE

What's the difference between the UCC-sponsored EYES TO SEE program and the work of the Lions Club and other secular groups?

In order to strengthen the mission of the church, the UCC uses church-related partners in health care who are known to have a solid track record in medical ministries and other forms of care-giving. This also brings together service and witness in meaningful, faithful ways around the world. A project such as EYES TO SEE helps maintain close working relationships with church-related medical personnel who are highly trained and effective in their ministries. These church-related professionals routinely provide people with health care services free of charge and without regard for the cultural, religious, economic, or other differences among those served.

We acknowledge that secular organizations such as the Lions Club have good working relationships with many groups, including the Interchurch Medical Assistance (IMA) and provide valuable assistance to persons in need.

We sought to initiate and ground the EYES TO SEE project through a faith-related organization in order to provide people in our churches with a way to be in direct mission with their brothers and sisters in need around the world. The church thrives when people intentionally and consciously engage in God's mission — and name it as such.

May you know many blessings in and through this mission project!

Instructions for Sending Eyewear

- Gather used and nearly new children's and adult's eyeglasses including frames and loose lenses.
- Separate the eyewear into the following groups:
Adult's eyeglasses
Children's eyeglasses
Frames only
Lenses only
- Seal the different groups in clear plastic bags; label each bag with the type of eyewear and item count.
- Securely pack the bags of eyewear into a mailing box.
- Write the name and return address of your local church.
- *Mail to: UCC/IMA Eyeglasses Project
% Brethren Service Center Warehouse
601 Main Street
New Windsor, MD 21776*
(PLEASE DO NOT MAIL EYEGLASSES TO CLEVELAND)
- Send us your stories!