2017 Leaders' Guide





"I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink..." Matthew 25:35

www.onegreathourofsharing.org



You are here

EACH YEAR ONE GREAT HOUR OF SHARING produces a Leaders' Guide to help congregations promote the offering. Our hope is that what you find on the following pages will give you a running start to a successful promotion season. We aim to help take the guess work out of what to do and where to find it. We know we don't have all the answers, and that your congregations have great ideas, too. Please share them with us so we can let others know what great ideas are working in our local churches. This is not a contest, because when you promote and support One Great Hour of Sharing, you are already a winner.

Thank you, on behalf of each life that will be blessed because we are here.

PROMOTING THE OGHS OFFERING

- 1. **ORGANIZE THE MATERIALS** in the packet, checking contents to ensure proper quantities. Order additional items if needed. Share contents with other ministry leaders and discuss promotional ideas.
- 2. GENERATE EXCITEMENT around the offering.

 Create a buzz by getting key people involved in setting a goal and have them spread the word. Invite participation through a pastoral letter or regular newsletter. Include the offering envelope or bulletin insert in your mailing. Remind people of the offering at weekly services and gatherings or by offering moments for missions included in the packet, or found on the website: ucc.org/oghs_resources.
- 3. **HELP YOUR CONGREGATION LEARN** something new about the offering. Please remember that as members of the UCC, the mission made possible by the offering is something we are ALL a part of as the church. Use the adult and children's sermon suggestions, stories, skits, and video resources. Make OGHS a special part of the service on multiple dates prior to the offering. The suggested OGHS offering date is March 26, 2017.
- 4. SHARE THE GOOD NEWS. After thanking the congregation for their support, announce the amount received for the offering in worship and in your church newsletter. Celebrate reaching your goal and let members know they can give to One Great Hour of Sharing all year. Send your congregation's gift to your UCC Conference Office making sure it is clearly marked "OGHS."
- 5. **REVIEW THE BACK COVER** of this guide to help you know where to find all of the resources created for you.



Worship Resources/Theme Interpretation

You are here.

Just as you did it to the one of least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.

Matthew 25:40



PAUL'S LETTERS REMIND US that as members of the church, we are so closely connected that we can think of ourselves as parts of one body. The New Testament constantly refers to followers of Jesus, not as Christians, but as a *family*—brothers and sisters.

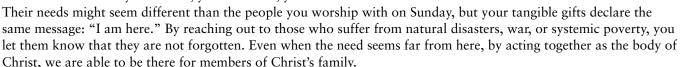
Many churches live this out when someone is ill, mourning, or facing a crisis. You show up. You are there for your loved ones in need. You show that love in tangible ways, with casseroles and cards, hugs, and spoken words of prayer. These acts of kindness let your brothers and sisters in Christ know that you are present with them. They know they are not alone because you are beside them. They know that they are not forgotten in their times of trouble. When someone you care about suffers—all your truest words and most loving actions simply declare: "I am here."

The Bible tells us that God is like us in this respect. When one of God's beloved children suffers, God declares, "I am here." God hears the cries of the poor and oppressed (Exodus 3:9, Psalm 10:17, 69:33), is near to the brokenhearted (Psalm 34:18), and is near to all who call God's name (Psalm 145:18). The promise that God will be with us is a constant refrain from Genesis to Revelation.

When we see the latest tragedy on the news, we might ask, "Where are you, God?" But we already know the answer—God is *here*, in the midst of those who are hurting.

When Jesus tells the parable of the sheep and the goats (Matthew 25:31–40), he reveals to us a mystery. God is most tangibly present in this world where people hunger, thirst, lack adequate clothing and shelter, and are sick or imprisoned. Christ cares for people who suffer and says He is *so* present in them that when you feed the hungry, care for the sick, welcome the stranger—you feed, and care for, and welcome Christ.

Not just your fellow Christians, but anyone in need, anywhere in the world—these are your sisters, your brothers, your children.



We are there through providing well pumps for clean water, seeds and training for sustainable agriculture, and rice and oil to provide nourishment and cooking supplies. We are there through medical kits, school supplies, temporary shelters, and safe housing projects where needed most.





In the midst of suffering, where is God? God is here. Where are you? When you give to OGHS, you are here.

Scriptures: Matthew 25:31-46, Psalm 145:18, 1 John 3:11-24

Call to Worship:

to be read by two groups (e.g. adults and children; left and right; choir and congregation)

All: Praise God!

Group 1: We praise you, our God, and we bless your name forever and ever.

Group 2: Every day we will bless you, and praise your name.

Group 1: Great are you, God, and greatly to be praised.

Group 2: Your greatness is unsearchable.

Group 1: You are near to all who call on you.

Group 2: To all who call on you in truth,

All: Praise God!

Opening Prayer

Sustaining God, we gather to seek your presence. We know that when we call out to you, you are near. You hold us up when we are falling. You are just in all your ways, and kind in all your doings. You have never failed us.

Saving God, we gather to proclaim your power, knowing that your words are faithful and your deeds are gracious. We stand in awe of your wondrous works. Still-speaking God, we gather to listen for your voice.

Speak to us in scripture, song, and silence. Show us the way to love, not just in word and speech, but in truth and action. Show us where you want to lead us. Amen.

Prayer of Confession (unison)

God of love, you created us to love you and one another. We confess that we have sometimes limited that love to words, and failed to make that love real by our actions. We have failed to recognize Christ in the hungry, the thirsty, the homeless, the naked, the incarcerated and the sick. Too often, we have turned away from your presence, failing to share what we have with our brothers and sisters in need. Forgive us. Turn our hearts, and guide us to follow in your ways anew.

Words of Assurance

Leader: Our God is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.

All: God is good to all, and has compassion for all creation.

Litany

Leader reads the regular font; congregation reads the bold.

O God of promises, you remind us again and again that you are present with your people. When our hearts are broken,

You are here.

When we worry about our country and our future, You are here.

Where anyone is hungry, or thirsty, You are here.

When we feel like strangers, and wonder if anyone will welcome us,

You are here.

Where anyone is sick, or in need of care and company.

You are here.

When people are in prison,

You are here.

When anyone needs clothing,

You are here.

You, O God, are here with us when we suffer.

Empower us to be with others as they suffer.

Help those who feel hopeless, or who are filled with fear. Help us to remember that You are here, God, in the midst of all that we are going through. Help us remember that you are a God of love, and you love us.

Amen.



Invitation to the Offering

We worship a God who gives generously and abundantly. God gives to all creatures their food in due season, and from God's open hand the desire of every living thing is satisfied.

God has given us so many blessings.

The food we eat, the friends and family we cherish, the precious gift of God's love for us, a love that led Jesus to lay down his life for us.

When that love abides in us, we cannot refuse to help our brothers and sisters in need. Through our regular offerings we...[celebrate the work of your congregation, locally]. Through the special offering for One Great Hour of Sharing, we join with other Christians to make our presence known to people who might feel forgotten—the hungry, the hurting, the thirsty, the sick. Our gifts, together, provide food, shelter, comfort, and safety all over the world.

Dedicatory Prayer

Gracious God, in our offering we return to you a portion of the blessings you have showered upon us. Bless these gifts, that they might bring comfort, food and shelter to those who need it. Bless those who will receive them. Let them know your love through full bellies, warm clothing, and safe places to sleep. Amen.

Charge & Benediction

We worship God in sanctuaries, in beautiful, holy spaces. But Christ has told us that if we want to find him in this world, we will seek out the lost, the least of his brothers and sisters—those who are hungry, thirsty, sick, in prison, naked and estranged. May we go forth this day with eyes open to seeing Christ in our world, and may we know God's love by loving one another. May we love, not just in word and speech, but in truth and action.

"Christ Has No Body," -Teresa of Avila

Christ has no body now on earth but yours; no hands but yours; no feet but yours. Yours are the eyes through which the compassion of Christ must look out on the world. Yours are the feet with which He is to go about doing good. Yours are the hands with which He is to bless His people.

Invitation to Communion

"We know love by this, that Christ laid down his life for us." We come to this table to celebrate and experience that life-giving love.

There is a Latin American table grace that says "Bless, O Lord, our bread. Give bread to those who are hungry. And to those who have bread, give hunger for justice. Bless, O Lord, our bread."

We come to this table to break bread together, joining with the church across the world and throughout the ages at this foretaste of the great feast to come. Some come to this table hungry, struggling to find the bread they need for each day. Some come to this table with access to plenty of food, but starving for God's nourishing love.

What we see in this feast of love, a table where all are fed, can also make us hungry for a world that is more like this table. This bread and cup can sustain us, give us the strength to lay down our lives for one another.

At this table, we remember ...

"While they were eating, Jesus took a loaf of bread, and after blessing it he broke it, gave it to the disciples, and said, "Take, eat; this is my body." Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you; for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. I tell you, I will never again drink of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom." (Matthew 26:26–29 NRSV)

Blessing of the Elements

Dear God, bless this bread, and us as we receive it, that we might be the body of Christ, united in love and service. Bless, O Lord, the cup poured out to draw us in, let it renew in us your covenant of love, and our shared commitment to you. Amen.

Prayer of Thanksgiving

We thank you, gracious God, for your gifts of bread and wine, the gifts of Christ's body and blood. We thank you for nourishing us, sustaining us, and empowering us to live as one body. We thank you for your most amazing love, and pray that your love would abide in us always. Amen.



Sermon Starter

How to use this Sermon Starter:

Allow the text to get you started, then add your own examples through answering the thought-provoking questions to make it more personal. Take out any examples that do not apply to your setting or that you choose not to use.

People who have been helped by the One Great Hour of Sharing (OGHS) offering, frequently comment that "you were here" after the flood, the earthquake, or the fire, or "I can't believe the church showed up for me during my time of need." Some even say, "I have given to this offering, but never thought it would help me." Our gifts through the offering allows the church to show up and be here when people need it most. What's more, OGHS works with congregations and organizations locally, those vested in the affected communities, so we can be present quickly, and help the people living in those communities rebuild their lives.

This is wonderful from the perspective of aid and material development, but what does it have to do with our faith? The theme for the offering, "You are here," provides multiple possible avenues to explore the connection between human need, our faith, and this shared offering in today's sermon.

- You are here could be the response to a question provoked by tragedy, fear and suffering: "Where are you, God?" Psalm 145:18 echoes the refrain throughout scripture that God is nearby, present with God's people. As soon as a person calls on God, God is here.
 - When have you felt God's presence in a time of deep need?
- 2 Through the lens of Matthew's parable, You are here answers the question: "Where do we find Christ in the world?" He is here, in those who hunger and thirst.

The parable of the sheep and the goats (Matthew 25:31–46) begins with something of a mixed metaphor—the Son of Man is seated as king on a throne, but acting as a shepherd—separating sheep from goats. This shepherd king divides people based on their response to basic human needs. Both groups are taken by surprise, and ask "when was it, Lord…?"

The needs described are anything but metaphorical, and are so basic that we can easily imagine them 2,000 years later—food, water, clothing, welcome, care when sick, visits when in prison. These needs are so basic that we can easily relate to them, because they are our needs, too. We don't need to look outside our congregations or our

own families to find examples.

At the core of this passage is the claim that Christ is present in the human needs of this world, so that feeding the hungry is feeding Christ. This is a more dramatic claim than the idea that Christians can show Christ's love through our deeds of kindness and work for justice. Rather, Christ completely identifies with "the least of these who are members of my family." When someone is thirsty, Christ is thirsty. When we see a situation of need—Christ is here.

The glory of God is shown when hungry people are fed, strangers are welcomed, or wherever human need is met.

- How has your congregation fed the hungry, welcomed the stranger, or reached out locally? Globally?
- When have you personally encountered the face of Christ in people in need?
- 3 You are here shows the church uniting to respond to those needs—when you, collectively, along with many others, give, it means that the church can be here, in the midst of need even when it is far away. Together, we are able to respond quickly and be here to stay when the needs are long-term. Pooling resources allows our reach to extend much farther into the world than any one person, congregation, or denomination can do alone.
- 4 You are here addresses the question: "Where do I fit in this picture?" When God's love abides in us, we are moved to respond with our own material goods to the needs of other members of the human family.

The first letter of John poses a pointed question: "How does God's love abide in anyone who has the world's goods and sees a brother or sister in need and yet refuses help?" (3:17) The letter writer, like the gospel writer, sees human community as united into one family in Christ. This letter is concerned with the ethical application of love—how love is lived out in life together. The question is followed with an admonishment, "Little children, let us love, not in word or speech, but in truth and action" (3:18). True love, then, is expressed in deeds of generosity, not empty words. It also makes a theological point—when God's love is here, abiding within us, we will respond generously with our worldly goods.

• When have you felt or seen love expressed more powerfully through actions than words?

Gracious and Loving God, ignite in us a desire to walk out our faith, by loving others as you have loved us.

Amen.



"My Tummy Hurts"

Focal Text: Matthew 25:35-40

Try to remember a time when your belly ached. Perhaps it hurt so terribly you wanted to crawl into a ball and cry your pain away. Maybe you felt better when someone brought you your favorite teddy bear and you hugged it tightly. Or maybe your best buddy—a pet dog, cat, or frog, offered a few wet licks to your face or cuddled next to you. Perhaps a loved one brought you some medicine or a cup of warm soup in your favorite bowl. Such kind gestures can surely help one feel better.

Let us imagine together:

There was once a little girl, who got a very bad tummy ache. As the child lay sick in bed, her grandmother came to check on her. She peeped into the girl's room, kissed her on the forehead, and covered her with one of her colorful and thick homemade quilts. Then she whispered: "Your grandmamma is here." The little girl drifted to sleep listening to her grandma hum softly. Every note hummed was a drop of medicine that echoed with melodies of love. The next morning, the little girl's tummy still hurt a little—but she felt better because her grandmamma had been there. She felt special, comforted, and cared for. The young girl remembered that she was not alone.

There are many people all around the world aching and in pain. They are crying because they have a great need for help. Some are crying because their tummies hurt from hunger or thirst. Others are crying because they feel all alone. Our scripture today teaches us how to respond to the aches and pains of people around the world when they cry out for help. Just as our loved ones respond to our cries when our tummies hurt, we should treat others with the same gentle and loving care as the grandmother in our story. We may not know who they are, but they are our brothers and sisters in Christ. After all, we are each members of God's family. When a member of our family hurts, we often feel their sadness and pain, too.

We can help make people feel loved, welcomed, and special by being kind and offering to help whenever we can, like we do through the One Great Hour of Sharing offering. The OGHS offering provides assistance to



families needing food, water, and shelter. OGHS helps children go to school and provides help in times of need. Can you remember how nice it felt to be snuggled in your grandma's quilt or to have a warm cup of soup when your tummy hurt or on a cold day? The Bible story teaches us that every act of kindness we demonstrate toward others can be felt by God, too.

Each time we give a big bear hug to someone who is sad; God is giving and receiving a hug, too! That's amazing! When someone is hungry and you share your meal, you also share a meal with God. You not only show them that "You are here," you also help them know "God is here!"

We may not always be able to respond to every cry in the world; but we can do our best to be friendly; welcome old and new friends; and love our sisters and brothers near and far by sharing what we can. The OGHS offering helps us to do just that.

Prayer: Dear God, when there are cries for someone to help, please help me to care and share. Amen.

Story images: Grandparent, God's love, blanket, tummy ache, teddy bear, sharing and friendship.

Scriptural images: Hungry, thirsty, lonely, sick, strangers, God, prayer, encouragement, community.



Sharing Calendar

"Let us love, not in word or speech, but in truth and action."—1 John 3:18

For ideas on how to use this calendar, visit ucc.org/oghs/resources

ns -	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Jasu of bree of bree blessir blessir blessir gave it gave it from this is sufficient to the control of the cont	"_Jesus took a loaf of bread, and after blessing it he broke it, gave it to the disciples and said. Take, eat; this is my body." (Matthew 26:26). Give 2 units in thanksgiving for Jesus' incarnation.	800 million people in the world approximately 1 in 9 do not regularly have enough to eat. Give 1 unit for every meal you eat today.	In 2016, droughts caused severe food shortages in Ethiopia, Central America, and elsewhere. Give 1 unit for every grocery store in your town or neighborhood.	Since 1990. the number of malnourished people in the developing world has fallen by almost half, thanks to food security and development projects! Give 1 unit in celebration of this progress and 1 unit to continue the work.	Being able to start a vegetable garden with seeds provided through OGHS. partners can provide food and economic security. Give 1 unit for each vegetable in your refrigerator.	The U.S. wastes 33 million tons of food. \$165 billion worth each year. Give 1 unit in repentance for each food item that has gone bad in your refrigerator or pantry this week.	"I was hungry, and you gave me some-thing to eat." Give 3 units to provide food for someone who is hungry.
"A San came and Je Give r John sharec sharec experi Give 1	"A Samaritan woman came to draw water, and Jesus said to her, 'Give me a drink" (John 4:7). We remember that Jesus shared in the human experience of thirst. Give 1 unit for every drink you have today.	663 million people worldwide do not have regular access to clean water. Give 1 unit for every water bottle in your home.	Rain collection, cisterns, and irrigation systems help communities mitigate drought conditions. Give 1 unit if you have ever collected rain water, or 2 units if you have never collected rain water.	1.9 billion people have gained access to clean drinking water since 1990. Give 2 units in celebration.	Women and girls in Africa and Asia often spend more than 6 hours collecting water every day. Give 2 units if your commute was less than 6 hours today.	The water crisis in Flint, MI brought to public attention the severe effects of contaminants in water supplies and the importance of good infrastructure. Give 1 your home.	"I was thirsty, and you gave me something to drink." Give 3 units to increase access to clean water by helping communities build wells, small dams, cisterns, and filtration systems.
"you e strang citizer and a and a the hc (Ephe Give 2 seleb: ull hc	"you are no longer strangers but you are citizens with the saints and also members of the household of God" (Ephesians 2:19). Give 2 units in celebration of the full household of God.	More than 65 million people have been forcibly displaced from their homes world-wide. Give 1 unit for every room in your home where you feel safe.	"Jesus said, 'Let the little children come to me." (Mark 10:14) More than 2.000 children are being held in family detention centers in the US awaiting asylum hearings. Give 1 unit for every child in your family.	OGHS congregations help resettle refugees in the United States every year. This year the numbers of refugees will increase. Give 2 units in celebration.	Nearly 10 million displaced persons are categorized as stateless (not considered a national of any country). Give 1 unit for every US citizen in your household.	Poverty and hunger are key reasons people leave from Latin America to immigrate to the U.S. Give 2 units to help address these root causes.	"I was a stranger, and you welcomed me." Give 3 units to support relief and resettlement efforts for refugees and humanitarian responses for immigrants.
"But a him Hhim Hhim Hand ba and ba wounc to an ir care of 10:33 units ir for tho mercy.	"But a Samaritan while traveling came near him He went to him and bandaged his woundsbrought him to an inn, and took care of him." (Luke 10:33–34). Give 2 turits in thankfulness for those who show mercy.	Waterborne illnesses kill more people than all forms of war and violence combined. Access to clean water and adequate sanitation can prevent the spread of these illnesses. Give 1 unit for every toilet in your home.	In 2015, more than 300,000 women died from maternal causes. Give 2 units if the women you know have access to reproductive care.	Since 2000, global rates of HIV/AIDS, malaria, tuberculosis, and several other major diseases have seen decreases of 40% or more. Give 3 units in celebration of these efforts.	OGHS partners help provide basic medical supplies and psychological care to thousands of people living in refugee camps. Give 1 unit for every bottle of medicine in your home.	Environmental toxins, such as fertilizers and industrial waste, contribute to weakened immune responses, especially in children. Give 1 unit if anyone in your family has recovered from an illness this year.	"I was sick, and you took care of me." Give 3 units to help provide medical care and prevent illness around the world.



Moment for Mission

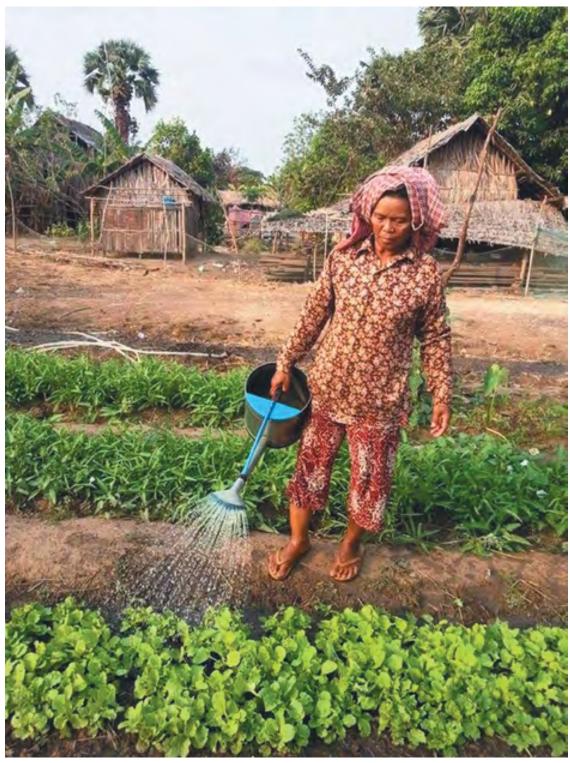


Photo Credit: CWS

Som Bee and her granddaughter now have access to clean water for cooking, drinking and gardening.



Where There is Water

THINK OF ALL THE WAYS THAT YOU HAVE USED WATER SO FAR TODAY.

Did you take a shower this morning? Did you flush your toilet? Or wash your hands? When you made, or ate breakfast, was water used? How about when you cleaned up after the meal?

Now imagine walking each morning to gather water for your family, knowing the water you were collecting was unclean and could make the members of your family sick.

Next, let's imagine that each year for several months you don't have access to water because it was the dry season and your water source had dried up. How would you get by? What parts of your daily routine would you have to abandon? How would you provide water for your family?



Unfortunately, these are realities for many people around the world.

In a rural community in Cambodia, the only water available was from a shallow, hand-dug well. Each day during the rainy season, a grandmother named Som Bee would walk to the well to collect the water for her family. But the water from the well was unclean, sometimes leading to health problems, including diarrhea.

Thanks to your support, the community was able to address the unclean water problem by installing a ring well. The members of the community received training on how to filter the water, and to keep it clean for daily use.

Because of your support, the members of the community now have access to clean water year-round, and they are sick less often.

Because of your support, Som uses the clean water for her garden to help her grow tomatoes, pumpkins, spinach, gourds, cucumbers and mushrooms. Of course, her family eats the vegetables, so they now have a healthier diet!

Som's garden is so bountiful, she is also able to sell some of her vegetables in her local community, earning money to support her family and buy other items that her family needs.

Your support has reached 16 villages in central Cambodia with clean, safe water. You were here with Som and her neighbors as they gathered to build their well. Now, you are with Som each time she leaves her home and only walks a matter of yards to the well. You are here when she waters her garden and prepares nutritious meals. You are here as her granddaughter grows healthy and strong.

You are here. And their future is brighter because of your support.



In addition to Our Church's Wider Mission (Basic Support), the United Church of Christ has 4 Special Mission Offerings. They (SMOs) exist to allow congregations and individuals to meet people at points of critical need in their lives. Though many options exist for direct, individual support of these needs, the SMOs allow a common witness and make a collective positive impact. Our church has identified four areas where these critical human needs exist:

- in places lacking health and educational resources and/or where disaster has struck;
- within systems of injustice which oppress daily life and opportunity;
- in the nurture of youth and congregations just beginning their lives of faith.
- in the lives of church leaders without sufficient resources to live with dignity;

We believe these SMOs collectively serve to lift people closer to the abundance and wholeness to which Jesus Christ has called us to work together to bring about.

One Great Hour of Sharing

This offering is received on the Fourth Sunday of Lent.

Supports partners in countries with ministries that fund health, education and agricultural development, emergency relief, refugee ministries and both international and domestic disaster response. It is administered by Wider Church Ministries, Global Sharing of Resources.

Strengthen the Church

This offering is received on Pentecost Sunday.

Supports church growth, pastoral and lay leadership development, youth and young adult ministries within conferences. It is administered by Local Church Ministries.

Neighbors in Need

This offering is received on the First Sunday of October as part of World Communion Sunday.

One-third of this offering supports the Council for American Indian Ministry (CAIM) and two-thirds is administered by Justice and Witness Ministries to support a variety of justice initiatives, advocacy efforts, and direct service projects through grants.

The Christmas Fund

This offering is received on the Sunday before Christmas.

Provides direct financial assistance to retired and active United Church of Christ authorized ministers and lay employees and their surviving spouses, including pension and health premium supplementation, emergency assistance, and Christmas thank-you checks. This offiering is a ministry of the Pension Boards.





ONE GREAT HOUR OF SHARING RESOURCES IN YOUR SHIPMENT

(One of each unless indicated otherwise)

- Posters (2)
- Leaders' Guide
- Bulletin Inserts (bulk)
- Cube Coin Offering Box
- Offering Envelopes (bulk)

OGHS MATERIALS AVAILABLE AT UCC RESOURCES

- Bulletin Inserts (no charge)
- Offering Envelopes (no charge)
- Cube Coin Offering Boxes (additional—\$0.10/each)

Order additional resources

Call 800-325-7061 or Email UCCRORDERS@ucc.org

OGHS ON THE WEB UCC.ORG/OGHS/RESOURCES

Complete OGHS Resources including:

- Worship Resources and Children's Sermons
- Children and Youth Activities
- Downloadable Art, Graphics, Songs and Videos
- Sharing Calendar
- Skits and Stories

OGHS MATERIALS AVAILABLE ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Like us on Facebook

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Or Contact us

Phone: 216-736-3215 Email: oghs@ucc.org



Please send your donation to your UCC Conference Office, clearly marked for One Great Hour of Sharing. The Conference will forward it with gifts from other congregations to our office at: 700 Prospect Avenue, Cleveland Ohio 44115-1100

