



WALK IN LOVE

2026 LEADER'S GUIDE

A SPECIAL MISSION OFFERING OF
THE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST EQUIPPING

ADVOCACY AND JUSTICE MINISTRIES

Walk in love, as Christ loved us
Ephesians 5:2

Dear friends,

I have often found it difficult to preach from Ephesians. It is challenging not to turn the text into a sermon full of scolding. Act this way, don't act this way. There are certainly plenty of instructions in Ephesians that Christians haven't been living up to for thousands of years.

And yet, I find myself drawn to the encouragement to be like Christ. This is a movement at the heart of our faith, that we can be transformed to be more Christ-like. There is hope that what we were doesn't have to dictate who we will be.

This is at the heart of why this scripture is the theme for our Neighbors in Need offering this year. When we come together as a church to do the work of justice and advocacy, we are acting out of a hope that change in the world is possible.

As you encourage your congregation to participate in this offering I hope you will share the following. First, this offering is transformative because it calls us to collective justice—not isolated programs and pitches, but a genuine ecosystem of people who work collaboratively across issues and geographies to bring about social change. Second, our gifts represent our faith in God's ability to multiply what we have. Jesus' ministry was full of abundance, but not because he started with overwhelming resources. Rather what was offered in community became enough to meet the needs of the day.

When we walk, roll, and march in love together, justice will come.

With hope and generosity,

Rev. Rachel McDonald, Generosity Officer, OCWM and Special Mission Offerings
mcdonaldr@ucc.org



Neighbors in Need funds justice ministries engaged in advocacy and direct support. One-third of the offering supports the Council for American Indian Ministries, comprising over 20 Native congregations and over 1,000 individuals in the UCC, and two-thirds funds justice efforts in the National Ministries. This includes a Neighbors in Need grant program that provides funding to UCC congregations and partners for projects that address immediate needs, create advocacy campaigns, and establish innovative justice programs.

Publicizing the offering

You know your congregation best. Do they love a silly skit? Clear instructions via email? Encouragement in a sermon? Here are a few ideas:

- Share about the offering in a children's message
- Send out a letter to those in your congregation encouraging giving
- Preach on the focus text (Ephesians 5:2)
- Place the offering envelopes in the bulletin for several weeks leading up to the offering
- Collect the offering for a whole month, not just a single day
- Hang up the Neighbors in Need poster
- Print out the coloring page for all ages to use

A Year of Love



This year all of the Special Mission Offerings have been a part of “A Year of Love” with each offering guiding and encouraging congregations towards generosity rooted in love. Learn more at www.ucc.org/smo

When do we collect the offering?

The Neighbors in Need suggested offering date is October 4, 2026. But many congregations adapt the date or use an entire month or season to highlight the offering. Find a rhythm of generosity that matches best with your church.

What ministries does Neighbors in Need support?

The Neighbors in Need offering supports ministries of justice and compassion, with one-third of the offering given to the Council for American Indian Ministries and the remaining two-thirds supporting UCC justice ministries.

At the National Ministries of the UCC, the following ministry teams are supported in part by the offering

- Office of Public Policy and Advocacy
- Education for Faithful Action
- Gender and Sexuality Ministries

Where do we send the offering proceeds?

You can send your gift to your Conference with a note designating it for Neighbors in Need. Anyone can give at www.ucc.org/donate. You can also send your gifts directly to the National Ministries at the following address:

United Church of Christ
PO Box 71957
Cleveland, OH 44194

Order posters and
offering envelopes at
www.uccresources.com

Find digital resources,
stories, and downloads
at www.ucc.org/nin



Above: Messiah UCC, ND Below: New Town UCC, ND
Photo credit: Libby Fairchild, Interim Executive Director of CAIM

A prayer of blessing for the offering

God of justice,
May the offering we gather be special, not because it is unusual in our commitment to justice, but because it allows us to take a moment to stretch ourselves in our giving. Connect us with our siblings across the United Church of Christ who are sharing in the collection of these gifts. May we, in our collective witness, bend an unjust world toward justice, as we fund and launch ministries of transformative change. Come and bless not just the money we share, but also the advocacy and witness we bring.

In your holy name we pray,
Amen

Mission Moment: Joining Together for Justice

Did you know that Neighbors in Need was affirmed as an all-church offering at the 1999 General Synod? Since then, the offering has always funded and launched complex and collaborative ministries. Rather than supporting a single ministry, the offering has historically funded and resourced a variety of justice initiatives across the National Ministries, the ongoing work of the Council for American Indian Ministries (CAIM), and a grants program. Just as it was a collective witness of General Synod that affirmed the purpose of the offering, so the proceeds continue to fund a robust ecosystem of initiatives that work together to create resilient and evolving ministries.

When you give to Neighbors in Need, one of the ministries you support is the Washington D.C. Office of Public Policy and Advocacy. This year, the office hosted youth from around the country for a new program, Youth Voices: Bold Faith. This was a week-long immersion in faith-based advocacy, justice, and community. This is only one initiative funded in part through your gifts. Still, it shows how investing in advocacy and justice multiplies, as these youth returned to their congregations and communities better equipped to speak up and out for justice.

Let us come together across the United Church of Christ to continue to build a just world for all.
Thank you for your generosity!



Photo credit: Hannah Santos, United Church of Christ Office of Public Policy & Advocacy

Questions? Contact Rachel McDonald at mcdonaldr@ucc.org or 216-736-2182