

More than we can imagine

ORANGE ORCHARD

Implementation : Nicaragua
Size : 1 acre
Coverage : approx. 200 trees
Yield : approx. 50,000 fruit per year

IRRIGATION

Hose fed ground water irrigation system
1" diameter rubber hose connected to
12" diameter x 8" tall concrete overflow
cylinders, rock/gravel ring base

SUPPORT POSTS

8" diameter x 36" tall wooden posts
Poured concrete foundation
Trees anchored to posts
with .25" wrap-around chord

72" separation
between
tree rows

Now to God be the glory, who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine.

Ephesians 3:20

www.ucc.org/oghs



Thank you for preparing to promote the One Great Hour of Sharing offering.

Each year we create a **Leaders' Guide** to help congregations embark on a successful **OGHS promotion**. All of the samples in this guide are yours to use. You can also feel free to modify the materials to fit your congregation's need. Use and modifications are permissible in conjunction with promoting the OGHS offering.

However you decide to promote the offering, we would love to hear from you. Send us feedback at oghs@ucc.org, so we may share your great ideas with others. When we all work together, the resulting harvest may be more than we can imagine.

Thank you on behalf of every person and community we will reach. Thank you for being a blessing to others in their time of need.



Promoting the OGHS Offering in 4 Easy Steps

1 ORGANIZE THE MATERIALS

in the packet. Make sure you have the proper quantities. Order additional items if needed. Share the contents with other church leaders and discuss promotional ideas. A quick reference of where to find OGHS Materials is listed on the back cover.

2 GENERATE EXCITEMENT

around the offering. Get key people involved, set a goal, and 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 at www.ucc.org/oghs_resources.

3 HELP YOUR CONGREGATION LEARN

something new about the offering. 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. Sunday, March 11, 2018 is the suggested OGHS offering date.

4 SHARE THE GOOD NEWS

about the work that OGHS provides prior to the offering date. Announce the amount received for the offering in worship and in your church newsletter. Celebrate reaching your goal or let members know they can still give. Send your congregation's gift to your UCC Conference Office making sure it is clearly marked "One Great Hour of Sharing Offering."

Engage in mission through One Great Hour of Sharing.

You can: become a disaster volunteer, make a financial contribution, connect through Social Media, or become an OGHS Ambassador and use your voice to promote the offering. However you'd like to get involved visit ucc.org/oghs_getinvolved_index, for more information.

Watch the Latest One Great Hour of Sharing Videos

These 1–5 minute features highlight One Great Hour of Sharing and the mission that's made possible through the United Church of Christ. Videos can be fun and educational. They are easy to share with friends and groups, during worship, or on your Social Media page.

Make a Legacy Gift to the OGHS Endowment Fund

As your congregation participates in the OGHS offering, let them also know OGHS has an Endowment Fund. Download a copy of the brochure today to share. A legacy gift will ensure that the offering will be around to help people in need for years to come. Visit our website at ucc.org/oghs_endowment for more information.

Apply for a Matching Gift Through your Employer (if eligible)

Did you know that many employers contribute to employee and board members' favorite charities? Matching gift programs are a great way to double or triple the impact of personal donations. To find out if a company has a matching gift program, visit our website for a quick check at ucc.org/matching-gifts.

Connect with OGHS through Social Media

One Great Hour of Sharing has its own Facebook page. Find information to read or share through regular posts on the OGHS sites. If you haven't yet, please like and follow us on Facebook and Twitter!

facebook.com/onegreathourofsharingucc

twitter.com/OGHS_at_UCC

Become an OGHS Ambassador

OGHS is seeking volunteers to lend their voice to promote the offering more broadly. Training is available. Come, learn what's at the heart of OGHS and the ministry it makes possible. Then share the story with others in your congregation and neighboring churches. Sign-up today by sending an email to oghs@ucc.org.

Travel with OGHS

Each year OGHS hosts an educational mission trip to help interested members of our local churches see first-hand how OGHS makes a difference in our world. Visit our website at www.ucc.org/oghs_travel, and join us on our next trip.



In addition to Our Church's Wider Mission (Basic Support), the United Church of Christ has 4 Special Mission Offerings (SMOs). These offerings 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:

- **One Great Hour of Sharing**—in places lacking health and educational resources and/or where disaster has struck;
- **Neighbors in Need**—within systems of injustice which oppress daily life and opportunity;
- **Strengthen the Church**—in the nurture of youth and congregations just beginning their lives of faith;
- **The Christmas Fund**—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. Join the other 1,000 churches that have made the decision to become 5 for 5 congregations, supporting OCWM and all four of the Special Mission Offerings.

Theme Interpretation

It is easy to feel overwhelmed when we look at all the areas of need in God's world: there is hunger, sickness, and injustice in so many communities. It is easy to feel there is nothing we can do to help. We can feel trapped by hopelessness and fear that what little we can do—won't have an impact.

But there is hope! Better yet: we are that hope!

As the Apostle Paul writes, “by the power at work within us,” God is able to “accomplish abundantly more than we can ask or imagine” (Ephesians 3:20). “We are the agents of transformation that God uses to transfigure this world” (Archbishop Desmond Tutu).

Wishing and dreaming of a better world means nothing if we don't realize that God gives us community to practice love and compassion. We cannot only care for ourselves, but we must also care about those around us, both near and far.

Our gifts become part of a loving legacy in ways we can't foresee. Our gifts become blessings to people we don't know and blesses in ways we can't expect. We can make a difference beyond what we can imagine.



Worship Resources

Call to Worship

One: We come into the presence of Love today
 Left: who calls us into community
 Right: who calls us God's people
 Left: To worship
 Right: To sing
 All: To pray
 One: To imagine together
 All: How God can use us
 Left: To spread love
 Right: To spread justice
 All: To spread peace in the world. Amen.

Prayer

A Prayer by Archbishop Oscar Romero

It helps, now and then, to step back and take a long view.

The kingdom is not only beyond our efforts, it is even beyond our vision.

We accomplish in our lifetime only a tiny fraction of the magnificent enterprise that is God's work.

Nothing we do is complete, which is a way of saying that the kingdom always lies beyond us.

No statement says all that could be said.

No prayer fully expresses our faith.

No confession brings perfection.

No pastoral visit brings wholeness.

No program accomplishes the church's mission.

No set of goals and objectives includes everything.

This is what we are about.

We plant the seeds that one day will grow.

We water seeds already planted, knowing that they hold future promise.

We lay foundations that will need further development.

We provide yeast that produces far beyond our capabilities.

We cannot do everything, and there is a sense of liberation in realizing that. This enables us to do something, and to do it very well. It may be incomplete, but it is a beginning, a step along the way, an opportunity for the Lord's grace to enter and do the rest.

We may never see the end results, but that is the difference.

Litany: Sharing the Blessings

Based on Ephesians 3:14–21

Regular font to be read by a leader; *italic* font to be read by the congregation.

God, Creator of all that is and all that will be

We praise and honor you

God, who calls all the families on Earth

We praise and honor you

God, who recognizes and celebrates our diversity

We praise and honor you

God, who has granted the Spirit to lead us

We praise and honor you

God, whose love is our root

We praise and honor you

God, who offers abundant blessings to all

We praise and honor you

As God calls us to open our hearts and share with each other

Make us more generous, we pray

Recognizing that we have more than enough blessings to share with the world

Open our hearts to the needs of the world, we pray

Knowing that we are the hands and feet of our God in the world

Move us to compassion and solidarity, we pray

As we seek to become a more generous community

Inspire us to see the plenty where others see need, we pray

We, your people, are ready to continue planting the seeds of your abundant love

Guide us, O God, and help us to follow Christ's leading.

Amen.

Worship Resources

Invitation to Offering

As we share our gifts today, to support the work of this congregation and our work through One Great Hour of Sharing, we celebrate God's love and abundance in the world. In our generosity, we recognize that we are all part of God's family. In our giving, we dare to imagine that God will use our gifts in the world to do great things; more than we can imagine! Let us give generously!

Prayer of Dedication

Holy and generous God,

We pray that you would grow these gifts to bless the world.

We imagine a world with enough food, water; resources, education, justice, laughter, and freedom for all of your people.

Do with our gifts even more than we can imagine, Holy One, and make of us a loving and generous people.

Amen.

Sermon Starter—Ephesians 3:14–21

Today is the Sunday we bring our gifts for the One Great Hour of Sharing offering. Today's message is about more than money for the offering. It is also about imagination!

We spend lots of time in church talking about budgets, ministry projects, deadlines, and needs. We seldom have opportunities to imagine together and to imagine with God.

In the Scripture this morning, we see a letter to the Ephesians. It is a celebration of church, of God's imagination, and of God's power within us. The message invites us to stretch beyond our present realities, and to embrace our connection to God and to each other. God desires for us to imagine ourselves in a few ways:

1. Through Connection: We know from Genesis, God is creator of everything, including every family or grouping. In community God wants us to know that we are all invited to the table. There is room for us here. This is a place of belonging.

Community and connection are at the center of the world that Jesus envisions for us. Racial and religious divisions that once dominated the landscape separating Jew and Gentile have been rendered irrelevant by the love of Christ. Paul reminds us that we are all included in "God's family."

2. With Strength, power, and faith: Paul's prayer reveals tenderness and compassion for God's people. Paul prays that we may be strengthened with power and know the indwelling presence of Christ. This is a reminder that the strength we have, and the power we are given is the power of Christ in us. We are not given strength for strength's sake. We are given strength so that we may have the faith to do the things God has purposed for our lives.

We are reminded that faith is part of a bigger picture, and that our God given gifts of talents, material goods, and love, are part of a bigger picture, too! Our faith therefore, can only grow as we grow in our experience of God's amazing power in us and through us. It compels us

to action. It compels us to reach beyond ourselves and to connect with God in amazing ways.

3. As Love: Love is a recurring theme throughout Scripture. God loves us, so that we may in turn love others. We are rooted and established in love. And through God's love for us, Christ gave his life to ensure our salvation.

In our Scripture today, "Paul uses the words rooted and grounded". Imagine for a moment how deep the roots of a large tree are. In order to keep the tree upright, the roots must be deep. That is how stable we can be in the knowledge that God loves each of us. And when we are grounded and secure—our ability to share love with others will extend like the branches of a large tree.

When we become filled with the knowledge of the love of God, we become more loving. We become more grace-filled. We become more generous people and communities.

4. Beyond our own imagination: Paul concludes the prayer and continues to stretch us by calling on the power of God that is already at work within us, connecting us to God's imagination. Perhaps one of the biggest challenges the church faces today is that we place limitations on what God can do in our church and in our world, with and through us.

But, there is no limit to what God can do in response to our prayers, because God himself is limitless." As we seek to imagine with God, we draw ever closer to the source of goodness and to an understanding of the love and power that Paul prayed over our churches. We can reach beyond the limits we have placed on our own ability to connect, to be strong, and to love.

Our giving to One Great Hour of Sharing is but one concrete way we can show we are willing to reach beyond what we can see. Our contributions become a part of God's abundant blessings to brothers and sisters in need, worldwide.

Now to God be the glory, who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine. Give God glory though all time and for ever and ever. Amen

Ephesians 3:20-21

Ephesians 3:14–21

Note: This sermon works best if you prepare materials ahead of time.

Read the scripture passage together (if the scripture has already been read in worship, you can just reread verses 20–21)

Paul talks about God's love for all of us and of how God can do more than we can imagine. I thought we could practice doing some imagining together and think about how God might imagine things.

(Reveal container of soil.) Here is the first thing for us to consider together. What do you think this is? *(Give children a chance to respond.)* What do you think God can imagine in this rich soil? *(Invite responses that may be related to things growing in the soil, plants, food, trees, etc. as well as other playful responses.)*

(Reveal seed.) How about this? Who knows what this is? Have you ever seen one of these? *(Allow for some discussion of seeds the children may have encountered in gardening or in their food.)*

When God looks at a seed like this, God can already see this!

(Reveal the sprouted seed.)

It's hard to believe that from this little seed we get a whole big, tall tree that can give us wood and fruit. But God sees it! Today I wanted to bring a whole tree in here to show you, but we couldn't fit a whole tree without making a big mess, so here's a picture!

MATERIALS

The items will be revealed one at a time, as you present the message to the children.

- a container with soil
- citrus seeds
- a seedling or a sprout you have grown in anticipation of the sermon
- an illustration of a full-grown orange tree
- a basket of oranges

(Reveal picture of full-grown orange tree.)

How are the seed and the tree similar? How are they different?

(Invite comparisons of the seed and the tree.)

(Reveal basket of oranges.)

From this little seed we get these juicy oranges that we can share and enjoy! But that's not the end of God's work. God is able to do even more than we can imagine!

What do you think God can do for the family who grew this tree?

(Lead discussion in the direction of food and income: they can eat the oranges, they can sell the oranges.)

How does life change for a family who can now eat oranges and sell oranges?

(Receive a few responses from the children.)

Oranges can completely change the quality of a family's life: no more hunger, more time to do other things, money to buy necessities. That is only what we can imagine! God can do even more!

When we share our offerings for One Great Hour of Sharing, we are helping to do things like planting orange trees that will help families and communities! We give with excitement and anticipation of all the things God can do through our giving!

(You may wish to distribute or collect coinboxes at this time.)

(Give each child an orange, or let them know that they will be shared during the church coffee hour for all to enjoy. You may also choose to share some oranges with a local foodbank.)

Let's pray together:

Thank you God, for doing more than we can even imagine.

Thank you for taking care of us. Help us to take care of each other.

Amen.

If you give a farmer a seed...

Intention: This activity uses the adventures described in the book as a jumping off point to see what God can imagine. Children are given the opportunity to see how God might use even simple things to do great things.

Instructions: Read one of the wonderful children's books written by Laura Joffe Numeroff and illustrated by Felicia Bond such as *If You Give a Mouse a Cookie*. In these stories we will follow the silly antics of animal adventures. There is a process of creation that happens with each animal, whether it is Mouse's drawing, Pig's tree house or Moose's elaborate sock puppets.

The characters in this book had great imaginations! How about God? Do you think God has a good imagination? The theme for One Great Hour of Sharing is "More than We Can Imagine." God can do even more than we can imagine. We can try to think of some of the things God has imagined in our world.

Think about a seed. A tiny seed turns into a tall, tall tree in a land where there are not many other plants, not much for animals to eat. So God makes a giraffe with a long funny looking neck that helps it to eat the leaves at the very top of the tall trees where no one else can reach.

Or maybe think about a rainstorm and the way God can take rain and sun and turn them into beautiful rainbows.

AGE RANGE

Preschool through Middle School; or any age group willing to engage with a storybook.

MATERIALS

A copy of one of Laura Joffe Numeroff's books, such as *If You Give a Mouse a Cookie*, or another in the series.

Let's imagine:

What could God do with a cookie?

Invite children to extend the imagination as far as they can go—kids are so much better at this than adults!

So, for example, God might use a seed to grow a cherry tree. The cherry tree is beautiful so God will make the blossoms for everyone to enjoy. The fruit is also delicious so God will share it with hungry people to enjoy. When we eat cherries, there is a pit that can go on to become another tree! More cherries! When a tree gets older, it can be used for wood. The wood can make a desk where a little girl will study. She will study hard and learn to speak every language on earth so she can make lots of friends! And so on!

You may add your own prompts, making sure to include some that might be silly as well as some that lead to more serious reflection. Invite them to consider the ways God can use each thing to make an impact on our lives, our communities, and the world.

How do our actions and our gifts contribute to God's imagination?

As you prepare to finish with a prayer, invite children to gather in a circle. Ask each one to think of their favorite thing that God imagined.

Let's pray together. I will start and we will go around the circle and each of us will say out loud the thing we thought of!

God of all creation, we thank you for your wonderful imagination. We thank you for _____ (invite the children to speak—you may add ideas from earlier discussion if they get stuck.)

Help us imagine a better world with you, we pray.
Amen.

What makes a house a home?

A house is a structure with some walls, a roof, doors and windows. The house becomes a home when it is a place where you can feel safe and loved. When you're at home, you can let your guard down. You can relax and rest.

Sometimes, though, a house isn't really a home. That was certainly the case for Roger Doris and his family. They built their house in Haiti's Northwest Department in 1989. It was a traditional mud-and-stick house, like so many in Haiti are. In 2000 and 2001, they renovated their home to replace the mud walls with concrete blocks and added a tin roof. It was definitely a home.

Then Hurricane Matthew hit in late 2016. As the wind pounded on the house and the rain poured down. Extensive damage was done to Roger's house. The walls shook and cracked. The wood support columns—which weren't particularly sturdy to start with—were damaged badly.

Overnight, that house was stripped of being a home. The family still lived there, but they were afraid. They didn't know how much longer the house would stand. That sense of security was

gone. There was no more peace of mind, and no way to let down their guard.

We responded to help Roger and his family build a new house. Roger had training as an iron worker and carpenter, so he teamed up with professional masons to work on the new

house. His family provided funds to pay for the new foundation and food for the workers. They also received seeds to plant so that the family would have a food and income source.

Now, the family has a house where they can feel safe. The house has a strong foundation and sturdy support columns made of rebar. More than that, everyone has peace of mind. It is truly a home.

Roger describes the house as a "miracle." He doesn't live in fear anymore.

Each of God's children is loved. Each one deserves to be safe and protected, too, no matter where they live.

Our neighbors in Haiti needed us when their security was taken away, and we were there to help. Thank you for your support of our brothers and sisters in Christ.



Haiti Mission Moment

Roger and his wife at the construction site for their new home.



CWS PHOTO

The suggested Sunday for the OGHS Offering is March 11, 2018.

OGHS Sharing Calendar—*MORE THAN WE CAN IMAGINE!*

The purpose of the calendar is to help us focus on ways that God has blessed each of us, and to give thanks for those abundant blessings. The calendar also highlights some of the challenging situations in the world. Each day suggests a donation of coins or bills. Your household can decide what unit works best for you. It is easiest if you select one unit and use it throughout the days on the calendar. Your gift will be a blessing to others! The sharing calendar works well with the OGHS coin box. To order additional coin boxes, call 1-800-325-7061.

	SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
DISASTER RELIEF	<p>God provides for us more than we can imagine. Ephesians 3:20</p> <p>With a thankful heart, share three units for all the ways God has provided more in your life than you expected.</p>	<p>Support disaster survivors by becoming an UCC Disaster Recovery Volunteer. Help communities rebuild: ucc.org/disaster</p> <p>Share one unit if you have ever volunteered at a disaster site, or two units if you have not.</p>	<p>Severe thunderstorms account for 60% of the \$23.8 billion dollars in damages caused by natural disaster in 2016. That number could double or triple in 2017</p> <p>Share one unit if you have an umbrella and another if you have a raincoat.</p>	<p>The Caribbean was repeatedly impacted by disasters in 2017. Learn more about their resiliency through the Caribbean Initiative at: www.globalministries.org</p> <p>Give one unit for each country you can name in the Caribbean.</p>	<p>Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. Galatians 6:2</p> <p>Give one unit for each time in the past week someone has helped you, or you have helped someone else.</p>	<p>Almost everyone in the fire zone in Northern California had some level of damage from toxic ash, power outages and smoke to linens and bedding.</p> <p>Give one unit for each blanket in your home.</p>	<p>"Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice." Philippians 4:4</p> <p>Share one unit for each person or experience that brought you joy today.</p>
CHILDREN	<p>"Let the little children come to me... for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs." Luke 18:16</p> <p>Share one unit for every child in your family and extended family.</p>	<p>Children remain the poorest age group in America. Some progress has been made in reducing poverty, but too many children are still hungry.</p> <p>Give one unit for each meal you've eaten today.</p>	<p>Children of a mother with 5 years of primary school education have a 40% higher survival rate than those from mothers with no education.</p> <p>Give one unit for each female in your family who has at least a 5th grade education.</p>	<p>Nearly half of all deaths in children under 5 are from undernutrition. This means that about 3 million young lives are lost each year unnecessarily.</p> <p>Give three units in honor of the children in your congregation.</p>	<p>Over the last decade child mortality rates have improved. Rising prosperity, education and the spread of health care are key factors.</p> <p>Give one unit for each job, degree and doctor associated with your household.</p>	<p>Children who have experienced a disaster in a year, are less likely to get vaccinated or to be on track with vaccines the following year.</p> <p>Share a unit for each check-up you had in the last year.</p>	<p>Girls are often excluded from educational systems, yet educating girls is the key to reaching many other development goals.</p> <p>Share a unit for each female teacher you have/had.</p>
FOOD AND WATER	<p>"...I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink..." Matthew 25:35</p> <p>Give a unit in thanksgiving for each day this week you were not thirsty.</p>	<p>In the United States, 40-50% of all food ready for harvest never gets eaten.</p> <p>Give three units for each meal you ate today where you did not finish what was on your plate.</p>	<p>Due to hurricanes in 2017, Puerto Rico and the US Virgin Islands sustained damage to their water systems.</p> <p>Give one unit for every glass or bottle of water you drank today.</p>	<p>The proportion of people living in extreme poverty is half of what it was in 1990. Yet 1.4 billion people live on less than \$1.25 per day.</p> <p>Share a unit for each meal you have eaten in a restaurant in the past week.</p>	<p>In 2014-15, 1.9 million people were reached with clean water and 3 million people with sanitation.</p> <p>Give one unit for each time you washed your hands today.</p>	<p>For every \$1 invested in water and sanitation, an average of \$4 is returned in increased productivity.</p> <p>Give one unit for each toilet and sink in your home.</p>	<p>In the first 2 years of a child's life, optimal nutrition fosters healthy growth and improves cognition while decreasing risks of obesity later in life.</p> <p>Share one unit for every scale in your home.</p>
REFUGEES AND THE DISPLACED	<p>"The stranger who sojourns with you shall be to you as the native among you, and you shall love him as yourself..." Leviticus 19:34</p> <p>Give three units to support refugee resettlement in the US.</p>	<p>In 2016, there were 17.2 million people displaced from their homes due to conflict or persecution across international borders, 50% more since 2013.</p> <p>Give three units if you were never displaced from your home.</p>	<p>About 45% of the world's refugees reside in countries with per capita incomes below \$3,000—countries least able to afford them.</p> <p>Give three units if you or your household receives more than \$3,000 per month.</p>	<p>\$10 can provide a thermal blanket for a refugee, of 1 mat to prevent them from sleeping on the cold ground.</p> <p>Give two units for every thermal blanket in your home.</p>	<p>Over one thousand Puerto Ricans who self-evacuated after the 2017 hurricanes to Pennsylvania were looking for a "safe space."</p> <p>Share one unit for each bed in your home,</p>	<p>Adequate shelter is a basic human right, a basic necessity that every human being requires.</p> <p>Give two units if you live in a comfortable home.</p>	<p>Feel God's presence and joy through helping others.</p> <p>God loves a cheerful giver, so give whatever units you think would please God.</p>

Finding OGHS Resources

ONE GREAT HOUR OF SHARING RESOURCES IN YOUR SHIPMENT

One of each unless indicated otherwise

- Poster (1)
- 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)

OGHS ON THE WEB [UCC.ORG/OGHS/RESOURCES](http://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

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